

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-048-2013/14

Date of meeting: 21 Oct 2013



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance & Technology

Subject: ICT Capital Requirements

Responsible Officer: David Newton (01992 564580).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To determine projects to be scheduled for the financial year 2014/15 and;
- (2) That a sum of £373,300 be included in the Capital programme for 2014/15 for the following ICT projects:
 - (a) Replacement of Host servers;
 - (b) Core switch replacement;
 - (c) Air conditioning provision for critical network riser cabinets; and
 - (d) Implementation of other projects identified from the ICT strategy to improve productivity/efficiency, or maintain service.

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. Following the revision of the Capital programme, this allocation has been removed and now all proposed ICT projects are considered on an annual basis.

Estimated project costs for the following financial year 2014/15 are set out 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 the 3 critical projects identified above (i, ii & iii) will impact on the reliability of the ICT infrastructure and could result in damage to expensive network switches along with sustained periods of system unavailability in both the Housing and Environment and Street Scene areas. To not approve (iv) will impact on the ICT strategy implementation and delay

the long term vision of flexible working and improved process.

Report:

Replacement of Host Servers (ICT Strategy – Projects – 11.10)

1. The hosts are the physical servers that hold the virtual servers that power most of our business applications. The hosts have a finite lifetime for support, and when that ends must be replaced to ensure we can get support for such critical devices.
2. The replacement hosts will ensure we have a stable supported environment.
3. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public		X	X						
Council			X			X	X		
Members		X	X						

4. The existing Host Servers are nearly 5 years old. They require replacement in order for us to be able to run and receive continued support for our updated server virtualisation software which runs on them. The replaced hardware will be utilised for both the Disaster Recovery project and improving our daily backup process. The anticipated lifespan for the new servers will be a minimum of 5 years assuming no major variance from the ICT Strategy.

Estimated cost £120,000

Core Switch Replacement (ICT Strategy – Projects – 11.13)

5. The core switches are a key component of our network, which all other parts of the network depend on. These will be unsupported in 2014 and require replacement as failure of the core switch would result in major loss of service.
6. Ensures that our network is properly supported.
7. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public		X	X						
Council			X			X	X		

Members		X	X						
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8. The core network switches have been in place since 1999. The warranty support has expired and HP have ceased support for this device. Whilst these switches have a great deal of resilience built in, we are now reliant on second hand parts should they fail. In addition, a great deal of extra load is being placed on the internal network and the new switches will improve performance. The anticipated lifespan for the new switches will be a minimum of 10 years assuming no major variance from the ICT Strategy.

Estimated cost £90,000

Air conditioning provision for critical network riser cabinets

9. During this summer, network connectivity was lost to areas of Housing and Environment and Street Scene for a considerable period of time, due to network switches overheating and malfunctioning within two riser cupboards. These switches were beyond repair and had to be replaced. Temporary mobile air con units had to be installed to avoid a reoccurrence of this issue. It is therefore essential that a permanent solution is implemented to ensure future reliable connectivity in these areas. Facilities Management have designed a solution and advised of the cost of implementation.

Estimated cost £8,300

Implementation of projects identified from ICT Strategy

- Mobile Working (Phase 1); (ICT Strategy – Projects – 7.12, 6.21, 10:14):

10. This is the rollout, following the completion of the pilot using Windows 8 Tablets and Mobile Briefcase and VPN (Virtual Private Network) connection via 3G/4G mobile phone data network.

11. This project enables mobile working, using offline tools that copy data to the machine, or online links via VPN.

12. At present the Council has 1.5 network devices (thin clients, PCs, laptops) for each ICT user. The aim is that all users will have just one network device each for use in the office or offsite where applicable.

13. This will reduce support costs and licensing costs (software such as MS Office or windows is licensed on a per PC basis, not per user). It will also mean that staff are given the best machine to do their particular role from a range of options.

14. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	Service 24/7 Availability	Service 24/7 Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public	X	X				X	X	X	X
Council	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X

Council	X				X	X	X		
Members									

Estimated cost £5,000

- 64 Bit server licenses for Citrix (ICT Strategy – Projects – 7.19, 11.6):

21. This is the next evolution of PCs and Laptops, moving on from previous 32 Bit machines, 64 bit machines are faster and more powerful, and make better use of memory.

22. The current version of Citrix (the system that powers the thin client/metaframe terminals, and also delivers many applications to PCs) requires upgrade as it will be unsupported in 2013.

23. The new version of citrix will obviously be supported, but also offers major improvements in the way applications are made available, and also in terms of need to re-enter passwords. In addition performance will be improved in graphics intensive applications.

24. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public									
Council			X			X	X		
Members									

Estimated cost £6,000

- Payment Portal (ICT Strategy – Projects – 6.18, 12.4):

25. Adoption of electronic methods of sending bills out (email and SMS (text message) reminders), and rollout of electronic payments (online and automated phone line) to more areas

26. Use of eBilling will save the Council postage and printing costs. Electronic payments (for example for Sundry Debtors) will streamline the payment process for us, and make it easier for residents to pay bills

27. This new system for online payments, will add capability of taking payments for more online services, and eventually replace the current online payments system

28. This means we can make online forms that link to a payment process, which links in seamlessly, The system allows more control for EFDC, which means new payment types can be created quickly without involvement from the supplier. The system also has lower ongoing costs than the current system

29. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public	X	X						X	
Council	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Members	X	X						X	

Estimated cost £10,000

- Information@work rollout (ICT Strategy – Projects – 6.17):

30. 60 new workstations and 24" screens, additional high performance scanner, additional standard scanner

31. Continued corporate rollout of I@W (Information@Work) ERDMS (Electronic Records and Document Management System) and related scanning hardware, and also implementation of system enhancements

32. Enhancements to the system would give benefits in terms of records management, sharing across directorates, and most importantly use of automated workflow and case management to improve efficiency

33. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public	X	X	X			X		X	
Council	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Members	X	X	X			X		X	X

Estimated cost £25,000

- eForms back office integration (ICT Strategy – Projects – 6.20, 8.7):

34. Online forms can be linked to back office systems, so data can be directly inputted from a form into the system, this would need third party components to implement beyond the forms package and relevant systems, or in some cases make use of web services provided by the software vendors.

35. This would offer massive time and efficiency savings, for both staff and public use. For staff the forms can be designed to streamline entry of routine data, for the public queries/applications (etc.) can be inputted directly into the back office system by the member of the public in a simple secure way

36. Create system to allow online forms to directly link to and add data to back office systems. This would streamline process by removing the need to re-enter data entered on a form by automating the process

37. This may require use of a third party tool, or web services provided by our software vendors (or a mixture of both).

38. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public	X	X						X	
Council	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Members	X	X						X	

Estimated cost £50,000

- Remote Site Wireless (ICT Strategy – Projects – 7.18):

39. Provision of wireless on remote sites, potentially for corporate network access or general internet access for staff and the public. This extends the wireless system being installed at the Civic Office complex.

40. This will give the ability for staff to work in any EFDC office using their laptop, for example attending meetings or hot desking. Allows use of personal devices in a secure fashion as they do not touch our corporate network.

41. Assessed benefits:

	Customer Service	24/7 Service Availability	24/7 Service Resilience	Retain Low Council Tax and use finances efficiently				Improved communication	Enable flexible/remote working
				Reduced procurement costs	Reduced ongoing costs	Improved process	Improved Staff productivity		
Public	X							X	
Council	X					X	X	X	X
Members	X							X	X

Estimated cost £5,000

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 £373,300 for the financial year 2014/15. In addition to this amount, the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel have requested that ICT approach all Members to ascertain whether they feel they would benefit from additional solutions to improve Member connectivity to ICT systems, such as email etc. If a positive response is received, an additional sum of £27,000 would be required. An amount of £230,000 for Capital projects was agreed for the previous financial year. 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