

Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of HR, IT & Technical Services

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Wards affected: All

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To: Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21 October 2014

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To: Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 23 October 2014

IT infrastructure

Recommendation

That the committee reviews the contents of this report and provides comments to the relevant cabinet member.

Purpose of Report

1. This report updates the scrutiny committee on progress of the information technology (IT) infrastructure project, providing an opportunity for discussion in advance of final decisions being taken on a number of elements of the procurement.

Background

2. The councils' IT infrastructure is aging and there is a project in progress which will bring the IT systems up to date, offering improved resilience and a better experience for all users, including employees and councillors. The cabinet portfolio holders for IT are members of the project board.
3. Budgets for 2014-15 have included provision of both capital funding for the acquisition of new equipment, and increased revenue funding in order to support the improved systems.

4. Design work was carried out in two phases with external consultancy advice. A high level design was delivered in December 2013, enabling us to make the necessary budget provision, and a more detailed design model was completed in June 2014.
5. We are currently in the process of procuring the major elements of the new IT infrastructure.

Co-location and networks

6. In order to achieve greater resilience and higher availability of systems, we will "co-locate" the IT infrastructure in a purpose-built data centre owned and managed by Surrey County Council (SCC). SCC specifically constructed this data centre with the intention of sharing it with other public sector organisations, and most of the district councils in Surrey have their equipment hosted there. A secondary data centre in another location provides a stand-by in case of disaster at the primary site.
7. The new IT infrastructure will be installed at the Surrey data centres, enabling us to make the transition smoothly once everything is ready. Much of the equipment currently at Crowmarsh Gifford and Abingdon will then be decommissioned, though it will be necessary to move a small number of existing servers to Surrey.
8. As a part of the project we are replacing our existing wide area network which links our various buildings. Individual cabinet member decisions were made in August awarding the new network contract to Vodafone. The agreement with Vodafone is part of a broader contract let by Oxfordshire County Council and in which we can be included.
9. The network upgrade will introduce a higher capacity connection to the Crowmarsh Gifford offices, as well as a stand-by circuit in case of failure of the primary. These measures will offer enhanced resilience and network performance.
10. It is also worth noting that the new network will include the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, enabling us to offer an improved IT service there during elections.
11. We are also upgrading the wireless network provision at council offices including The Beacon and Cornerstone. We will be able to provide not only guest access as now, but also secure wireless access to the council network for those for whom it is appropriate.
12. Co-location and network contracts are for a two year term so that they do not impede the potential outsourcing of the IT service as part of the 2016 corporate services contract.

Servers and desktops

13. At the time of drafting this report, we have received submissions from a number of suppliers. An outline is given here, and a verbal update will be given to the meeting once the evaluation of the submissions has been completed.
14. Eight bids have been received for the provision of new **servers and storage**. Three shortlisted suppliers are to be interviewed on Friday 17 October. The

shortlisted bids range in value from £137,998 to £166,672, including a three year warranty. Following interviews and the discussions at scrutiny committees, we intend to finalise the procurement by means of individual cabinet member decision.

15. Five bids have been received for the provision of a new **virtualised desktop** environment. Two shortlisted suppliers are to be interviewed on Thursday 16 October. The shortlisted bids range in value from £171,059 to £212,496, including a three year warranty. Following interviews and the discussions at scrutiny committees, we intend to finalise the procurement by means of individual cabinet member decision.
16. The combination of new servers and new desktops will bring the users' IT environment up to date. The technical design is intended to minimise single points of failure, with the intention to provide high availability of systems.
17. 11 bids have been received for the provision of a **hosted email** service. At the time of writing these bids have not yet been evaluated fully. Following evaluation and the discussions at scrutiny committees, we intend to finalise the procurement by means of individual cabinet member decision.
18. The use of hosted email will make life easier for both employees and councillors, who will have access to council email wherever they have an available internet connection, using their preferred device (such as conventional computer, tablet or smartphone).
19. The new desktop infrastructure will include a current version of Microsoft Windows (version 7 or above) and the Office 2013 software, and the adoption of a modern mainstream email application should also be seen as a positive step. The updated software applications will make it easier for our employees to exchange documents with partner organisations, and will contribute to a more enjoyable experience of IT.

Financial Implications

20. The capital cost of the items mentioned above will be in the range £400k to £500k, to be shared equally by both councils. These figures are as expected and we do not expect to exceed the overall capital budget of £905k for the IT project.
21. Much of the cost of the hosted email service will be a revenue item, up to around £60k per annum to be shared equally by the two councils. We have made provision for this cost within the current year's base budget.

Legal Implications

22. The procurements described above are being conducted using the government's G-Cloud framework, operated by Crown Commercial Services, in accordance with Contracts Procedure Rules 98 and 99.

Risks

23. Terms and conditions for the procurement of these supplies and services will be those pertaining to the G-Cloud framework, mitigating much of the commercial risk.

24. There are risks to the implementation timetable, for example the delivery time for equipment or the capacity of the suppliers or the councils to carry out the work. We will mitigate these risks as far as possible by continuing to work to a detailed project plan.

25. A broader risk arises that the new infrastructure might fail to deliver the anticipated benefits. This risk is mitigated by a number of factors:

- we have used expert consultants to design the new infrastructure
- our suppliers have all had to go through a pre-qualification process for acceptance on the G-Cloud framework
- we will be using technology which is well established.

Conclusion

26. The new IT infrastructure is to be delivered during the first quarter of 2015. It will offer more resilience and an improved experience for all users. The precise timetable for implementation depends upon suppliers' lead times, and we will make it known as soon as we are able.

27. The committee is invited to review the contents of this report and provide comments to the relevant cabinet member.

Background Papers

- None