

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th September 2012

Report of: Head of Business Improvement

Title of Report: ADOPTION OF A CORPORATE TELEPHONY STRATEGY

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To propose the adoption of a corporate Telephony Strategy for the next three years.

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner

Policy Framework: An efficient and effective Council

Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board:

1. Approve the proposed corporate Telephony Strategy and Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 and to note the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 2.

Appendix 1 - Telephony Strategy 2012 to 2015

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details of how the Council proposes to take forward and embrace new technology through adopting a corporate approach to managing its telecommunications. The report includes a detailed action plan and timetable for implementing the recommendations.

Implementation of the action plan will deliver a telecommunications solution that is both future proof and provides the Council with flexibility in the way that this service is delivered to best meet the needs of the Council and residents.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's telephony systems deliver services to over 1300 telephone extensions across to seventy Council sites.
- 2.2 The Council does not currently have a Telephony Strategy in place.
- 2.3 Prior to April 2011 the management of telephony was devolved to individual services based at each office location. This resulted in no corporate overview of telephony or the ability to step back and look cohesively at new technical solutions as they came on stream. The creation of the new ICT service has enabled the potential for managing and developing telecommunications corporately and the development of this strategy.

The draft Strategy recognises the importance of providing excellent customer contact through telephony as one of the Council's key priorities and the fact that key parts of the current infrastructure will not be supported by the manufacturer beyond 2015.

- 2.4 The Strategy also explains how the Council can maximise the benefits that are available through better utilisation of the existing Voice Over Internet Protocol, known as VOIP, telephony platform, mobile technology and a managed move to the use of soft phones for office based staff to reduce our call handling costs. A road map of the actions that need to be undertaken to reduce out dated line rental arrangements over the next three years is also included.

3. Approach

- 3.1 The draft Telephony Strategy has been developed around the following principles:
 - A modern telephony service which enables and enhances the Council's ability to provide efficient, effective and appropriate services to its customers.
 - A service which provides the same features, functions and facilities to all its users through a range of integrated telephony options that create the flexibility for effective service delivery irrespective of their location.

- A service which supports and enables seamless flexible working whereby a remote/mobile user has access to exactly the same services as they would in the office.
- A service which enables collaboration quickly and easily (e.g. the ability to carry out a free conference call to a specialist colleague if necessary to resolve a customer query to the Contact Centre).
- A service which will be able to provide text based communications (such as instant messages) and video enabled communications.
- The capability to reduce both the number of fixed service lines and desk handsets leading to future savings.
- The strategy supports the Council's commitment to improving customer contact.

3.2 This approach will enable the Council to achieve:

- Further development of flexible and mobile working.
- Integration of mobile telephones with the main telephony system for easier contact and operation.
- Integration of voicemail and email allowing users to receive notification of voicemails through different methods.
- The provision of a business class telephony service. Telephony is a critical component of the Council's communications and interactions with residents. Responsibility for voice services will rest with the ICT unit, providing appropriately skilled resources and a broader market knowledge to inform future development.
- Migration of users to VOIP where required and decommissioning of the remaining analogue based telephony platform.
- Removal of redundant telephony lines between sites
- Rationalisation of current inter-site connectivity.
- Instant Messaging and Presence through the implementation of Microsoft Lync.
- Video conferencing, reducing the need to travel to meetings reducing the Council's carbon footprint and travel costs.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Subject to approval of the draft Telephony Strategy attached at Appendix 1, the Head of Business Improvement and Technology will arrange to:

- Implement the recommended improvements arising from the telephony service audit.
- Review the data network with the County Council to identify where any enhancements may be required to carry voice services.
- Consider a move to a unified extension numbering scheme or conduct a discovery exercise to produce a full inventory of the current numbering scheme to confirm capacity of numbers.
- Develop and agree a migration strategy and schedule with the appointed service users and supplier.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The Council is fortunate in that it has already made the investment to put in place a high quality VOIP platform. This means that the strategy can be most effectively built on what is already in place. While many of the activities in the strategy do not require additional funding to complete there will be an initial cost of approximately £10k to facilitate exploiting new technology to support flexible working. The service has a capital budget to fund this.

5.2 To enable the main improvements outlined in the Strategy to be delivered an initial investment of £50,000 will be required as outlined in the report. This will be subject to an invest to save capital bid as part of the annual Medium Term Financial Strategy review. This investment will result in longer term savings from reduced fixed line rental and call charges.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications in relation to the implementation of the Strategy. Any new procurement activity will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules and the EU Procurement Regulations 2006.

7. Risk Management

A risk register is attached to this report.

8. Climate Change/Environmental Impact

- 8.1 The proposals within the strategy will aid mobile and flexible working, reduce the need for travel and so support the Council in lowering its carbon footprint.

9. Equalities Impact

- 9.1 The implementation of this strategy will facilitate an increase in the capability for staff to work flexibly away from the office and assist the Council in being able to offer employment opportunities to a more diverse workforce.
- 9.2 This strategy offers the option of a wider range of telephone contact options for customers including self service which should improve customer satisfaction.
- 9.3 An equalities impact assessment is provided at Appendix 2

Name and contact details of author:-

Name: Jane Lubbock

Job title: Head of Business Improvement and Technology,
Business Improvement and Technology

Tel: 01865 252218

e-mail: jlubbock@oxford.gov.uk

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