

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-049-2012/13
Date of meeting: 3 December 2012



Portfolio: Finance & Technology
Subject: Disaster Recovery Update
Responsible Officer: David Newton (01992 564580).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To receive an update on the ICT Disaster Recovery (DR) Project and;**
- (2) To confirm that the telephony project should be given the highest priority.**

Executive Summary:

Information, Communication and Technology (**ICT**) incorporates computer system, data and telephony elements of the Council. Initially the main focus for the Council's ICT Disaster Recovery (DR) Project was to recover core systems and data as quickly as possible following a DR incident. After a DR exercise carried out during 2011/12, the Emergency Planning Team and Risk Management Group suggested revising this focus, as in the event of a DR situation telephony was the most significant unmitigated risk. This resulted in the emphasis of the project being switched to telephony. This revision also coincided with our telephone switch supplier (Siemens) advising that due to the age of our current switch, it would soon become unsupported.

Cabinet agreed on 10 September that the replacement of the telephony system should be the key priority for ICT for 2013/14 and that an additional £210,000 should be included in the Capital Programme for this project. When the Cabinet considered the Capital Programme on 22 October a Member questioned the relative priorities of the projects and asked for a further report.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To confirm priorities within the overall DR Project.

Other Options for Action:

Currently it is planned to complete the work on the telephony system before returning to the enhanced offsite back up provision. Members could prioritise the offsite provision ahead of the telephony system, although this would leave little time for completion of the telephony project before the system became unsupported. Alternatively, both projects could progress at the same time although this would require significant additional revenue and capital resources as the internal ICT team could not take both projects forward simultaneously.

Report:

1. Following the implementation of new technology, such as server virtualisation, recovery time from a DR situation can be substantially reduced. However, it is impossible to create an accurate DR response document without knowing where the DR site will be situated, as any potential location impacts on the planning for internet/WAN connectivity. Recognising this and the essential role of ICT within the Authority, the Councils Emergency Planning Officer, in liaison with the Housing Directorate, identified a secure room at Careline located at Parsonage Court, Loughton, which could be used for ICT DR purposes. It was agreed at Cabinet on 6 June 2011 that this accommodation would become the ICT DR site, removing the foremost obstacle to creating an accurate ICT DR plan. A wireless broadband connection was subsequently implemented to connect this site to the Civic Offices.

2. It is important to remember that the Council has not suffered a significant DR incident since occupying the current site in Epping. Some resilience has been created for data storage by building a second computer suite and locating it at the opposite end of the site to the first computer suite. If a DR incident occurred the Council's key systems could be supported from either suite so it would only be an event that made the entire site unusable that would necessitate the use of an offsite solution and the recovery of data from backups. If such an incident were to occur it would take approximately 40 days to purchase and set up the necessary hardware and software and restore data from the offsite tape backup.

3. As mentioned above, it became necessary to switch priorities from system and data recovery to implementing a Voice Over Internet Protocol (**VOIP**) telephony system. A VOIP solution allows telephone switches to be hosted over numerous sites offering more resilience and facilities in a DR situation. In addition, the existing telephone switch is 30 years old and is due to be de-supported by the supplier in 2017. The imminent de-supporting of the telephone switch and the high importance placed on communication has made the telephony replacement ICT's main priority.

4. The importance and complexity of both elements of this project and the current internal resource level within ICT make it inadvisable to attempt to implement both components simultaneously. It is anticipated that the system and data element of this project will re-commence in 2014/2015, following the implementation of the telephony solution and resolution of the accommodation issue.

Resource Implications:

If the current timescale for the implementation of the proposed system and data DR solution is unacceptable, external resources will be necessary, which will result in increased revenue expenditure. Additional capital resources would also be required as the full requirements for offsite storage are not included in the current Capital Programme.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

Reports to Cabinet on 6 June 2011, 10 September 2012 and 22 October 2012.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There are two key risks to address to enhance resilience. Firstly there is the risk that the telephony system will fail, either as a result of a DR incident or due to its age. Secondly there is a risk that the Council's operations could be disrupted by a DR incident. It has been proposed to prioritise the work on the telephony system as there is currently no mitigation against this risk. The risk of disruption from a DR incident has been largely mitigated by the construction of a second ICT suite at the opposite end of the site to the first ICT suite. However, this risk will not be fully mitigated until an offsite solution has been completed.

It is felt that the DR Project currently has an appropriate balance between risk and resource.

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.