

THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2015

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR OPERATIONS AND ASSETS**PLANNED UPGRADE TO CORPORATE SERVER INFRASTRUCTURE****PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the current situation following withdrawal of Microsoft support for software versions in use at Tamworth Borough Council. Additionally, the report seeks approval of the release of contingencies to support this essential activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet approve the release of £35k from the Specific Contingency budget to support vendor demand during this essential server upgrade.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

(a) Do Nothing

This is not a viable option. If the organisation's servers are not upgraded as per Microsoft licencing rules, the servers will quickly become vulnerable and open to external attack. Additionally, as part of the organisation's commitment to the Public Services network (PSN), server patches and fixes are part of essential maintenance

(b) Upgrade Without Supplier Support

This is not a viable option. Whilst the upgrade of the server operating systems will be completed internally, many of the application suppliers have refused to grant appropriate access to the team for re-installation of their products. Some have granted access but no support and have stated that their post-upgrade support costs will be significantly higher than consultancy for performing the re-install in the first instance.

(c) Engage With Suppliers To Perform Re-Install

This is the preferred option. Quotes have been sought from suppliers of all of the organisation's corporate applications affected by the withdrawal of Microsoft support for the provision of installation services. As much groundwork as possible will be completed in-house, including the building and preparation of servers running newer operating systems. The suppliers will then access remotely and perform the re-installation of their respective products.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

In order to support the re-installation of all windows based applications by vendor, a total sum of £35k is required from the Specific Contingency budget. This will cover the re-installation and support where required, of all third party applications following the upgrade of server operating systems. The release of £35k will leave £65k remaining within the Specific Contingency budget to the end of March 2016.

Additional internal resource is required for server build, configuration and preparation. This is planned as part of operational activity.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

Subject to ongoing commitments to licensing governance, there are no legal nor risk issues to report.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Subject to ongoing commitments to licensing governance, there are no sustainability issues to report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past twelve months, Microsoft has announced the withdrawal of support across much of its product base. This includes operating systems and desktop applications. Historically, this has been staggered and the organisation has managed the impact as part of its ongoing ICT Strategy. The cumulative impact of these announcements has led to a significant change in the way the Authority exploits its software assets and the ICT Service are currently planning for a roll out of new versions of Office and Exchange.

Whilst the service has also planned for Windows Server upgrades, and has procured the appropriate licences to allow these upgrades to be performed in-house, the vendors of a number of our third party corporate applications have added challenges to this plan. By restricting our access to their applications, the organisation is reliant on them to perform re-installations of their applications onto the newly upgraded servers. Additionally, whilst some are not restricting access, they are refusing to support re-installations performed by their customers. This does not apply to all vendors, however it does include a number of business critical applications including Academy (Benefits and Council Tax), Orchard (Housing) and Civica (Corporate Electronic Document and Records Management System - EDRMS)

The upgrade to our Windows Server operating systems is critical in order for us to retain access to the PSN. One of the requirements of this access is that our servers are updated and patched effectively so as to eliminate vulnerabilities in our applications. If we continue to use out of date operating systems, there are no patches developed nor available. Additionally, we have experienced a number of issues relating to performance of one of our corporate applications and, following significant performance monitoring activity, our vendor has advised that we need to upgrade before they will pursue those findings further. This is having an operational impact on a number of our service areas.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

None