

IT Laptop Replacement

Strategy & Resources Committee Thursday, 30 March 2023

Report of: Melanie Thompson, Head of Transformation & Business Support

Purpose: For decision

Publication status:

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

This report sets out the planned approach to replace the laptops which are used by 90% of the workforce.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better council

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Recommendation to Committee:

That the Committee approve the replacement of the endpoint hardware during 2023/24 as follows:

- Replace 90% of laptops currently in circulation
- Upgrade RAM specification from 8GB to 16GB to support increased usage of Software as a Service (SaaS) applications
- Roll out Windows 11 with the device replacement
- Purchase extended warranty to cover the devices for 5 years
- Use of a temporary resource for asset tagging and device build

Reason for recommendation:

The current laptops will reach the end of their vendor support dates throughout the 2023/24 financial year. That combined with an increased failure rate means that the Council needs to forward plan for the replacement of most of the current laptop stock. Although the budget for this replacement was approved in February 2020, as part of the annual budget setting process for 2022/23 [on 1 February 2022], the Committee requested that a more detailed justification for the replacement was submitted for approval.

Introduction and background

1. In 2015 the Council launched two initiatives, "new ways of working" and "the smarter working project". The objectives included a change in working practices; to enable staff to work in different locations, increasing online processes and workflow and a reduction in accommodation requirements to enable rental income from freeing up space in the Council building. These initiatives were approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2015.
2. By 2018 the Council had moved away from thin client terminals (Igels) to laptops across the organisation, this was to enable more agile and remote working and increasing the rentable space. This took place in stages with the final major tranche being approved by Resources Committee on 18 January 2018.
3. The current laptops will reach the end of their vendor support dates throughout the 2023/24 financial year. 95% of the laptops will remain in their supportable lifecycle until the end of the 2023/24. However, when purchased only the standard 12 month manufacturer's warranty on the devices was included, therefore there is an increase in hardware failures which is placing demands on resources within the IT team, resulting in increased onsite support costs and workforce disruption. 5% of the laptops will remain in support ranging from 2025 to 2027 and can be replaced using the rolling replacement budget.

The age profile of the 95% of devices is between 4 and 5 years old. By 31 March 2024 all devices will be over 5 years old. Typical service life for a laptop is 3 to 5 years.

4. Performance is no longer matching original specification requirements. There are increasing end user complaints in respect of performance and reliability, as the organisation moves to more SaaS applications which place a higher demand on end user device's RAM (random access memory). SaaS applications (i.e. those hosted remotely, cloud-based, rather than on the Council's own servers) are likely to increase in number and usage as part of the Council's strategy to decommission its own

hardware, but also because the general market trend is for hosted solutions. This is because hosted solutions take advantage of increased security, better resilience, easier updates and lower hardware costs.

5. This hardware expiry coincides with the Microsoft End of Servicing for Windows 10 and as such the Council will be required to make the upgrade to Windows 11 by June 2024 to maintain security with patches for vulnerabilities from Microsoft. The minimum hardware requirements have doubled for Windows 11 over Windows 10, upgrading existing laptops will add further performance strain.

If we continue to use Windows 10 after June 2024, it will still work, but be unsupported and become vulnerable to security risks and viruses. The Council would not be able to achieve PSN (Public Service Network) compliance nor the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) cyber essentials.

6. The Council has a responsibility and commitment to be PSN compliant and meet the cyber security standards. Holding a valid PSN compliance certificate gives permission to interact with the PSN, the PSN community connected to it and the PSN services available on it. Importantly it demonstrates to the hundreds of local authorities, council, fire and emergency services, government departments, agencies and public bodies that the Council is ensuring good security and adhering to the obligations of handling public sector data. Therefore, the move to Windows 11 is not optional.
7. There would be significant disruption to the business to undertake a Windows 11 upgrade roll-out followed by a laptop refresh programme. It will be more efficient to combine the two initiatives and issue new laptops to users with Windows 11 installed on the devices. Conducting these workstreams separately will result in disruption to staff, the business and IT staff.

Scope and approach

8. The replacement will affect 217 laptops and there is a need to purchase a rolling replacement stock of 13. A total of 230 laptops. This represents stock for 90% of the workforce. The remaining staff do not regularly use a computer.
9. IT will identify 3 potential replacement models using requirements by technical specification, user experience and price. A staff focus group will be used to determine the best replacement model.
10. A procurement exercise would commence and follow the Council's Contract Standing Orders to purchase the new laptops.

Resources

11. Upon delivery the devices will be asset tagged and added to the asset management database and built using the specification created by IT. The tagging of assets will allow tight control of distribution and return, including when members of staff leave the organisation.
12. The building of the devices could be completed by current IT staff, but this would need to be planned and then fit around ongoing application and user support. It will be impractical to build and dispense 217 laptops in a timely manner.
13. To enable the devices to be ready for issuing at the same time, it would be prudent to employ a temporary member of staff for a period of up to five weeks.
14. When the laptops are built and ready for user hand-over, IT will engage with staff to arrange site attendance and replace their laptop including an overview of any new features of Windows 11.

Financial Information

15. The capital budget for the cyclical replacement programme for IT, which included laptops, monitors, servers, switches, UPS, firewalls and server migration was approved in February 2020.
16. The available capital budget for 2023/24 is £299,100 and for 2024/25 £195,800.
17. Due to the limited resources in IT for 1st and 2nd line support, currently 1.5 FTE supporting over 200 users, it is recommended that a 5 year extended warranty is purchased when the stock is replaced.
18. Based on 230 laptops, with 5 years extended warranty, the estimated costs are:

2023/24	
Replacement of 230 devices @ approx. £800 per unit	184,000
Extended 5 year support @ approx. £100 per unit	23,000
Temporary staff for up to 5 weeks	2,500
Total investment	209,500

19. The replacement cost is expected to be at the highest end of potential outcomes and therefore includes an element of contingency.

20. The stock being returned to IT will have a residual value and therefore could be 'sold' through our appointed ITAM disposal provider who have initially provided a quote of £20,000, subject to stock condition. The disposal process itself will be pre-arranged and ensure that the returned equipment is disposed of using an efficient, secure and cost-effective approach.

Risks of not replacing the laptops

21. The current devices are not in support by the vendor and any defects require repair and replacement by IT which is time consuming and costly.

Parts cannot always be sourced, therefore ad-hoc replacements are ordered. This results in different models, with the drivers and hardware becoming more disparate resulting in greater IT support.

22. The current laptops are coming to the end of their operation life span and are no longer effectively supporting the needs of staff. Battery running time will continue to decline and are not replaceable. Laptops will be increasingly harder to use for meetings if not plugged into a power source.

Risks to the success of the replacement programme

23. Laptops must be compatible with the docking stations, and this will be in the scope of the specification to avoid any additional expenditure.

24. Secure storage of the laptops will be essential from the delivery, build through to deployment.

25. Sourcing a temporary resource must be planned to achieve the timelines of the project to avoid impact upon the IT team, which would cause delays in supporting applications across the Council.

26. Staff with special requirements or software may have greater disruption if not identified.

27. Staff will need to engage in the process of booking a timeslot to come into the office and change over laptops.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The budget to fund the replacement of laptops as set out in this report is included in the approved capital programme. Value for money will be secured

by following procurement routes set out in Contract Standing Orders and by ensuring that the specification of new laptops is fit for their intended purpose over the course of their useful economic life. The cost per laptop indicated in the report is prudent and therefore includes a degree of contingency. Officers would therefore expect the final budget requirement to be lower than stated.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

Whenever the Council procures goods where the value is over £213k, the Council must procure the goods in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, unless an exemption is available. Although in this instance the threshold has not been met, the Council will still procure the goods from an approved framework which would comply with the statutory regulations. The relevant Officer will need to confirm to the Council's Procurement Board that a compliant procurement process has been followed in this instance and seek approval. The contract terms for the purchase and support will need to be reviewed by the legal team.

Equality

There are no equality implications associated with this report.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental/sustainability implications associated with this report.

Appendices

None

Background papers

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – New Ways of Working and the Smarter Working Project – 27 January 2015

Resources Committee – IT Provision to meet Customer First Programme Objectives - 18 January 2018

Strategy & Resources Committee – 22/23 Draft Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – 1 February 2022

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