ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF
THE CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE
ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SUBJECT:

Update on progress with the Council's Cloud First Policy.

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DATE: 31 August 2021

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PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Council's Five-Year Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Services Strategy was adopted by Full Council approximately 2½ years ago and confirmed the adoption of a Cloud First Policy. This report is an update on progress so far and provides insight into the next phase of the programme.

This report is an information update, and the Committee are being asked to note the progress of the programme and its future direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Corporate Support Committee is being asked to endorse this report.

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1.   BACKGROUND:

CLOUD FIRST PROGRESS

a)   Hosted Solutions

i.   Since the adoption of the Cloud First Policy, the team initially concentrated its efforts on migrating a number of our major line-of-business applications to hosted solutions. These opportunities have been taken primarily based on a system's procurement life cycle or the system's failure to meet the needs of the service.

ii. Currently the following systems have been migrated to a hosted service: –

- Committee Services – Civica (Modern.Gov)

- Revenues & Benefits – NEC Software Solutions

- Environmental Health - Idox (Tascomi)

- Geographical Information System – Cad Corp (Web Map)

- Legal Services – The Access Group (DPS Spitfire)

- Parking Services – Chipside Limited

iii. Some of the benefits from these migrations are the reduction in on-premise hardware and storage requirements. Along with the shifting of responsibility for patching, backing-up & upgrading these systems to the supplier and improved Business Continuity.

iv. To assist in this process, we have also developed an ICT Cloud Security Questionnaire to ensure that, when hosted solutions are being considered, all aspects of the hosted system are evaluated.

b) Cloud Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Solution

v. Having established the process for migrating systems to a hosted solution, we then turned our attention to reviewing those systems with no hosted option and establishing a Cloud Tenancy they could be migrated to.

vi. We reviewed the major players in this arena taking into consideration: security, geographical location, system availability / performance, business continuity, sustainability, and value for money.

vii. We established there was very little to choose between them, however we were able to leverage our existing Microsoft license agreement to secure funding of £50k to assist in planning, designing, and creating a Microsoft Azure Cloud Tenancy along with an 85% discount on Azure Cloud training for staff.

viii. It was agreed to take up this offer and create an Azure Cloud Tenancy as a proof of concept to ensure we could achieve the required levels of security and performance whilst establishing the real costs.

ix. This initial phase has now been completed having created both a primary and secondary site to enable business continuity and we are now running 12 servers and 10 virtual PCs live in the environment. We have been monitoring these closely and also commissioned a security vulnerability test and the results have been very positive.

x. There are a number of benefits we are already harnessing from this Azure Cloud Tenancy: -

- Increased agility & flexibility to deploy solutions - this has been evident as part of the inhouse development team's work on new transactional services such as the planning notification service which have been deployed on this technology.

- Only paying for what you use - as part of the initial deployment we have already created policies to shutdown systems when they are not required such as overnight.

- Security built-in - as part of the initial build we have been able to ensure IT security is front and centre in the on-boarding process ensuring the safety of the Council's and its customers' data.

- Improved Business Continuity - by ensuring the tenancy included a secondary site we can identify those systems and services that are critical to the Council and ensure they are protected at the secondary site as part of the disaster recovery plan.

- Improved sustainability - the current estimates show a minimum 40% reduction in carbon emissions for those systems running in our azure tenancy compared to running in our own data centre

xi.   Currently the monthly costs for this initial deployment of Arun's Azure Tenancy is £1.5k per month and has already been identified in this year's ICT revenue budget.

xii.   On-going costs of this Cloud First Policy will be self-financing and, in conjunction with Finance, we have already identified reductions in both the infrastructure refresh, and annual maintenance budgets, along with future cost avoidance to achieve this.

xiii.   It is also anticipated that once the transition of all identified systems and solutions has been completed, we will be able to demonstrate an on-going reduction in costs to the Council.

FUTURE DIRECTION & WORK

c)   Hosted Solutions

xiv.   We will continue to identify line of business applications that can be migrated to hosted solutions and we have already identified the following 4 systems to be migrated during the next 18 months: -

- Finance – Advanced (E5)

- ICT Helpdesk – Richmond (ServiceDesk)

- Housing – Civica (Cx)

- Telephony & Contact Centre – Unknown

d)   Cloud Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) Solution

xv.   Firstly, before we can migrate any large line of business applications to Azure we will need to procure an Azure ExpressRoute connection. This is a connection that extends Arun's on-premise networks into the Azure Tenancy and will create a fast and reliable connection to Azure from the Internal Arun network ensuring no loss of performance for the applications.

xvi. At the same time, we will begin creating and testing our disaster recovery procedures for the Azure tenancy at the secondary site and configure those critical systems identified.

xvii. Once these tasks have been completed, we will begin the next phase of migration. 30 servers have already been identified as candidates for migration into our Azure tenancy including a number of major line of business applications. The migration of these servers would be carried out as mini projects with servers being grouped together by application and we anticipate these to be completed over the next 12-18 months.

xviii. We will also be identifying those servers in Azure that we can commit to a 3-year subscription to leverage further server cost reductions of between 30% - 50%.

e) **On-Premise Consolidation**

xix. Whilst we continue to consolidate our Cloud First Policy, we will begin to de-commission some of our on-premise infrastructure as the demand reduces and workloads are redirected.

xx. Our first target will be to remove our equipment from the WSCC Power Place Data Centre by July 2022. This will create some of the revenue savings we have already identified with Finance, but achieving this target date will be dependent on both significant success with the migration of already identified systems and an alternative Disaster Recovery solution to be in place for any remaining on-premise systems.

xxi. Once all these works are completed, we estimate that we will have reduced the on-premise virtual machine numbers from 165 to 35, a reduction of 79%.

Hopefully, this update gives you a greater insight into the progress being made with the Cloud First Policy and how this will enable us to create a more sustainable ICT Infrastructure. This will be required to deliver against our customers' expectations and their greater reliance on digital solutions over the coming years.

2. PROPOSAL

That Corporate Support Committee note the progress made on this project.

3. OPTIONS:

This is an update report and does not contain any options.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	**YES**	**NO**
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X

	YES	NO
Other groups/persons (please specify)		X
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	**YES**	**NO**
Financial	X	
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability	X	
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

6. IMPLICATIONS:

Financial – the implications are the move away from the current infrastructure refresh cycle to a subscription-based revenue model, however this change is self-financing.

Sustainability – As we move to a Cloud First Policy the current estimates show a minimum 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared to our on-premise environment.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

The Corporate Support Committee are being asked to note this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Service Strategy 2019-2023

Service Strategy