LOLA

LONDON ON-LINE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

COMPUTER SERVICES

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The descriptions given in this booklet are brief and are only intended to give a broad picture of the extent of each application or service. For greater detail, contact the Information Office at LOLA.

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COMPUTER APPLICATIONS

GENERALISED APPLICATIONS

LOLA's data processing activities are founded on a database system. A series of files of information on PEOPLE, PROPERTY and RESOURCES are integrated. The People and Property indexes not only give access to records by name and/or address rather than by code numbers, but also allow the development of two Generalised Applications based on the indexes. These enable a wide range of computer applications concerning people and property to be developed and implemented rapidly.

Within stringent security and confidentiality provisions and agreed codes of practice, key records for a property, a person or an organisation can therefore be cross referenced.

GPA

Generalised Persons Application deals with records about people known to the authority.

Each separate application within GPA is known as a function. Functions contain records which may either be grouped together or held individually.

Records may be retrieved, inspected and amended through VDUs.

An analysis suite allows selection of records to be sorted and re-formatted. This runs both by reference to pre-defined requests and as an ad hoc system. A facility is available to generate reminders automatically when pre-defined dates are passed.

GPA Functions

Leisure Opportunities
Housing Allocation
Housing Transfers
Personnel
Library Borrowers
Childrens Records & Placements
DTS Clothing Issue & Entitlements

PIPS

Property Information and Progressing System is a generalised system which uses the address as a common identifier.

There are over 30 implementations which include property acquisitions, improvement grants, housing voids, trade refuse agreements, development control, environmental health.

Housing benefit systems for public and private sectors are based on PIPS functions. (See UHB on page 10).

The analysis facilities are similar to GPA, and FOCUS is used extensively.

PIPS Functions

Streets Gazetter	Development Control
Laundry	Planning Applications
Dog Licences	Commercial Property Control
Disinfestation	Trade Refuse Agreements
Infectious Diseases Register	Container Bins
Home Accident Survey	Environmental Health – Notices
Former Tenants a/c	Improvement Grants
Housing Stock – Properties	Housing Voids
Housing Stock – Blocks	Environmental Health (Housing)
GLC Garages Take-on	Right to Buy
'CLUSTER' – Land Use	Legal Files
UHB Private Sector Current a/c	Inspection Control
UHB Private Sector History	Highway Register
HB Direct Adjustments – Private sector	Insulation Grants
UHB Public Sector – Current a/c	Housing Action Areas
UHB Public Sector – History	Network Control

Some of these functions are in use in one borough only, others are used by two, three or all four boroughs.

SPECIALISED APPLICATIONS

Payroll

Calculates employee's pay and related statutory and voluntary deductions (eg trade union subscriptions), produces payrolls and payslips providing a comprehensive breakdown of pay elements to show an employee how his/her pay is made up.

As a by-product of the payroll a cash analysis is produced showing the cashier how many notes/coins of each denomination are required. For non-cash paid employees cheques or bank credit transfers via BACS are produced.

Full details of the charges arising from the calculation of pay are automatically passed to FMA.

Automatic calculation of pension increases, annual increments, salary and wage awards together with any arrears of pay and tabulations to assist in the preparation of annual estimates are also features of the payroll suite.

Payroll is a major source of computerised staffing information, the history file provides a period by period picture of all hours worked and the pay elements calculated together with details of when key fields have changed.

On-line transactions are now available in certain areas which enable selected records to be displayed on the screen. The on-line facilities are gradually being extended with a number of major enhancements in the pipeline to allow, for example, an employee's record to be viewed on the screen subject to the necessary security rules being satisfied.

Financial Management Application (FMA)

Cost Centres

FMA is designed to provide each departmental manager with his or her own set of accounts, known as cost centres, to which are charged all costs for which he or she is responsible.

Facilities exist to compare actual and estimated expenditure on a cost centre and provide exception reports to a responsible officer. Attached to each cost centre is a facility to record estimated and actual activities which can be compared and performance tested. In some cases activities can be directly associated with costs for budgetary testing purposes. A re-analysis program will restructure the costs into a number of forms notified to the computer, eg for the final accounts or to complete returns. A comprehensive history of charges to sub-codes is also provided.

Job costing

For costing individual units of work; where very detailed costs need to be recorded; or where on-costs are to be applied; expenditure is charged to jobs and automatically redirected to FMA.

Information on expenditure at job or cost centre level is available on-line via VDUs: on-line facilities also exist to originate, amend and delete cost-centre and job records.

Charges are passed to FMA to update cost centres and jobs in batch from a number of other applications eg Payroll, Creditors.

For more detailed analysis the cost centre and jobs detail history files record all charges in a financial year. Selective prints of history files are available; a full print-out is produced on microfiche at intervals when specified by the users. Facilities are being developed to interrogate these files on-line.

Creditors

Records and processes payments by the authority. It also aggregates them on to cheques with payment advice; automatically produces regular payments (eg for foster parents) on the due date, and reconciles cheques issued with those presented at the bank. It also automatically generates commitment and payment charges for inclusion in FMA. On-line facilities are available to originate, amend or interrogate the records, including the ability to notify and verify payments on-line.

Miscellaneous income

Maintains the miscellaneous debtors' accounts and automatically provides for the credits to be posted to income heads in the accounting program. Accounts for recurring debtors are produced in time for dispatch on the due date. Facilities are provided for reminders of non-payment and to produce lists for recovery procedures.

The Financial Management Application and Job Costing receives income charges from the programs already mentioned.

Direct debiting

The system is designed to allow payment to a borough via the BACS Direct Debiting System. At present the system is used only by Rates. The direct debit database can be updated in batch or by VDU.

Housing database system

Structural details of properties, whether they are let or empty; records of tenants, present and former; and rent accounts are maintained on this system. Structural details and Tenant Records are updated on-line.

The financial details are updated weekly; there is an on-line data capture facility which allows updating, interrogation and deletion of any pending amendment data. Tenant Notifications and Statements are automatically produced to keep tenants informed of any change in their rent details and current balance. All rent accounts can be fully interrogated on-line where detailed amendment and payment histories exist. Payments are credited to the account nightly.

Personal and property amendments can be set up on-line immediately.

An extract of the full database is defined to FOCUS, a report generator, to enable the users to generate analysis and reports on a regular or ad hoc basis.

Housing Allocations

In addition to the above, a Housing Lettings system for Tower Hamlets has been designed. This system enables available properties to be allocated to the applicants on the Waiting and Transfer lists based on their requirements and priority status.

UHB Unified Housing Benefit

There are two complementary systems for the public sector (council tenants) and the private sector (private tenants). Case records are maintained for all tenants eligible for housing benefit. On-line transactions are used for benefit calculations during the day with results being displayed immediately on the screen.

Bulk re-calculation of all tenant housing benefit occurs whenever there are rent or rate increases, or a government increase to pensions and welfare benefits.

The public sector system feeds all new housing benefit values into the Housing system to ensure that the tenant's rent is reduced accordingly.

The private sector system pays housing benefit to tenants by production of Giro and bank cheques via the Creditors system.

Housing Advances

Maintains a personal account for each mortgagor granted a mortgage by the authority. Instalment slips and reminder notices may be produced as appropriate, and statements of account and of interest due are also produced for the mortgagor. Changes in the rate of interest are calculated.

The application has been enhanced by use of FOCUS to provide on-line interrogation and redemption facilities.

Rates

Contains the details of each hereditament and is a reliable base for the wider concept of property records. It also contains the ratepayers' personal accounts, automatically calculating the charge, whether it is domestic, mixed or full rate, and deals with rebates and void property. Rate demands, instalment slips, schedules, final notices, summonses, court lists and warrants are all produced by the computer. Amendments to the file are effected immediately via VDUs which can display any of the records for inspection.

Stores

A new system for processing stores transactions, including an interface with the mainframe applications FMA and Creditors, audit facilities and later extension into purchase control is being implemented. These facilities will be available originally as a batch system.

Transport

A stand-alone mini-computer based system is planned to interface with the LOLA mainframe systems.

Libraries

The LOLA system maintains a record of current library loans for selected libraries in Haringey.

The data is collected in the libraries via light pens connected to a Plessey mini-computer system. The basis of the system is that a borrower is issued with a single ticket with a bar coded label. The ticket may be used to borrow books anywhere in the borough. Books are similarly bar coded. The light pen is 'wiped' across these bar codes and data on loan functions such as issues and discharges is recorded on the Plessey mini-computer.

Magnetic tapes containing this loan information are sent daily to LOLA for processing of recovery action for overdue books, borrower and reader interrogation, management reports and statistics.

Direct Labour Organisations (DLO)

A system for charging clients (services) for work performed by DLOs in order to make statutory profit, utilising local terminals. Results are used to update FMA (cost centre level) with transactions relating to both client expenditure and DLO income heads.

Laser DLO software is being implemented in Tower Hamlets and Haringey.

CLASS

Computerised **L**ocal **A**uthority **S**uperannuation **S**ystem. This maintains superannuation records and calculates benefits.

MARCH

A highway maintenance package.

CHART

A highway maintenance package.

CLUSTER

Central **L**and **U**se **S**ys**T**em and **E**mployment **R**egister maintains a file of the details of property erected on land and the use to which that land is dedicated within the borough. It also contains information on employment in commercial premises.

CASCAID

Careers **A**dvisory **S**ervice **C**omputer **AID** is a package used to aid career officers in selecting career suggestions to suit the work interests and qualifications of each young person they advice.

STRIFE

STudent **R**ecords **I**n **F**urther **E**ducation.

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Maintenance and production of register and poll cards etc for elections.

FACILITIES

Analysis of Data

FOCUS
A report generator and inquiry language, which enables users in the boroughs to provide regular or ad hoc analyses/reports from data held on LOLA's various mainframe systems.

All queries are developed and tested on-line using a subset of the relevant data. Operational runs against the production databases or files are also submitted on-line and then run in batch mode overnight.

Mark IV/V
An application generator, which enhances the productivity of the Applications programmers by generating a great number of machine instructions from a single programming statement.

Designing screen layouts and batch output is also simplified; screens can be simulated, thus enabling analysts and users to come to an agreement at a very early stage in the design of an application.

Specialist Support Services

Personal Computing
The Personal Computing Group provides a service enabling council officers with little or no computing experience to do their own computing by using the LOLA mainframe computer. The PCG supports ADI (for inquiries) and ADRS (for reports) which are both written in the APL programming language. Also SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), DYNAPLAN (a spreadsheet) and FOCUS (for inquiries, reports and single-user systems). The PCG provides its users with consultancy, education and "hot-line" support. It is responsible for making corporate data available to a wider community of council officers.

Planning and Consultancy
Continuing developments in technology provide a wide range of approaches and solutions to information processing requirements. Larger, more powerful and (comparatively) cheaper central processors, mini-computers, distributed processing, office automation, networks, micro-computers and personal computing all form part of a strategy for information technology.

The Planning & Consultancy team provides a consultancy service to the boroughs on all aspects relating to their projected use of computer facilities. This covers all levels of information processing from micros through to mainframe solutions and includes advice on the selection and evaluation of locally based "turnkey" systems.

The **Micro Support Group** is a specialist part of the Planning and Consultancy Division dedicated to the support of micro-computer installations in the four constituent authorities.

The services offered include:- demonstrations; consultancy, hardware and software recommendations and quotations for specific configurations; ordering of items and administrative support; commissioning and installation of new hardware and software; communications support; user education; "help desk" telephone support for user queries; technical support and advice; "bespoke" application programming; substantial discount on end user prices.

The service is standarised on the IBM Personal Computer, MSG supports the full range from the single floppy disk drive PC to the enhanced AT. The IBM equipment supercedes the previously recommended Superbrain micro, installations of which MSG still supports. Support is also offered for a wide range of peripheral devices (eg 10 different makes of printers and plotters) and the group also offers support for over 75 different software packages.

Computer Division

The computer division consists of four groups. They are:-

TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES
Customer Services Group monitor the level of mainframe service; monitor machine capacity to help planning for growth; problem management; maintain installation standards; and provide a library of technical manuals. The team includes the Data Security Officer.

Teleprocessing Support Group responsible for the day-to-day support of the tele-processing network, and the provision of a continuously manned "Help-desk" service to the users.

Operation Support Group provides first-level support to the Operations Section for their key-to-disk system. Also generate and maintain all operational Job Control procedures; co-ordinate all new applications, and control disk space.

Applications Support Group. LOLA has a large and complex database system, with both batch and on-line updating. The team is responsible for the integrity of data held; also database design, analysis and tuning; and advice to the Applications development teams.

OPERATING SYSTEMS SUPPORT
generates, installs and supports the operating systems.

IMS SUPPORT
are responsible for the support of the IMS (Information Management System) software.

OPERATIONS
This section is responsible for all aspects of data preparation, job receipt, preparation, scheduling, running and result processing, including ancillary processing for both regular scheduled work and ah-hoc submissions.

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