

**REPORT FROM: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES**

**TO: EXECUTIVE**

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## **ICT STRATEGY**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update Members on overall ICT Strategy and to seek approval to upgrade the Council's infrastructure network.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.0 To agree to the upgrade to the Council's infrastructure network at a cost of £150,000
- 2.0 To note the wider ICT strategy.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.0 To allow essential upgrade work to be completed.
- 2.0 To keep Executive informed on ICT developments.

### **ISSUE**

- 1.0 The Council's IT services are provided by a third party via the Liberata contract. Liberata provide both the strategic lead and technical advice and support for the Council with limited technical experience held by the client (Council).
- 2.0 However, the Council runs an effective IT Programme Board which meets monthly and oversees the Corporate ICT Strategy providing oversight on current ICT set up and future delivery.
- 3.0 This report provides an update on the following key areas;
  - a. Infrastructure Network upgrade
  - b. Switch to Microsoft 365 Licences

- c. Roll out of Microsoft TEAMS Phone
- d. Update on Cyber Treatment Plan
- e. Contract Reviews
- f. System Developments

### **Infrastructure Network**

- 4.0 The ICT Network and core switches routes all ICT traffic around the network and to the servers in the primary and secondary data centres. It also allows staff to connect to corporate systems and the internet and remote onto the network while located off site.
- 5.0 The Council's core network equipment has reached end of life and end of support (usually 7 years). Once out of support, legacy equipment poses both a cyber security risk as well as posing an increased risk of failure that could potentially cause significant disruption to Council services. There is also the risk of the Council failing on the various security and cyber audits it is required to undergo due to the network infrastructure being dated and no longer receiving security updates.
- 6.0 Refreshing this equipment has already been undertaken in the smaller council sites but the main bulk of the equipment is now due for replacement in the Town Hall, Fleet Street and Number One Market Street.
- 7.0 Liberata have worked with their preferred supplier (HP) since 2019 and have received a proposal to replace this vital infrastructure equipment with the latest generation of equipment and to ensure that the Council network remains both secure and efficient. The existing network equipment is Cisco, which is very expensive to replace. Therefore, HP was chosen as an alternative provider due to their switch range being extremely reliable, versatile, and competitive in terms of pricing. As the smaller Council sites are now all using HP switches it is important to maintain this standard for ease of management.
- 8.0 The total cost of the scheme is approximately £150,000. Approval is sought to carry out this work to be funded from the ICT Reserve. Note that there is a six-month lead time from ordering the work.

### **Microsoft 365 Licensing (Email, Word, Excel, TEAMS)**

- 9.0 Microsoft have moved their Office product to a subscription based (per user) model. The pricing has been defined for public sector organisations via a Crown Commercial agreement. The Council needs to continue with these licenses to provide the productivity and communications used by virtually all its employees and Councillors. Tools such as Outlook, Word, MS Teams etc.
- 10.0 The license agreements are for 3 years with annual renewal allowing for truing up of the numbers and type of license required. E1 licences provide online only access and E3 (and above) allowing for a local installed version of Office on the user's device with enhanced functionality. The Council has tried to minimise the cost by utilising web only licences (E1) for staff where back office access and full functionality of the applications is not required. The current licencing costs to the Council are c£70,000 per annum. The current licence agreement ends in 18 months' time when the Council could be subject to increases in licencing costs of around 30%.
- 11.0 The Council has arranged for end users training to be provided via Nelson & Colne College to ensure that it gets the maximum benefit from this new functionality, particularly around remote working.

## **Mitel telephony replacement via MS Teams Phone**

- 12.0 The current Mitel Telephony system (landline phone system) has been in situ for over 10 years and is connected to legacy ISDN telephony lines. The ISDN system will shortly be decommissioned and could lead to a significant service outage if not replaced.
- 13.0 The Council have already adopted the use of MS Teams for making voice and video calls internally and to other organisations. The move to full MS Teams telephony (TEAMS Enterprise Voice) will build upon the tools familiar to staff and add in the functionality to receive and make calls to landlines and mobiles. Staff will also be able to be added to ring and pickup groups to ensure that customer calls can be answered by the correct teams. The Teams Phone solution allows for improved mobility of the workforce as they will no longer require a desk phone and can take the telephony capability with them via their laptop and mobiles. Staff will retain their existing phone numbers and these will become available to the user whether they are working remotely or in the office.
- 14.0 The project has previously been approved by Policy & Resources Committee at their meeting on 16th September 2021. There has been a lot of preparation work required in advance of the full migration being able to be scheduled in with the relevant third party providers. Migration and implementation are now due to take place in June/July 2023.

## **Cyber Treatment Plan (CTP)**

- 15.0 In 2020, following several high-profile cyber security incidents affecting local government and public sector organisations, the then Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) conducted a “Mitigating Malware and Ransomware Survey” across all local government organisations. The results of that survey highlighted some key areas for improvement around cyber security and in particular backup of systems and data. The MHCLG Cyber Security Team approached Councils with a view to providing cyber support around 7 cyber focus areas:
- a. Backup
  - b. National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) Active Cyber Defence (ACD)
  - c. IT Health Check
  - d. Multi-Factor Authentication
  - e. Operating Systems
  - f. Active Directory
  - g. Logging
- 16.0 Workshops were conducted with the Council and Liberata IT Services around these key areas with a view to producing a Cyber Technical Support Enhancement Report. This was then discussed with Liberata IT from which a Cyber Treatment Plan (CTP) was produced that included an action plan around the findings of the workshops related to the 7 cyber focus areas. Cyber Resilience Funding of £200,000 was awarded to the Council to enable the delivery of the CTP. Quarterly ‘check-in’ meetings have been held between DLUHC (formerly MHCLG), Local Digital Team, the Council and Liberata IT Services throughout the delivery which has now come to a successful conclusion.
- 17.0 The Council and Liberata IT Services are keen to continue working with DLUHC and the Local Digital Team to continue to strengthen and protect the Councils security systems and arrangements as opportunities arise.
- 18.0 The Council has been able to use this funding to purchase 5 Member tablets for trailing to allow Members to obtain access to email, TEAMS Meetings and Council committee papers. If these prove successful further investment in Tablets can be made and rolled out to all Members. Significant savings could be made in printing cost should members wish to take

this opportunity.

## **Contract Reviews**

- 19.0 The Council updated its mobile phone contract in January 2023 and is in the process of switching its SIM cards over from EE to Vodafone. At the same time, existing iPhone devices are becoming obsolete and these will be switched over to android devices which provide greater functionality and are cheaper to purchase.
- 20.0 The Printer contract will be reviewed this financial year with a view to reducing the number of office machines and moving to a more secure method of printing.
- 21.0 The Print Room main printer will be retained for the remainder of the life of the lease (2 more years) but the Council will explore ways of reducing reliance on this printer with a view to externalising where possible.

## **Systems Developments**

- 22.0 The Council has a small number of key systems which it uses to manage its back office functions. Each system requires on-going maintenance to remain up to date with the latest software releases and/or hardware needs. Where possible the Council looks to cloud based solutions though the costs of these can be prohibitive and therefore some systems remain as physical installations. A brief summary of the existing software is shown below;
- a. Civica Financials and Payment Portal  
The finance system is moving to a web only version and will work alongside the KOFAX system to allow the front end scanning of invoicing. The payment portal Opayo was upgraded last year.
  - b. Idox  
This system is used across the Places directorate from planning to environmental health. The Council needs to upgrade to the latest software version to keep up with latest releases and to improve functionality and performance.
  - c. Imperago Timesheet system  
Recently upgraded to replace the old Etarmis time recording system which was obsolete.
  - d. Pentana  
Used to help manage the Council's strategic and general performance monitoring function.
  - e. BACAS Burial and Cemeteries System  
Used to manage cemetery sites.
  - f. Civica Legal  
Used to manage legal cases and debt management.
  - g. Civica Xpress  
Elections management system.
  - h. JADU website and job management system  
A single sign on version is to be released to work alongside the Northgate customer portal for Council tax. Further improvements are being made on the JADU system to make online payments more straight forward. The single sign on function on the website will enable customers to register and login to their JADU account and view Council Tax information (or NNDR for businesses) including payments and balances.

Customers will have access to view forms they have completed and the stage that the form is at (historic processes as well as current and future transactions). Customers will be able to view any communication with Pendle Borough Council which has been recorded through the CXM by website form or over the phone. This

includes the ability to track orders for services such as pest control and waste to cancel or rearrange appointments.

Single sign on needs the latest version of Jadu before it can be integrated. The upgrade is currently being tested before it can be rolled out on the live site. We are waiting for a timescale from Jadu for the upgrade. Current Northgate MyAccount holders will have their account deactivated and will need to set up a new account through Jadu/website. Once a new Jadu account is created and linked to their Northgate Account, customers will see all the previous Northgate MyAccount information plus the extra CXM information.

A communications campaign will target users who already have a MyAccount to encourage them to set up a new one. We will also be doing a communications drive promoting the benefits of having a MyAccount to increase uptake.

i. Future Development – Incab Technology

In the recent past, the Council has explored the use of InCab technology for waste collection vehicles and better job management systems. Both these systems would help to streamline business processes in Operational Services. Previous reviews have suggested that the cost could be in the order of £100,000. Any proposals will be considered by Corporate Leadership Team and brought forward as required under the Scheme of Delegation.

j. Future Development - Hybrid Meetings

The existing infrastructure in the Wilson Room requires upgrading to allow hybrid meetings to take place and allow the full functionality of TEAMS to be utilised. This is relatively low costs (c£5,000) and will be considered by Corporate Leadership Team and brought forward as required under the Scheme of Delegation.

## IMPLICATIONS

**Policy:** There are no policy implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Financial:** The Network upgrade is expected to cost around £150,000 to be funded from the Council's ICT Reserve.

**Legal:** There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

**Risk Management:** Failure to upgrade the network increases the Council's cyber risk as well as increasing the likelihood of service failure.

**Health and Safety:** There are no health and safety issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Sustainability:** There are no sustainability issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

**Community Safety:** There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

**Equality and Diversity:** There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

## APPENDICES

None

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None