

Thursday, 11 November 2021

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Services

Replacement Backup System

Exempt Information

N/A

Purpose

To request that members approve the following for replacement of our current network backup system –

- Release of £15,000 from capital contingency to part fund the replacement of our current backup system.

To advise members of the following -

- The re-purposing of existing capital scheme for Mobile Phones of £20,000, no longer required to fund the Mobile Phone contract, to part fund the replacement of our current backup system.
- The addition of a new scheme to the capital programme - Replacement Backup System with a total capital budget of £51k, funded by the two elements above and a contribution from existing ICT capital budgets.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members approve the release of £15,000 from the General Fund capital contingency budget to part fund the replacement Backup System.

Executive Summary

The network backup system is a critical part of the Authority's ICT infrastructure, supporting business continuity plans for the Council's ICT systems from a simple file or system recovery to a complete disaster recovery scenario. The current system has been in place for some years and runs on legacy hardware infrastructure approaching manufacturer end of life. The current system has been value for money and technically reliable to date, sweating hardware assets beyond their expected life but lacks the ability to backup cloud-based data and services.

In line with the recent approval of the 5-year ICT Strategy, the ICT Service is preparing for the adoption of more cloud-based services to further leverage existing Microsoft agreements and benefit from the flexibility and demand driven model Cloud offers. To pave the way for cloud adoption, it is essential we have a robust and Cloud enabled backup system to ensure our information is secured for both on premise and Cloud based data.

Over the past 6 months, the ICT service has carried out a thorough market appraisal of backup systems that fit a basic set of requirements and are in line with our ICT Strategy. The outcome of this appraisal was a further deep dive into two different solutions from Rubrik and

Arcserve. Following extensive engagement with both vendors, associated resellers as well as existing customers of both, Arcserve has been found as best fit for our strategy. We already use the non-cloud Arcserve product so are confident using the system, it will result in reduced implementation time and require less resource from the team allowing us to focus on delivering other projects rather than the learning curve of a new system.

Arcserve sets the pricing, they have a preferred partner for this opportunity in CoolSpirit who have preferential pricing, offering us the best value. We have negotiated a significant discount to the retail pricing and have licensing for Azure backup (Microsoft's Cloud Services) included free in preparation for our cloud adoption strategy. This offer is unique to the proposal from CoolSpirit and would otherwise cost £32,300 over the 3-year contract which further supports the waiver to financial guidelines based on best value for the organisation.

The Council is now relying even more on fit for purpose, future proof, reliable and value for money ICT infrastructure. Cloud enabled backup is an integral part of our technology infrastructure, delivery of the ICT Strategy and the associated outcomes for our citizens.

Options Considered

A market wide appraisal was carried out with a more detailed review of two vendors aligned with our requirements. Following a deep dive into the two solutions with both the software vendors, associated resellers and existing customers, the outcome based on best fit, current position of the ICT Service, resource availability, current knowledge/experience of the team and commercials was a decision on Arcserve as the preferred system.

As a comparison, Rubrik solution costs would be £70,500 over 3 years with uncertainty over cloud storage costs as this is purchased separately direct from Microsoft. Storage required for cloud service backups can only be estimated and therefore the Rubrik solution costs are subject to possible increase as data grows. The Arcserve cloud storage costs are fixed.

There are also additional costs associated with the Rubrik solution as we move more services to the cloud, these are included with Arcserve. Finally, continuing with the Rubrik solution after the proposed 3-year contract would incur additional annual costs of £7k over Arcserve in the same period

The Arcserve solution in its proposed form has been recently audited at Lichfield DC with a Reasonable Assurance level, only falling short of Substantial level due to some local internal process recommendations.

Resource Implications

The total cost of the 3-year contract with CoolSpirit for the Arcserve backup system is £68,287.23. This is broken down as follows –

Year 1 - £50,917.47 – Backup system, cloud backup storage, licensing, support, and implementation

Year 2 - £8,323.01 – Cloud backup storage

Year 3 - £9,046.75 – Cloud backup storage

Year 2 and 3 costs will be funded from existing budgets. The release of £15,000 from General Fund capital contingency will leave a balance of £120,000.

Legal/Risk Implications

The main risk to this project is refusal of the release of the necessary funding and therefore doing nothing in terms of replacing our current backup system. This would present several significant implications in terms of reliability of our backups, business continuity and delivery of the ICT Strategy.

1. the current storage infrastructure hosting our backup data is now nearing capacity and end of life
2. the servers running the backup system are also at end of life
3. the current DR model utilising Walsall WMBC as a secondary site for our data is being withdrawn in 2022 as Walsall are accelerating their own move to the Cloud and decommissioning the reciprocal DR arrangement.
4. Doing nothing would result in us being unable to backup any Cloud based data going forward

Equalities Implications

N/A

Sustainability Implications

N/A

Background Information

N/A

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List of Background Papers

N/A

Appendices

N/A

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