

SUBJECT	<i>Crematorium Telecommunications Link Update</i>
REPORT OF	<i>Councillor Mike Smith</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Steve Bambrick – Director of Services</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Frances Phillips – ICT Infrastructure Manager</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>None specific</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the IT service provided to Chilterns Crematorium and to propose recommendations to improve the use and resilience of the IT systems at both Chilterns and Berton crematoria in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To note the actions that have been taken and that remain underway to resolve the recent connectivity issues at Amersham Crematorium; and**
2. **To agree to the installation of a fibre telecommunication link at the new Berton Crematorium. As this is a new site build BT Openreach would need to perform a site survey and depending on what infrastructure is needed there the estimated costs are between £4.5k to £6.5k plus an annual rental charge of £3625.**

2. Reasons for Recommendations

To further improve resilience at the Chilterns Crematorium and the new Berton Crematorium and to help Crematorium staff make the best use of their IT assets.

3. Background

- 3.1. Business Support, formerly Chiltern ICT, have provided IT support to the Chilterns Crematorium for many years. This support currently excludes telephony. At first support was for the Crematorium's standalone network but for the last 13 years Chiltern Crematorium has been directly connected to the corporate network located at King George V House.
- 3.2. The Chilterns Crematorium is in a rural setting so is not in the vicinity of the latest telecommunications infrastructure and can be prone to power cuts.
- 3.3. In 2017 Business Support procured a new telecommunications contract with a local company, MLL. As part of the new contract all sites, including the Chilterns Crematorium needed to migrate to new infrastructure provided by MLL. Migrations like this will always carry risks and can be problematic.

- 3.4. There were 4 unsuccessful attempts to migrate the Chilterns Crematorium over to MLL infrastructure during December 2017 and January 2018 which resulted in some disruption to service before they were successfully migrated on 31.01.18.
- 3.5. Following on from the migration, Crematorium staff started to report a higher level than normal of intermittent system issues. In the main these were for short periods of time but unfortunately there were 4 occasions when the systems were down for a whole working day.
- 3.6. It should be noted that throughout the period of disruption there were fall back options available to the Crematorium staff:
- a. As all their systems are served from King George V House, they have the ability to work in the offices there or Capswood.
 - b. As part of a corporate contract with O2 a separate WiFi network has been installed by Business Support. The Crematorium staff were issued with a laptop that could remotely log into the Crematorium's systems via the WiFi. Occasionally Infrastructure staff printed reports and delivered them to the Crematorium.
- 3.7. All current IT issues were resolved in July 2018.

4. Root Cause of IT Issues

- 4.1 The difficulty in troubleshooting the disruption to the Chilterns Crematorium IT service was due to several contributory causes with some exhibiting similar faults.
- 4.2 Migration Issues: Many of the problems experienced during the migration attempts to move the Chilterns Crematorium onto the new MLL infrastructure were caused by the inability of the previous telecoms contractor to provide accurate and timely information on the configuration of the previous communication lines and devices connecting the Chilterns Crematorium to the corporate network.
- 4.3 Power Cuts: during this period there have been power cuts. Cutting the power to any IT device can cause it to behave unpredictably.
- 4.4 System Faults: The Chilterns Crematorium uses the Gower Epilog system for its core application. The majority of calls logged during the period of disruption were due to Epilog's unavailability even though all other IT systems were accessible. It was discovered there were two faults impacting availability of Epilog:
- a. There were configuration issues going back to the setup of the system which Gower rectified.
 - b. Epilog is based on a Microsoft SQL database which can be sensitive to communication delays caused by problems with telecommunication lines.

4.5 Communication Lines: It was determined that the main cause of the problem was the copper telecommunication line feeding into the Chilterns Crematorium. Not only was its capacity being fully utilised but MLL and BT also suspected the line material had degraded.

5. Resolution

- 5.1 While a resolution for the problems was investigated a Wi-Fi enabled laptop was provided to allow staff to access all their IT systems including Epilog. This is how other CDC and SBDC staff access the corporate network when working remotely. Crematorium staff were also offered the choice of working from the Amersham or Capswood offices using hot desks that are provided at these locations.
- 5.2 A fibre telecommunications link has been installed into the Crematorium. Fibre is a more robust and reliable technology so will provide a more stable link. Additionally, the new line doubles the capacity for IT traffic. This will open up more options for the Chilterns Crematorium such as Skype for Business. In recognition of the inconvenience suffered by the Crematorium staff, MLL have refunded all the rental cost of £252 for the original FTTP copper line, the install cost of £836 for the new FTTC fibre line and offered 10% discount off the annual rental cost for the new line which totals £1105 in recognition of the poor level of service the crematorium has received since the migration to them. This credit totals £2193.
- 5.3 Since the configuration amendments to the Gower Epilog system and the installation of the fibre link the IT services to the Chilterns Crematorium have been stable. There has been one instance where a member of staff pulled a cable out of the new fibre router and another caused by a power cut but these do not fall within the scope of the service provided by Business Support.
- 5.4 Crematorium staff will now review their business processes and plan how best to use the IT solutions Business Support can offer them going forward to improve operational efficiency and resilience.
- 5.5 An uninterruptible power source (UPS) will be purchased and installed at the Chilterns Crematorium to provide emergency battery power to the communications infrastructure during any unexpected power loss.

6. Recommendations

The installation of a fibre telecommunication link at the new Berton Crematorium. As this is a new site build BT Openreach would need to perform a site survey and depending on what infrastructure is required, the estimated costs are between £4.5k to £6.5k and an annual rental charge of £3625. The new fibre link will further improve resilience as the Berton site will then become another location from which the

business can operate.

7. Links to Council Policy Objectives

This report links to the Council Objectives by optimising the effective use of Council resources.

Key objectives available here:

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Aims-and-Objectives>

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/aims-and-objectives>

8. Next Steps

If recommendations are approved:

1. Instruct MLL to install the fibre telecommunication link at the Bierton Crematorium.
2. Business Support will organise a workshop with Crematorium staff to facilitate the review of their business processes.

Background Papers:	None
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