

Title	Review of Member's ICT needs
For further information about this report please contact	Susie Drummond
Service Area	Customer and Information Services
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A
Background Papers	N/A

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes/No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes/No

Officer/Councillor Approval

With regard to officer approval all reports must be approved by the report authors relevant Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Service, Finance, Monitoring Officer and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	08/02/11	Andrew Jones
Head of Service	08/02/11	Susie Drummond
CMT	08/02/11	Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer	08/02/11	Mike Snow
Monitoring officer	08/02/11	Andrew Jones
Finance	08/02/11	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	08/02/11	Les Caborn

Consultation Undertaken

Consulted with Members Services and Portfolio Holder.

Final Decision?	Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. Every four years, linked to the local elections, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Services undertakes a technology refresh of Councillor ICT equipment. The purpose of this report is to agree the technology required by Warwick District Councillors to perform their council duties. Issues considered were the cost of the provision, feedback from Councillors who use the technology and the need to ensure the Council's systems and data remain secure.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That Councillors adopt Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) technology as the connection method for accessing council systems and data.
- 2.2. That, if required, Councillors will be provided with a wireless thin client device, including mouse, screen, keyboard and a scanner/copier/printer.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1. In response to the financial challenges the council is facing, the council set up an Agile Working project. ICT's contribution to the project was to identify appropriate technologies that would support a more flexible workforce. The technology would need to support ad-hoc home working, hot desking, permanent home working, location independent working and mobile working, to name but a few.
- 3.2. The current VPN (Virtual Private Network) technology did not provide sufficient flexibility to address all these needs and so Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) technology was piloted. The pilot consisted of individual officer solutions and also addressed the needs of all the staff within the Council's Human Resources department. Following the success of these pilots, VDI Technology has now been established as the council's standard remote working technology. Therefore, to retain the existing VPN solution used by Councillors would incur additional costs (currently estimated to be 15k-20k).
- 3.3. The VDI solution offered to Councillors will enable access to email, the Council Intranet, unrestricted access to the Internet, MS Office and Committee papers. In addition, this solution specifically addresses the biggest single criticism Councillors have with the existing system, the time taken to connect to the Council's network. Because VDI technology removes a number of security issues, specifically verifying the security status of the connecting device, the connection method can be simplified. This will offer a significant advantage for Councillors, because the need to update the virus scanning software prior to connection is removed.
- 3.4. Finally, and linked to the above, the use of VDI provides more options for Councillors as council systems can now be accessed via VDI from non-council owned devices.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The alternative option considered was to refresh the existing Councillor technology, retaining the existing VPN solution for connection. To do so would create the following issues:

- The solution would not address the Councillors fundamental issue of delayed connection resulting from virus software updates. The solution would incur a more expensive device cost and would acquire higher support costs than a VDI solution.
- This would be a bespoke solution for Councillors in addition to the council's standard VDI solution, incurring additional costs.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1. The council currently funds a PC Replacement programme. The replacement programme is funded on the basis that all PCs (desktop, laptop and tablets) are replaced on a four year cycle. The Councillors' PCs form part of the replacement programme and sufficient funds exist to replace the existing Councillor equipment. Reductions have already been factored into the Capital Programme whereby the budget for PC/Printers has been re-profiled, so allowing the existing budget to be extended into 2014/15. This was included as part of the February 2011 budget Report. This budget will be subject to further scrutiny of the future demand upon it.
- 5.2. The cost of a thin client device is between £100 and £350, whereas a laptop/tablet PC costs between £400 and £850. In addition, a thin client device is expected to have an operating life of eight to ten years, but a laptop has an operating life of four years.
- 5.3. Provisioning costs also form part of the VDI business case. A thin client device, in its simplest form, can be made operational in minutes but a conventional PC can take a couple of hours to build and test. Furthermore, support costs are significantly reduced as the majority of maintenance and upgrade work takes place on the VDI machine in the Council's data centre and not on the device itself. This can reduce the number of site visits to Councillor homes. Each visit can cost the Council in excess of a hundred pounds when factoring in arranging, travelling and undertaking any necessary work. With 46 Councillors the support costs can be significant over a four year cycle.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1. The Council has committed itself to Fit for the Future and part of this is to review how the Council delivers its services to see if there are more efficient ways to do this. The move to VDI technology also has the potential to reduce energy usage.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Every four years, linked to the local elections, ICT Services undertakes a technology refresh of Councillor IT equipment.
- 7.2. The current technology solution utilises tablet PCs. Tablets were purchased on the assumption that Councillors would receive committee papers electronically and members would utilise the tablet PC at committee meetings. Clearly, and for perfectly valid reasons, this change has not taken place.
- 7.3. However, not only is the tablet PC an expensive device, but the use of such devices, be they standard PCs or laptops, requires significant security protocols to be put in place to protect the Council network; user validation, device validation, virus checking, etc. These protocols ensure we are compliant and

able to run important systems using customer information. For Councillors, who often only wish to check e-mails, and may do so infrequently, these protocols can be a barrier. Updating the virus software can create a considerable delay if a Councillor has not connected for a significant period of time.

- 7.4. Furthermore, ICT Services, like all Council departments, is seeking to cut its operating costs. The provision of complex devices not only incurs a significant capital outlay, but often leads to substantial hidden costs in user support. To address this, ICT Services has been evaluating the use of a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) to replace the traditional desktop within the council.
- 7.5. VDI is an alternative desktop delivery model that allows users to access desktops running in the council's data centre at Riverside House. This is achieved either via a local network connection or via the Internet.
- 7.6. Over recent years computer users have become very comfortable accessing systems via the Internet that do not reside on their local PC; Web mail, social networking sites and sites that enable you to manage and edit pictures. VDI extends this idea by making an entire PC and all its associated software available over the Internet.
- 7.7. The use of VDI technology delivers the following generic benefits to the council:
 - simpler provisioning of new desktops
 - lower cost of deploying new applications
 - desktop image-management capabilities
 - longer refresh cycle for client desktop infrastructure
 - flexible and secure remote access to an enterprise desktop environment
 - reduced energy costs
 - simpler patch management
- 7.8. VDI technology is also vital in supporting the council's Agile Working programme by enabling a variety of home working and mobile working solutions. VDI will also form part of the council's response to an emergency.
- 7.9. The proposed solution for Councillors builds on the work we have undertaken with officers, but is very different from the current solution. The Councillor's existing tablet PC is a very powerful and functionally rich device. This is a feature that some Councillors value as the Council equipment is often of a better specification than their personal equipment. However, we need to be open and transparent: the proposed solution will simply provide all the functionality necessary to perform council business and will not support personal use, other than access to the Internet.
- 7.10. The proposed solution will be based on VMware View Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, using a Wyse thin client device located in the Member's house. In essence, the Wyse device is a dumb terminal providing access to a virtual desktop which is stored on a server in Riverside House. This virtual desktop has the same look and feel as the Windows desktop that runs on a traditional PC.
- 7.11. In addition to the benefits to the council as a whole, the VDI solution will provide Councillors with:
 - A faster, simpler log on to the council network
 - full council e-mail functionality through MS Outlook

- access to the council Intranet
- access to the CMIS Committee Management System
- access to Microsoft Office
- facilities to print documents locally and to the Council's bulk printers
- centrally managed and transparent security patching and virus updates
- simpler support. In the event of a problem with the device, a new device can be issued with minimum need for local setup or configuration.
- direct access to Internet without the need to use the council's secure gateway and browsing restrictions
- access to council systems via non-council owned devices
- a single solution for Joint Members, who can use the WCC device for access to Warwick DC systems.

However, the solution also comes with some limitations.

- The device can no longer be used for personal use because all the data and programs are stored on the council's servers
- The solution is only available on-line and requires the member's broadband to be stable.
- The Wyse thin client device acts like a desktop PC, and, while it is very small, cannot be used as a portable device. However, the device is wireless enabled which means it requires no cables other than for power.

It should be noted that if system access is required away from the home then:

- WDC e-mail can be accessed from any Internet enabled device via webmail
- The Committee Management System is also web enabled, again allowing access from any Internet enabled device with a browser.