

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Date: **16th July 2020**

Title: **ICT Update**

Portfolio Area: **Support Services – Councillor N Hopwood**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Mike Ward** Role: **Head of IT Practice**

Contact: **email: mike.ward@swdevon.gov.uk 01803 861310**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes the continuous improvement and evolution of the Council’s IT platform to meet the needs of its ambitious and successful service delivery model.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report is an overview of work completed in the IT Community of Practice during the previous twelve months as part of a continuous programme of work designed to further improve the security, resilience, availability and capability of the Council’s IT service. It also highlights improvements in the pipeline to be implemented over the year ahead.

2. Background

- 2.1 The IT Practice is responsible for delivery and support of
 - 2.1.1 All network infrastructure spanning two principle locations and approximately 160 servers.
 - 2.1.2 Exchange email, Skype for business, Telephony.
 - 2.1.3 Security hardware, firewalls, anti-virus, anti-malware and web filtering.
 - 2.1.4 Office applications including Civica Workflow360, Planning and Environmental Health, Civica Financials, Northgate Revenues and Benefits.
 - 2.1.5 Approximately 400 client devices such as laptops, Surface Go's and iPads.
 - 2.1.6 Secure remote access to services.

3 Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The previous IT resilience report presented to the Overview and & Scrutiny panel on 11th July 2019 referenced the following work was underway which is now complete:-
 - 3.1.1 Extending the resilience of Pulse by purchasing an additional remote access appliance, in addition we have purchased extra concurrent connection licenses to reduce the possibility of contention over connections to nil (item 3.5 in the report dated 11th July 2019).
 - 3.1.2 The installation of a new network storage device (item 3.11).
 - 3.1.3 The upgrading of the Exchange (email server) architecture (item 3.12).
 - 3.1.4 The Microsoft Office 365 programme has resumed with the commissioning of a Microsoft Teams Pilot commencing July 2020 (item 3.6).

- 3.2 **Future IT Programme.** Councillors will be aware that implementation of the Future IT programme is underway. The solutions implemented in the Future IT programme are the result of many months of assessment and comparison of the market coupled with engagement with officers, a Member lead working party and Members. The purpose of this work is to replace the existing Civica platform with modern solutions which will enable the Council to deliver services more effectively and efficiently. The project status is green at the time of writing and members of the IT Practice are working on extracting data from the current systems then mapping and migrating it to the new ones. This is a huge undertaking given the complexity of the systems and volumes of documents and data to migrate. We also are currently implementing the new Netcall Lo-code platform. The system has already demonstrated its speed and flexibility and by bringing forward the go-live date of one

area of the solution we were able to rapidly deploy a Discretionary Business Grant application and payment solution in response to the Covid-19 lockdown. There is still much work to do building processes and configuring integrations before we fully release a live system. This month will also see the installation of the new servers for the Northgate Assure platform for Planning and Environmental Health, and the installation of the Information@Work document management software.

3.3 Other Progress to Date

3.3.1 A solution which enables residents, businesses and landlords to "self-serve" requests in the Revenues and Benefits system was implemented this year. Known as Citizen Access this system was also enable us to implement "e-billing" to residents next year. Later this year we will be implementing a similar solution for discretionary housing payments.

3.3.2 Web Accessibility Improvements. 23rd September 2020 will see the start of enforcement of web accessibility standards which came into force for public sector bodies on 23rd September 2018. This means we are required to meet the WCAG 2.1 AA standard. Currently there are a considerable number of non-compliance issues to be addressed and in order to help officers identify and resolve issues on our website, the IT Practice has implemented a solution called Silktide which scans all of the pages of our web site and summarises where areas need improvement and how the issue should be addressed. It also checks the web site for grammar and spelling issues and will help greatly to improve the quality and compliance of our website. We have also implemented a product called "ReciteMe" on our website which offers language translation and audio reciting of web page content.

3.3.3 An additional server for disaster recovery has been commissioned at Kilworthy Park enabling us to better implement the IT business continuity plan. In the event of loss of systems access at Follaton House, we are able to quickly provision the priority systems at Kilworthy Park and minimise any impact on Council services.

3.4 Covid-19

3.4.1 Whilst supporting remote working is already an established solution, Covid-19 brought about a large increase in the number of concurrent remote connections while officers are working from home. Our infrastructure including Pulse VPN, internet links

and server capacity enabled us to smoothly meet the demands of regularly maintaining 300+ secure concurrent remote connections.

3.4.2 In order to accommodate working efficiently and safely over a prolonged period of working from home, where requested, officers and members have been issued with additional screens, keyboards and mice. Office chairs are also available on request.

3.4.3 Remote Council Meetings including full council have been successfully held. The Councils Skype platform has supported the requirements of the meetings, including video, instant messaging, lobby admission and telephone dial-in in a secure environment. Our well established infrastructure, choice of Surface Go devices for all members and "in meeting" officer assistance, enabled us to become one of the first councils in the country to hold full council meetings remotely.

3.5 **Teams Pilot Commencing July 2020** - Microsoft Teams ("Teams") is a replacement and upgrade to Skype for Business which Microsoft intend to eventually phase out. It is being commonly adopted by many of the Councils external partners and moving to Teams will provide improved interoperability with external organisations in addition to the following business benefits internally. As well as voice, telephony and instant messaging, Teams Improves collaboration by providing a single location for project notes, documents, team members, messages, and meeting events. Teams provides additional security and control for external participants to join meetings and enables participation to a wider audience who may not have the Teams application installed. Following a successful pilot it is intended to begin the rollout of Teams in September 2020.

3.6 Office365 – Following the rollout of Teams, we will begin the implementation of Office365. Microsoft Office365 is a collection of cloud hosted subscription services delivering Office applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams and a raft of other services including applications such as OneDrive (file storage), SharePoint (Intranet), Planner (team and task management) and services such as Threat Protection (Antivirus), Information Governance (Protective Marking), Intune (Device Management, deployment and configuration). Office365 will provide much improved collaboration capability which will further enhance the Council's effectiveness as we move to a more remote oriented workstyle.

3.7 Current Performance

3.7.1 The Appendix B shows a selection of server uptime statistics for main business systems. Server uptime is generally excellent

4 Options available and consideration of risk.

- 4.1 The IT Practice has seen two established members of the team retire recently. Full knowledge transfer to new and existing members and successful recruitment planning has eliminated any noticeable impact on the service.
- 4.2 Where risks are identified, they will be entered in the IT and corporate risk registers for consideration.

5 Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 To continue implementing the programme of improvements outlined above.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council is required to reach specified standards in order to be compliant with General Data Protection Regulations. Public Sector Networks Code of Connection (PSN)
Financial	N	Future IT Contract award report
Risk	N	Service availability, data integrity
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	Web site improvements and compliance.
Safeguarding	N	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	Working from home hardware assistance
Other implications	N	None

Supporting Information

Future IT contract award.

<http://mg.swdevon.lan/documents/s24025/Future%20IT%20Platform%20Contract%20Award.pdf>

ICT resilience update 11th July 2019.

<http://mg.swdevon.lan/documents/s22462/ICT%20resilience%2011.07.19.pdf>

Approval and clearance of report**Appendices:**

A: IT Security (exempt); and

B: Server Uptime Statistics