



Report to Deputy Leader (Resources portfolio)

Date: 7 August 2020

Reference number: R01.20

Title: Buckinghamshire IT Network Proposal

Relevant councillor(s): Katrina Wood

Author and/or contact officer: Tony Ellis and Prod Sarigianis

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Recommendations:

- 1) Award contract for the implementation of the new Buckinghamshire IT network.**
- 2) Agree to borrow to fund the additional capital costs required based on the favourable business case.**

Reason for decision: Implement a new Buckinghamshire IT Network to improve resilience and performance of the IT infrastructure for the Council and facilitate the post-covid-19 transformation programme for the new Unitary Council. The support of the new network will be transferred to the in-house IT support team, and the Council will gain in terms of support quality and agility as well as a reduction of ongoing revenue costs. The new network will provide staff the ability to work seamlessly and securely from any location, be it council offices, home or anywhere with a mobile phone signal. This new network will also cover Buckinghamshire Health Trust. In addition, it provides the opportunity to provide network and IT services to other key partners and external organisations in the future.


Executive summary

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council's infrastructure currently consists of 4 separate IT networks, under separate contracts. All these contracts are coming to an end; the majority of the equipment is coming to end of life and cannot be supported going forward, while there is a clear need for a single network to better service the needs of the new Council. The recent increase in home working has also highlighted the limitations of our existing infrastructure and the need for additional capacity.
- 1.2 Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust is in a similar situation, having had to confront the same capacity challenges in the response to Covid-19 and requiring a complete refresh of their infrastructure due to its age.
- 1.3 Following discussion at the Buckinghamshire County Council Technology and Digital Board in 2019, and agreement with the Unitary ICT Workstream and the Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust, a tender was issued for a new Buckinghamshire IT Network in December 2019 under Crown Commercial Services Framework RM 3808.
- 1.4 A total of 4 suppliers submitted a proposal for the new network, and the proposals were reviewed by a panel of IT staff from the County Council, District Councils and the Health Trust, as well as our security partner Hytec. The panel attended presentations by all 4 suppliers and had the opportunity to ask questions and get clarifications on all the responses and completed their evaluation in May 2020.
- 1.5 The proposed Buckinghamshire IT Network will initially provide a secure, resilient and high-performance platform for the Unitary Council and its health partners, but it can be easily extended to provide services to additional public sector bodies in Buckinghamshire and beyond.
- 1.6 The new network will provide the Council and its partners with a modern platform that allows staff to work seamlessly from any location or device, be it in the office or a public building, at home or on the road, removing legacy limitations like performance degradation when number of home workers increases. Bringing support of the network in-house will address the quality and agility issues we have historically experienced with a managed service and achieve revenue savings.


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- 1.7 Buckinghamshire County Council entered a contract with Udata, now part of Capita, in 2014 for the provision of its network for a period of 5+2 years. The contract originally included wide area network connectivity for the council and schools, local area networking for the council, internet access and security, and telephony.

- 1.8 At the end of the 5-year period in September 2019 it was decided that a managed service contract was not serving the needs of the organisation; the reliance on a third party limited our agility in implementing changes. Bringing the service back in house would mean not only taking control of our infrastructure but would also achieve financial savings.
- 1.9 In the first instance local area networking, telephony and internet security were taken out of the contract, for these areas to be supported by the County's in-house IT team. This resulted on funding being made available for 3 FTEs for the team to provide network support, as well as additional revenue savings.
- 1.10 Wide area networking for the council and schools were extended for the remaining 2 years allowed in the contract, with the option of terminating earlier on a 3-months' notice, as there was a need to procure a new contract for the supply of the data circuits that connect all our sites to the network.
- 1.11 Aylesbury Vale District Council had a contract with MLL, providing all wide area, local area and internet networking services. The contract was recently extended to April 2021 and has an option for a final one-year extension after that.
- 1.12 Chiltern & South Bucks Council also had a contract with MLL. The contract ends in July 2020 but has the option for two one-year extensions.
- 1.13 Wycombe District Council network was supported by Capita up to the end of last year, when support for the local area network was transferred to the County's in-house ICT team. A separate contract for internet provision is in place with Exponential-e that comes to and end in August 2021.
- 1.14 The Buckinghamshire Council network currently consists of the 4 disparate networks mentioned above. As part of the preparations for vesting day arrangements were made to link them together to allow staff access to specific applications, primarily SAP. However, the current configuration makes changes to share additional applications complicated and expensive – the new council clearly needs a single network to facilitate its transformation into a single organisation.
- 1.15 The majority of the equipment that makes up the 4 networks is coming to its end of life and will no longer be supported by manufacturers, requiring a significant capital investment to replace.
- 1.16 Technological developments since the 4 networks were implemented mean that we have the opportunity to build a new modern network for Buckinghamshire to provide additional performance and capacity, improve resilience and availability, and increase security.

- 1.17 The new network will be designed on the principle that any member of staff should be able to connect seamlessly from any device, desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone, connected through our office cabling or wireless, or public Wi-Fi, or 4G/5G, and be able to experience the same quality service in a secure manner. Our staff could equally all be in the office or all at home without affecting the performance of our infrastructure as recently experienced.
- 1.18 The new network will be easier to support by our in-house IT staff, giving them the tools to support it efficiently and effectively. This will achieve our goal of moving away from the limitations of a managed service, facilitating more agile changes and enabling us to better support the council's transformation.
- 1.19 Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust is in a similar position of operating an ageing network, with inadequate capacity and equipment having reached end-of-life.
- 1.20 There are a number of benefits in procuring and implementing a new network in partnership with the trust, including
- Putting together a requirement for servicing a network for in excess of 13,000 staff not only gives us economies of scale, but also makes the opportunity more attractive to suppliers, both in terms of income potential but also as a high-profile reference/case study opportunity.
 - Having a single public sector network in Buckinghamshire can facilitate easier collaboration and data sharing across organisations in a secure manner, for example we could easily enable Adult Social Care staff access NHS systems and vice versa.
 - Sharing a network means we can build additional resilience and capacity in the infrastructure while at the same time we both save on implementation and running costs.
 - Building a public sector network across Buckinghamshire gives us the opportunity to offer connectivity services to other public sector bodies at a competitive cost, at the same time raising income for both our organisations.
 - Sharing the same technologies can help us achieve savings in operational costs around the ongoing maintenance and management of the network and gain resilience across our IT support teams, while at the same time we have the flexibility with a modern network implementation to simply manage our own parts separately.
- 1.21 Following discussion at the Buckinghamshire County Council Technology & Digital Board in 2019, and agreement with the Unitary ICT Workstream and the
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Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust, a tender was issued for a new Buckinghamshire IT Network in December 2019 under Crown Commercial Services Framework RM 3808.

- 1.22 The new network is to provide connectivity to the Council and Health Trust in the first instance, as well as approximately 100 schools currently being served by the Council's network. The scope included the CCG among with 74 GP surgeries, and specified that the solution needs to be easily scalable to provide services to other public sector organisations within Buckinghamshire and beyond. The contract is to be for 5 years, with an option to extend for 2 further years.
 - 1.23 The tender specification was approved by a panel consisting of IT staff from the county, districts, and health trust, as well as a representative from Hytec, the security consultants that advise us on cyber-security.
 - 1.24 A total of 4 suppliers submitted a proposal for the new network, BT, Capita, Logicalis and Udata (Capita). The proposals were reviewed by the joint panel, who also attended presentations by all 4 suppliers and had the opportunity to ask questions and get clarifications on all proposals.
 - 1.25 The council's and trust's responses to Covid-19 led to most member of the panel being unavailable to complete the evaluation in the timescales originally planned. The panel finally met and completed their evaluation in May 2020. Although this delayed the project and introduced additional pressures in completing the implementation in time for the end of existing contracts, it does have the advantage that it allows us to inform our final designs with the lessons learnt from Covid-19.
 - 1.26 The final scores agreed during the panel's moderation meeting and the recommended supplier are shown in the Appendix of this report.
 - 1.27 It is worth noting that all four proposed solutions were based on near-identical technologies, with the hardware components and most of the software being practically identical. The differences in their scores arose primarily around their approach in delivering data connectivity to different locations, their implementation proposals and experience/references. The selected proposal was considered the right solution by both Council and Health IT staff on the panel, as well as our external security consultant from Hytec.
 - 1.28 The implementation of a single network in partnership with the Trust means that we need to agree the principles around how we will work together, including things like funding arrangements, support arrangements, governance, change management, income sharing, exit arrangements. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is being drafted with support from legal services and input from both Council and Trust IT staff, to be agreed by the Corporate Director of Resources once completed.
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- 1.29 Note that the health trust is also going through their governance arrangements at the same time to gain approval for the project.

Other options considered

- 1.30 Do nothing: with all existing contracts coming to an end, and equipment coming to end of life, we had no option other than procuring a new contract to deliver a network for the Council.
- 1.31 Procure a network for the Council only: this would mean increased costs, and loss of all the benefits outlined in 1.20.

Legal and financial implications

- 1.32 Financial implications can be found in the Appendix of this report.
- 1.33 A Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust is currently being drafted by Legal Services for agreement by the Corporate Director of Resources.

Corporate implications

- 1.34 Our tender specification was based on our office estate and connected schools at the time the tender was issued. This is going to be reviewed at the early stages of engagement with the vendor to ensure that any changes are taken into account. Engagement with Property Services will ensure that we understand the Council's plans going forward, so that we do not invest on sites no longer required.

Consultation and communication

- 1.35 None.

Next steps and review

Once the contract award is confirmed, as well as going through the governance arrangements at the Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust, we will be engaging with the vendor to review requirements and draft implementation plan, as well as start liaising with incumbents around exit arrangements.



Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

