

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-023-2011/12
Date of meeting: 12 September 2011



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning & Technology
Subject: ICT Capital Requirements
Responsible Officer: David Newton (01992 564580).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To agree the proposed projects for the financial year 2012/13 and;
- (2) To include £170,000 in the Capital programme for ICT projects for the financial year 2012/13.

Executive Summary:

Historically, ICT were allocated £300,000 per annum (pa) in the Capital programme for the updating and maintenance of the core technical infrastructure. Modernisation of the infrastructure has now been completed. Following the revision of the Capital programme, this allocation has been removed and now all proposed ICT projects will be considered on an annual basis.

Estimated project costs for the following financial year 2012/13 are highlighted below.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The projects detailed below are necessary to maintain the current ICT infrastructure, improve business continuity within the Council and allow staff to fully utilise the benefits available from ICT systems.

Other Options for Action:

- To not approve one or more of the proposed projects, but continued reliability in the ICT infrastructure could suffer and the Council would be vulnerable in the event of a Disaster Recovery (DR) situation.

Report:

Telephony

1. Currently telephony is provided by four Private Automated Branch Exchange (PABX) switches. Although reliable, these ageing switches are expensive to maintain (£12,000pa) and spare parts are becoming increasingly difficult to source.
2. During this financial year, it was intended to introduce a pilot Voice Over Internet

Protocol (VOIP) switch for approximately 20 staff. This technology uses the Local Area Network (LAN) instead of separate telephony cabling. It will reduce both the connection charges to remote sites and the high annual maintenance charge for the switches.

3. Recent concerns regarding telephony were highlighted during the recent DR exercise and have raised the priority of this project. A pilot scheme is no longer considered adequate.

4. Another potential solution has been identified which would not use physical switches but would use the internet connection to provide a Cloud based (out hosted) solution. This appears to offer a superior alternative from a DR perspective, although it may have a higher long term impact on revenue expenditure. This is a relatively new technology and further analysis is on-going.

5. Whichever solution is selected, the budget allocation for the initial pilot project will be insufficient for a more comprehensive implementation.

6. The estimated cost of this work is £40,000.

7. The Voicemail system is also nearing end of life and the current supplier has presented an initial quotation of £19,000 to upgrade. However, it is anticipated that either of the telephony options detailed above, would also incorporate a voicemail system, thus removing this additional cost.

8. Over the last 12 months, over 45% of all calls made by the Council were to mobile phones, which cost £16,000PA. The introduction of a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) Gateway will allow cheaper calls to mobile phones.

9. The integration of Short Message System (SMS texts) into Outlook is also being investigated.

10. The estimated cost of this further work is £5,000.

Disaster Recovery

11. The initial scope of the DR project has changed as this complex project has evolved. The original intention was to only have data stored at a remote site. Therefore, the Capital setup costs within the existing allocated budget will not be sufficient to implement a full 'hot' failover solution. The project can be implemented in stages, starting with the initial scope using the existing allocated budget, but additional funding will be required in the following financial years. A phased approach to implementation is preferable from both a financial and ICT resource perspective.

12. The estimated cost of this work is £80,000.

Email Archiving

13. Email is an essential tool for all staff and is increasingly being used as a filing repository for important messages and document attachments. This has led to capacity and backup issues with the servers concerned. An archiving solution is urgently required to resolve these problems and also to allow staff more self-service options.

14. The estimated cost of this work is £15,000.

Document Management:

15. The next phase of the Information at Work (I@W) project will involve the purchase of additional hardware for the Council Tax section.

16. The estimated cost of this is £30,000.

Resource Implications:

At this early stage it is not possible to calculate exact costings for these projects. However, it seems prudent to allow an amount of £170,000 for the financial year 2012/13. It is likely that revenue savings will be generated by these projects and further reports will be made on individual projects as they progress.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

None.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There is a risk to the Council should the whole Civic Offices site be lost in a major DR incident. The loss of accommodation, at least partial, has been identified as a major concern. In addition, any disruption to the ICT infrastructure will have a significant impact on staff's ability to carry out their duties.

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
None.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.