TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 September 2024

IT Systems Review & Procurement Road Map 2019 – 24

Introduction:

Any new business requirement or renewal that comes through IT whether these are new or existing systems, hardware or services go through the same process to determine whether they are:

- Fit for purpose and meet the business requirements.
- Are value for money.
- Are sustainable over the lifetime of the contract and beyond.

The Corporate procurement process is followed for each of the systems to make sure that a fair process is in place to enable maximum visibility of the market to get the most competitive and effective solution.

All projects and renewals go through this process. In the past 5 years the following substantial projects and renewals have gone through this process to make sure that the requirements are met.

Computer Suite renewal (Cloud Migration) – March 2021

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff on on-premises and cloud solutions.
- Costs were compared between renewing current equipment and migrating to a Cloud based data centre, including staffing cost for maintaining the data centre, running costs, disaster recovery and efficiencies.
- A BVA assessment was conducted to find the costs and return of investment.
- A RFQ and competition was conducted to obtain quotes for the migration.

The Cloud migration has provided TMBC with a secure, robust, highly available and agile platform to underpin the Digital and IT strategies and meet the growing demand of its residents and staff. This cloud environment enables TMBC to adapt and grow using cutting-edge technology to enhance security and customer experience to provide a seamless transactions with the Council.

Microsoft License renewal - June 2021 & June 2024

- The G-Cloud framework was used to assess the market and obtain best added value and cost for the service.

The Microsoft Licenses have enabled TMBC to be on the forefront of digital engagement giving staff access to collaborative tools to improve efficiency and inter-departmental working. The Microsoft E5 licence procured in 2021 has given access to more security tools, proactive monitoring capabilities and Power BI reporting to give everyone access to data they require easily.

Disaster recovery solution – March 2020

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options for a disaster recovery solution.
- Costs of 3 different companies were compared for to find the most cost-effective solution.

The Disaster recovery solution enabled TMBC data and systems to be stored in a cloud environment, giving instant access to recovery and a way to seamlessly restore systems that had errors or issues. This gave an extra layer of confidence in the speed at which TMBC could recover from an incident resulting in a front-line system failure. Due to this being a cloud environment the costs were based on a Pay as you go basis, so no initial funds were needed to create in environment making it very cost effective over time.

Backup solution - January 2023

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options for an immutable backup solution including proof of concepts for each where possible.
- All solutions were tested to make sure they were fit for purpose resulting in many not meeting the basic requirements.
- The G-Cloud framework was used to assess the market and obtain best added value and cost for the service.

The Immutable cloud backup solution gave TMBC a secure, robust, cloud-based solution ensuring reliable disaster recovery and business continuity. The solution gives us confidence in the integrity of the Council data, gives protection against tampering and ransomware attacks safeguarding the critical data the Council holds.

Telephony & Contact centre renewal – July 2021

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options for a Telephony & Contact centre solution.
- YPO framework was used to procure the solution based on our requirements.

The move to cloud telephony and AW365 contact centre enables communication with the public and staff to be streamlined, improving responsiveness, availability, increasing efficiencies using bots and automation. This approach enhances the service delivery to the public ensuring the time to respond to and resolve queries are done efficiently and in a timely manner.

Audio visual equipment business requirements – May 2021

- A Business requirement to have hybrid meetings and record Council meetings was required.
- Research into different solutions was conducted including the usage of current equipment already in use.
- 3 different providers were given the opportunity to design a solution to meet the requirements.
- Each solution was considered, and costs analysed before procurement.

The hybrid meeting solution made Council meetings more accessible to both councillors and member of the public during the pandemic and beyond. This approach enabled the meeting to be streamed on YouTube to ensure transparency and reach as many viewers as possible.

Remote working and business continuity project – September 2021

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options for working from home.
- The current production systems already in use by the Council were considered to see if any could provide extended functionality to enable the business requirements.
- Our existing Firewall had these capabilities that we could utilise.
- Other solutions were considered, and costs compared.
- Laptops were procured to enable remote working and business continuity.

A remote access VPN and the policy change to use laptops for staff enables staff to connect to TMBC internal systems securely from anyway delivering a more flexible approach to working. This enhances business continuity and enhances workforce flexibility and productivity. Both solutions together enabled services to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic and created the opportunity for the remote working policy to give a better work life balance and greater productivity for staff.

Remote Access renewal – March 2022 & July 2024 (3rd Party Remote Access)

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options for remote access as the current solution that was in place was no longer fit for purpose.
- Each option was considered and compared on cost, functionality, and integration with our current environment.
- Microsoft Azure Virtual Desktop met the requirement and funding was secured for their solution to assist with deployment and configuration.

The existing system was vulnerable, outdated and not fit for purpose. Moving to AVD created a new secure, cloud native environment to create a remote working environment which can be centrally managed and secured keeping sensitive data secure. This creates a robust highly available and scalable solution to meet increasing business demands.

Mobile Contract renewal January 2021 & June 2024

- Research was conducted on business requirements, mobile signal throughout Tonbridge & Malling and data usage.
- A competition was run to compare different providers and suppliers.
- The RM framework was used to procure the solution to achieve the best value for money.

Next Generation Firewall – May 2021, September 2021 & August 2023

- Extensive research was conducted by Senior Technical Support staff to analyse and appraise the options of a Next Generation Firewall.
- Requirements were built to meet current and future requirements.
- The requirements led to 3 different solutions where a procurement exercise was conducted to analyse the different solution and costs.

The new Firewall provides advanced threat detection and comprehensive security to protect the Council's systems and sensitive data from Cyber-attacks. The additional features and functionality of the firewall has enabled the flexible remote working and enhanced security for the cloud migration.

Finance management system software review 2024

- Current software has a rolling one-year contract with since 1998.
- Contract review took place using G-Cloud framework to assess the market and obtain best added value and cost for the service.
- Following a thorough assessment of Integra Centros, by the Senior Accountant and Financial Systems Officer, alongside alternative systems available in the market, the most advantageous financial solution for the Council, aligning with best practices in financial management remains Integra.
- Upgrade to Integra Centros now scheduled for completion Q3 2024/25.

Planning and regulatory services line of business system review/replacement 2022-2024

- Extensive research conducted by IT Solution Architect and business leads for Built Environment and Public Protection systems. System Specification and procurement documents prepared prior to soft market testing.
- Soft market testing – The G-Cloud framework used to assess the market. 4 key suppliers invited to demo their SaaS solutions to IT and business leads.
- Each option was considered and compared on business outcomes, functionality, costs, integration, availability, and best value for money.
- Agile SaaS Solution acquired through G-Cloud framework on 5-year term.

Payment system review – March 2024

- Soft Market testing completed Dec 2022 evaluating 3 recognised companies from the GCloud 13 framework by business prior to Adelante SmartPay 4 reaching EOL March 24
- Whilst Adelante was not the lowest cost over 5 years through totalling both capital and revenue costs, when considering associated implementation costs such as new replacement interfaces and time lost from diverting officers time on the project etc the Adelante Replacement to SmartPay 6 was the best option for the Council as a whole.
- Upgrade and integration changes completed March 2024.

Website and Customer portal system review – 2021

- The content management system provided by Jadu, with online forms and back-office case management workflow fully integrated with back-office systems including NEC Citizen Access and Adelante Payments, replaced the Squiz Matrix website in July 2021.
- MyAccount allows registered customers to integrate seamlessly with 3rd party customer portals.
- Development of online forms on Jadu platform will negate the need for the current E-Forms system provided by EBase Solutions – enabling the organisation to make further saving whilst improving efficiencies and customer experience.
- TMBC Website 100% availability since go live.
- 5 year contract via NEC ends 10 May 2026

Corporate Document Management Enterprise system – March 2021

- Software upgraded from client to Enterprise solution in 2021 with Office Connect, GDPR Connect, Retention Policy modules adding Generic Import Module (GIM2) configured to improve business workflow efficiencies for Revs Bens team with integration with NEC Citizen Access
- NEC <mark>Information</mark>@Work has been used by the Revenues and Benefits team for some years with great success. This Enterprise approach adopted provides a corporate DM for the authority which was previously lacking.
- Upgrade to latest supported version scheduled Q2/Q3 2024/25

Parking Services systems review – Dec 2019

- Due to the ever-changing IT landscape these products required regular upgrades.
- The upgrade included 3sixty back-office Notice processing and Citizen portal with cashless parking interface and fully cloud hosted PermitSmarti solution
- The Rialto upgrade included the Real-Time module which allows PCNs to sync, download special messages and permits in real-time.

Citizen Access solution for Revenue & Benefit services – June 2018 & August 2021

- Contract purchased August 2021 via G-Cloud framework for the Citizen Access portals CA-R, CA-B, CA-BN, CA-LL, CA-I
- Customer portals for Revenues and Benefits with Single-SignOn enables registered customers 24/7 online access to self-serve their revenue and benefit accounts via their MyAccount portal
- Additional features added including Generic Import Module (GIM2) and eforms improve business process efficiencies through integration and automation with back-office systems
- G-Cloud call off contract now extended for a second and final period of 12 months from 1 August 2024.

Electoral Services System Review – 2024/25

- Current software review scheduled 2025.
- Business to commence soft market testing from Q3 2024/25 in readiness.