TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

21 July 2021

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1   IT INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

A report updating Members on progress with the upgrade of IT infrastructure

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1   The IT strategy was initially approved by Members in June 2018 to cover the four year period 2018 to 2022.

1.1.2   At its meeting on 6 January 2021, Members of the Advisory Board considered and supported a 'refresh' of the Strategy, extending its life until 2023. **[Annex 1]** sets out the latest refresh of the Strategy.

1.1.3   Over the last two to three years since adopting the IT strategy, the Council has made significant progress and achievements against the objectives set out. Many of the achievements became the catalyst for the Council and its staff being able to continue to provide public services to its residents and businesses during the pandemic since March 2020 and to date. These excellent 'foundations' have enabled the proposals regarding a new approach to working for staff for the future to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.1.4   This report updates on some of the projects that have been undertaken during the last few months. Members will recall my reports over the past 12 months regarding disaster recovery and business continuity in respect of our IT infrastructure, and I am pleased to say that the work undertaken will strengthen our position significantly in this regard.

1.2   Progress

1.2.1   In line with the primary focus of the IT strategy, in underpinning the Council's business demand for robust and highly available IT Infrastructure, IT Services are currently in the process of migrating the data centre from Gibson building to Microsoft Azure cloud. The following progress have been made thus far since the last update provided to Members:

1) A strategic partnership has been formed with Microsoft to enable the council's aspiration to improve customer experience whilst achieving greater operational and financial efficiencies across frontline and back office services;

2) Microsoft has made the cloud migration project viable to the council by funding 100% of the migration professional costs for TMBC ($69,800 USD equivalent to £50,488) via its Azure Migration Program (AMP);

3) Migration of the data centre started in May 2021, and we have already moved 43% of the servers (47 servers out of the 109), aiming to complete the migration by September 2021;

4) The on-premises email system has been migrated to cloud-based Microsoft Exchange Online;

5) We are in the process of migrating our on-premises Skype for Business telephony system to a Teams Cloud based system;

6) The new website has been created and hosted within our Azure cloud-based environment, providing higher availability and more responsive experience to the visitors;

7) Hybrid meetings are being deployed throughout the Council to enable greater accessibility to meetings both internally and externally. Thus, enabling the organisation to consider the potential of adopting long-term flexible/remote working for council staff.

1.3 Benefits realisation

1.3.1 Migrations and creations of systems in a cloud-based environment will give us the following benefits:

- No reliance on a physical building to store our systems.

- No maintenance overhead for the data centre physical environment or physical servers.

- Savings of energy consumption, reducing the Councils Carbon footprint by at least 33 thousand Kilo tons of CO_2 per year.

- High availability of critical systems:

  - Improved access to Council services for the residents of Tonbridge & Malling due to higher availability of services and the increased access to self-service.
  - Creating a better work life balance for staff by enabling flexible working.

1.4   Legal Implications

1.4.1   Procurement has been undertaken in accordance with all relevant legislation and good practice.

1.5   Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1   Projects are funded from Capital Renewals or specific IT budgets.

1.6   Risk Assessment

1.6.1   The Council and its staff are reliant on IT systems for the delivery of services. In addition, with the promotion of digitally enabled services to the public, it is imperative that the availability of the systems involved are maintained at a higher level around the clock. As the reliance on IT systems becomes even greater, the migration to cloud services in line with the IT and Digital Strategy will reduce risk to our service.

1.6.2   Corporate strategies, goals and priorities need to align and support each other. The IT Strategy will support the activities and goals set by the Council. Without a clearly defined strategy we may not be able to prioritise our resources correctly, leading to missed opportunities to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

1.7   Policy Considerations

1.7.1   Customer Contact

1.7.2   Business Continuity/Resilience

1.7.3   Procurement

1.7.4   Asset Management

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Nil

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