

Proposal for IT Systems Support

Town Council Report 18.11.20 – Item 11

1. Background

Since May 2019 there have been ongoing IT issues which impact significantly on productivity. These issues have included two disruptive hacking attacks, occasional outages and application conflicts. It has been clear that our IT infrastructure and support is below the level required for a modern responsive council with a large workload, serving a town of 27,000 people.

The current infrastructure also results in consistently poor Wi-Fi, with an obsolete server with remote connection issues that affect staff, councillors, and users of our halls. Currently there is no formal service, support or helpdesk arrangements in place and the system and staff are reliant on ad-hoc and reactive action when problems arise.

Following discussions with all staff and some councillors it was felt that a formal proactive support service was needed. Three formal requests to provide an improved service level contract were sent out to 1) the current incumbent, 2) a local IT support organisation and 3) an organisation specialising in local council support based in Bradford on Avon. Following a round of discussions and requotes, 3 Councillors with IT professional experience (the working party) reviewed the 2 quotations received. The current supplier did not supply a quote.

Based on this review the local (Portishead) supplier has been identified as the preferred supplier as its price was competitive against benchmarks for the level of service required and help desk and support available in Portishead.

2. Requirement

The working party consider that full-service support and management of the IT infrastructure is required, with our partner also looking to integrate and provide cost savings for telecoms and software applications. The objectives being to:

- To provide an efficient and professional Service Desk and support engineering facility that will provide a single point of contact for all PTC employees and councilor's to access IT support.
- To evaluate the current technology in use at PTC and create a transformation roadmap that reduces costs, promotes effective collaboration and allows all PTC staff to concentrate on their Council responsibilities.
- Turn IT from a cost, to something that is seen as an enabling tool to deliver enhanced services to Portishead residents, allowing PTC to increase its outreach and the services it can provide to the community, offering multiple ways for residents to access the Town Council and information through the sensible use of digital technology.

The preferred proposal for discussion involves an in-depth initial review by the support vendor to quantify the necessary infrastructure improvements and a training program for staff and Councillors to ensure we use IT to the maximum efficiency and benefit for Portishead.

Followed by a per user-based support agreement with a fixed base cost for managed software such as MS 365.

3. Preferred Supplier

Chorus Global Ltd, based in Portishead are recommended as the preferred supplier and an outline of their proposal and scope of service is provided in the Appendix. The working party feels that these objectives are aligned with the needs of the council.

The preferred proposal involves an in-depth initial review to quantify the necessary infrastructure improvements and a training program for staff and Councillors to ensure we use IT to the maximum efficiency and benefit for Portishead.

Following this review, it is the intention to enter a per user-based support agreement with a fixed base cost for managed software such as MS 365.

4. Costs and Service Level

The Initial cost of the review and in-depth report is £4,000. This will provide us with a roadmap for future preventative maintenance, potential to take advantage of other IT productivity tools and services.

A monthly on-going service and support cost of £920 has been proposed to cover 20 users (£46 per user versus an industry benchmark of £55)

Core support includes full support for the following services:

- Broadband and WiFi
- CCTV Video Systems
- Website Functionality including Domain Name management (not content)
- Management of Hardware (On site Desktops & printers) and laptops etc
- Software licenses and services from Microsoft
- Systems support including Parish Online and RBS finance applications
- Help desk to cover business hours
- Monthly onsite review, CSIP (Continuous Service improvement plan) review and service governance
- Laptop / server builds as required
- Management of backup storage solution

It is likely that some affiliated services including phones and video recording will migrate to the new service provider as current contracts end. If there is a saving or significant gain in service, it may be beneficial to leave a current contract early.

5. Recommendations

- a. To appoint Chorus Global Ltd as preferred supplier to conduct a review and to provide an in-depth report in respect of PTC IT infrastructure at a cost of £4,000 (excluding VAT).
- b. Subject to receiving a satisfactory report, to enter into an IT services and support agreement with Chorus Global Ltd at a monthly service cost not to exceed £1,000 per month (excluding VAT). Authority to consider the report, agree and enter a service agreement, including a service level agreement, to be delegated to a working group comprising Cllr Bull, Gardner and Temple.

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Appendix – Chorus Proposal Summary

The initial proposal from Chorus includes:

- All server infrastructure migrated to the cloud and taken off premise. This will reduce the risk of business failure and provided a disaster recovery solution for PTC. It is also likely to reduce costs and remove the need to upgrade hardware, improve space at Council premises and allow you to start to do some smart initiatives with the tools that are available in the cloud.
- Consolidate your technology and current IT partner ecosystem. You have access to MS365 licensing, and this is currently not being fully utilised. Our feeling is that you will be able to retire several commitments you have today saving money and simplifying what needs managing. An example here could be your current CCTV system being moved to Microsoft Stream which is part of the license you already pay for.
- Improve your current security posture. We can see that you have good anti-virus and a level of protection with your firewalls however this technology is not optimal when consuming cloud technology in a hybrid environment. We will access some vendor funding to initiate a review of your current security and document our findings that highlight your current risks and security priorities. In addition, we can advise on data compliance and GDPR through our collaboration team who are experts in helping you review and amend access rights to information, while setup workflows that help with data classification.
- Move to cloud telephony service potentially Microsoft or RingCentral. This would allow PTC to accommodate the changing requirements for scenario's we can't control such as COVID. A cloud telephony solution would allow everybody to work anywhere and still receive calls to any device that come into council premises. There are some brilliant tools with this for voicemails and call triaging which can add real value. We are confident we can significantly reduce the costs of your telephony service.
- We want PTC to view technology as a tool that can improve the services you provide. Our support service will make IT support easier, allowing the council to focus on how technology can improve/expand the services it provides to local residents. With the population age continuing to change, it will continue to be the case that residents want access to information quickly and efficiently and the Council needs to be ready to offer several different ways of accessing services.