



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 12 MAY 2021

SUBJECT: ICT RESOURCING

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Council is asked to note the content of the report and authorise the request for budget for increased staff in order to secure the future resilience of the ICT Service.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (32) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the provision of central support services including information technology.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Council agrees the budget of:**
- i) the staffing resources proposed in section 7e of the report; and**
 - ii) £386,000 is allocated, reducing to £293,000 after 12 months and £93,000 thereafter.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant additional demands on the ICT Service over the last year to support and facilitate the volume of increased remote working and online learning and teaching required across the Council. This work has and continues to range from infrastructure support for connectivity capacity to distribution of devices for working, teaching and learning across the corporate and school networks. It has also meant increasing the online accessibility to services for the public and at the same time the essential maintenance and upgrade work has continued in order to 'keep the lights on' across council services and systems. Additionally, the increased number of people working remotely has exponentially increased the support requirements both from a technical and user perspective.
- 3.2 The consequence of diverting ICT resources to support the emergency response has also meant that a range of business critical ICT work has not

progressed partly or wholly in areas of planned core ICT work including supporting transformation. In total this creates an overall level of risk that requires to be fully considered so that a strategic and planned response is put in place to ensure the Council's ICT Service is well placed and resourced, safe and secure and has the capacity to stretch appropriately to meet future demands.

- 3.3 The pressures on the service can be categorised into three main headings: current, planned and new demands.
- 3.4 Current operational demands have increased significantly following completion of the roll out of equipment to facilitate increased homeworking and learning and teaching, including the work required to facilitate the expansion of flexible working. For example, planning and readiness for the phased return to the office; increasing the capacity for connectivity; and responding to the support calls generated from this. Reliable connectivity is crucial and work is ongoing, particularly within Education, to monitor, investigate and resolve connectivity issues.
- 3.5 One of the biggest pressures of moving to remote working has been the requirement for video-conferencing platforms as the main method of communication for meeting and talking with colleagues in order to do their jobs. Microsoft Teams is the preferred solution as part of Office 365. While existing solutions are in use and an interim solution is being developed for a more integrated Microsoft Teams option, significant additional work is required to fully investigate, plan, test and implement MS Teams and Office 365 thereafter.
- 3.6 Urgent demands related directly to the pandemic such as setting up connectivity for the mass vaccination centre and community testing support have placed additional demands on the workload of key individuals within the ICT team who are also leading on other crucial work.
- 3.7 The requirement for the public to access Council Services digitally as part of continuing to provide as many services to the public during the pandemic as possible has also placed further pressure on the service e.g. creation of electronic forms for accessing keyworker spaces in the childcare hubs, applications for funds for food, other support, business grants, etc. These continued to emerge throughout the pandemic following national policy decisions and announcements, usually with challenging timescales for delivery. On the whole, the level of digital communication and interaction with the public continues to increase creating additional demands on the ICT service.
- 3.8 The requirement for support to the workforce has consequently increased along with the requirement for technical support for managing devices in terms of upgrades and maintenance.
- 3.9 Planned work contained within the ICT Service and action plans is essential to maintain the ICT services to the council's operations. This includes both infrastructure and development activity. While work has continued behind the

scenes to keep the ICT provision functioning across all services, diverting officers to work on the current demands has meant that large areas of planned work have slowed down or not progressed at all, including business critical work that is less visible but nonetheless vital. A full assessment of this work has been carried out, with a summary of the main points for resourcing in para 5.4 below and covers broad areas including cyber and information security, risk management, system upgrades, strategies (e.g. telephony strategy), and the use of cloud hosted systems.

- 3.10 New demands on the service include key corporate initiatives such as the Moray Growth Deal, the Learning Estate Strategy and community engagement through participatory budgeting as well as significant ICT involvement in much of the Council's transformation work to support modernisation and improvement.
- 3.11 While some of this work is contained within investment proposal templates and is as yet largely unquantified, it is anticipated that the majority of these will be planned in advance and will require ICT resource.
- 3.12 In addition to these factors, there are planned industry led developments and changes which will require significant levels of resource to implement e.g. the Public Switched Telephone Network switch off by December 2025 as part of the final move from analogue systems to digital.
- 3.13 Taking all the above into account, it is evident that there are a large number of significant unavoidable pieces of business critical ICT work presenting as both immediate and longer term. The current ICT resources are not able to meet all of these concurrent demands which leaves the broad options of increasing capacity or reducing demand.

4. RISKS AND ISSUES

- 4.1 The risks and issues connected with specific areas of work required have been assessed and there are a number of broad risks arising from the current situation:
 - Security – given the constant possibility of cyber-attacks such as ransomware demands, viruses and false identity leading to theft of funds and information, it is important to ensure that security measures do not fall below minimum acceptable standards.
 - Contracts – a number of fundamental ICT contracts are due for review or renewal. The dynamic nature of technology means that contracts require due consideration of whether they continue to reflect and serve the Council's current and future requirements. Failing to do this properly could potentially tie the Council into a product or agreement that ceases to be the best long term choice and could cause additional cost either because a further contract is required to fill any gaps that have emerged, or because there are more efficient options coming on to the market.

- People – the level of demand on the ICT team since March 2020 has been intense and prolonged. The service has responded well to the situation but it is clear that frustrations with the challenges faced by the Council as a whole in moving to unprecedented levels of remote working and learning have sometimes been focused directly on to individuals in ICT which has placed additional, unfair and unpleasant pressure on to the team. The level of stretch that is currently being asked of people is not sustainable.
- Connectivity – the Council operates on a Scotland Wide Area Network (SWAN) as part of a multi-partner approach to connectivity. The current contract is due for renewal in 2023 and partners are already beginning to consider whether this approach continues to best serve the needs of their organisations. Moray Council participate in these discussions and are seeking to gauge current and future requirements and thinking from partners.

5. PRIORITISATION AND ASSESSMENT OF DEMAND

- 5.1 With the increased focus on remote working, teaching and learning, accessibility of a wider range of council services online, continued transformation through improvement and modernisation and the increased risk profile arising from cyber security crime whilst also maintaining the ongoing 'behind the scenes' demands, it is clear that there is too much work to be managed effectively within the existing ICT resource.
- 5.2 There are two main options: re-prioritise and decide which areas of work will be either delayed or halted to bring the work within manageable limits for the current resources or add resources to enable the majority of work to be undertaken while meeting the aspirations of the Council with regard to both security and robustness of ICT infrastructure as well as meeting current and future development demands.
- 5.3 Assessment indicates that demand is such that most areas of work need to continue with delays likely to have a substantial and potentially damaging impact on service delivery and organisational capacity. Table 1 below, illustrates the areas of the service under most pressure, the outcome of additional staffing and the impact of any delay.

5.4 Table 1: Assessment of Demand

Area	Action	Outcome	Impact of any delay
MS Teams * <i>interim integrated approach</i>	Interim implementation of some elements of MS Teams	Improved accessibility to video-conferencing for day to day and business specific communication with colleagues and external counterparts	Inconsistent and patchy communication pathways for staff working remotely Poor inter-agency/organisational communication capacity Duplicate Teams accounts creating additional further work to reconcile
MS Office 365	Implementation of full MS Office suite	Anywhere, anytime access, enhanced communication and collaboration tools, improved sharing of materials, reliability, minimising disruption, automatic updates, robust security, built in compliance and privacy controls, mobile device management, improved compliance	Poor collaborative capacity both internally and with key partner agencies and organisations Improved capacity to share materials/documentation Increased risks as move towards 'end of life' with current operating systems and software – will have to move at some point soon and is on ICT Action Plan.
Schools Connectivity	Investigation and identification of full range of Education connectivity issues, resolutions explored and implemented	Optimum connectivity achieved to support blended learning and teaching	Inconsistent and poor connectivity at individual school level impacting potentially on user experience of pupils and teachers
Information Security/Cyber Security/Risk Assessment and Management	Information and cyber security, risk assessment and management solutions implemented	Robust resilience and future proofing of the council ICT infrastructure and systems	Increased risk of exposure to cyberattacks, particularly in light of the recent attacks targeted towards education establishments and public organisations (e.g. SEPA, UHI) – could lead to complete shutdown of all council systems for considerable period and costs for a ransom plus any recovery work
Support	Resourcing the exponential additional demand on the service desk and remedial technical work required fully supporting the increased flexible workforce Microsoft Endpoint Configuration Manager implemented	Technical solution - maintenance and upgrades centralised and automated	Staff not able to fully use the equipment they are provided with impacting on capacity to do jobs, service delivery. Manual intervention to maintain and upgrade all devices – time consuming and prohibitive for continued service delivery with finite ICT resource to do this work
Transformation and Strategy	Improvement and modernisation initiatives facilitated by ICT input and support	ICT resources to support specific transformation programmes as specified in future	Overall transformation delayed, improvement and modernisation projects dependent on availability of current ICT resource

Area	Action	Outcome	Impact of any delay
	<p>Schools Digital Strategy developed and implemented</p> <p>Digital Services/Culture Developed</p> <p>Flexible working: telephony and desktop strategies reviewed, updated and implemented</p>	Improvement and Modernisation projects	<p>unless specific capacity introduced</p> <p>Public services lag behind provision of other Councils</p> <p>Workforce not digi-savvy and unable to respond effectively to technology demands placed upon them</p> <p>Council approach to flexible working lags behind other Councils and does not enable digital workforce development</p>
Compliance	<p>IT Health Check completed</p> <p>PSN Accreditation achieved</p> <p>Cyber Essentials Plus achieved</p> <p>Licensing Agreements and Group policies agreed</p>	Systems and software contracts and licensing compliant and appropriate for Council requirements	Contracts expire, increased non-compliance with agreements, significant financial and reputational penalties with possible withdrawal of provision e.g. Microsoft.
Maintenance and Upgrades	<p>Systems infrastructure and software maintenance and upgrades completed as required</p> <p>e.g. the Council's current customer management system does not have the capacity to deliver the user experience expected post pandemic and will require significant resource to change</p>	Council systems and infrastructure maintained and upgraded as necessary to appropriate levels and within timescale	Council systems, devices and infrastructure is not adequately maintained with upgrades leaving the Council lagging behind technology requirements from providers, lack of support and incompatibility with future provisions.

Table 1 has set out the main areas of pressure and while it ranges from some very specific elements such as implementation of MS Teams or Office 365 to broad areas such as compliance, the same core group of officers are involved in many of them meaning when they are working on one area, there is reduced or no progress in another. This is impacting negatively on the completion of each area of work and is not sustainable either in terms of progressing critical areas of work, nor the pressure on the service and key individuals.

6. RESOURCES

6.1 The following resources are considered the minimum required to be able to effectively meet the demands on the service:

6.2 Table 2: Resources

Work	Resources Required	Status	Cost
MS Teams * <i>using alternative Shetland style approach</i>	Absorbed within existing resources for interim solution	Ongoing	n/a
MS Office 365	2 fte Consultant resource for preliminary infrastructure work and transfer of knowledge to ICT team creating future capacity and resilience.	Immediate – 24 months temporary As per project timescales dictate	1 x G10 £120,000 1 x G7 £80,000 £5,000 (5 days @ £1,000 per day)
Schools Connectivity	1 fte	Immediate - 12 months temporary	1 x G9 £53,000
Information Security/Risk	1 fte	Immediate – 1 x permanent	1 x G9 £53,000
Support / Web	2 fte	Immediate – 1 x Permanent and 1 x Temporary (12 months)	2 x G7 £80,000
Transformation	ICT resources to support specific transformation programmes as specified in future Improvement and Modernisation projects	As dictated by IMP timetable.	To be confirmed per IMP reports and investment templates.

6.3 This would allow for temporary resource to focus on particular areas of high demand and longer term substantive increases to ensure future capacity and resilience within the service. This is the recommended approach given the exponential increase in demand on the service and to be able to deal with the current pressures, progress with planned work and support transformation work going forward.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The proposals in this report support the Council's Corporate Plan priorities to modernise and change so that services are sustainable and contribute towards delivering efficiencies and improvement, supporting transformation of Education, developing Digital service provision.

(b) Policy and Legal

The potential policy and legal implications are as noted within the body of the report with regard to compliance.

(c) Financial implications

Corporate Management Team Additional Expenditure Warning

When the Council approved the budget for 2021/22 on 3 March 2021 (paragraph 3 of the Minute refers) it balanced only by using one-off financial flexibilities. The indicative 3 year budget showed a likely requirement to continue to make significant savings in future years. All financial decisions must be made in this context and only essential additional expenditure should be agreed in the course of the year. In making this determination the committee should consider whether the financial risk to the Council of incurring additional expenditure outweighs the risk to the Council of not incurring that expenditure, as set out in the risk section below and whether a decision on funding could reasonably be deferred until the budget for future years is approved.

If the additional spend recommended in this report is approved, this will increase the savings targets by £93,000 (permanent posts only) with £298,000 (£293,000 staffing and £5,000 consultancy) met from reserves.

(d) Risk Implications

The risks of not approving the additional unbudgeted expenditure requested in this report are referred to in the body of the report. In addition it should be noted that the National Cyber Security Centre has identified that there is an increased risk of targeted ransomware attacks on UK education. While this is not solely linked to the increased remote working and learning and teaching activity that has resulted from lockdown, it is nevertheless of significant concern that more and more of the Council's day to day operations are reliant on robust security and protection measures.

Taken with the recent cyberattacks on SEPA and UHI, ensuring adequate staff resource in the information and cyber security and risk management is of paramount importance to be able to maintain and improve appropriate security systems for the Council's ICT infrastructure and systems.

(e) Staffing Implications

The staffing implications are as follows:

Permanent	1 x Grade 9	£ 53,000	
	1 x Grade 7	£ 40,000	
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£ 93,000</u>	
Temporary	1 x Grade 10 24 mths		£ 120,000

1 x Grade 9	12 mths	£ 53,000
1 x Grade 7	24 mths	£ 80,000
1 x Grade 7	12 mths	£ 40,000
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>£ 293,000</u>

GRAND TOTAL **£386,000***

* Of which £93,000 is recurring

(f) Property

There are no property implications.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equalities or socio economic impact implications.

(h) Consultations

The Corporate Management Team, Chief Financial Officer, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, ICT Managers and Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted on the content of the report and their comments incorporated into the body of the report.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Council's ICT Service is under increasing pressure due to the impact of the pandemic.

8.2 Additional resources are required to ensure the Council is equipped to support the increased demands arising from remote working, blended learning and teaching, enhanced digital services and to be able to prepare and respond robustly to increased cyber-security risks and the continued pace of change.

Author of Report: Frances Garrow
 Background Papers:
 Ref: SPMAN-1656699058-22