Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To
Audit and Procurement Committee

Date 18 November 2013

Subject Responses to ICT Related Jeep Suggestions

1   Purpose of the Note

1.1   To provide responses from ICT Services to staff suggestions made under the JEEP campaign.

2   Recommendations

Audit & Procurement Committee are asked to note the responses.

3   Information/Background

The original suggestions and responses are shown below/

<u>Suggestion:</u>

"Something I've been thinking of for a while which could save some money for the council is in the purchase of new IT equipment. I note that the council used to buy Blackberries which is sensible as they can connect easily to an Outlook server, however the new purchase of Apple devices seems less correct.
Personally I have an android device and I could purchase a license to connect to outlook easily. The program supports remote wiping should it be lost (so you can wipe all the emails and contacts from the IT machines) and it integrates with outlook so you can manage your emails, contacts, tasks and calendar the same or similarly to the desktop program. I know that Google themselves produce a tablet as a loss leader which is reputed to be one of the best on the market and obviously supports the widest range of applications as it is from the same company as the operating system. Instead we, as a council, have opted for Apple products, which causes me multiple concerns.

Apple products are considered prestigious and that seems in poor taste in the current economic climate

Apple uses a completely different operating system which is proprietary and is based on a different kernel to Microsoft which means there has to be additional support in place for the Apple OS (iOS if I recall correctly). Whilst this would also be true for any Android device,

their commonality with the common smart phone would make it easier to fix. Also the trend with these products would be to make them more like Windows to fit in better.

Apple uses all proprietary connections and parts. If an employee has a charger for his Android device then it's common that it will fit another Android device like their smartphone which cuts down on the number of PAT tests required and the resulting mess of cables. It would also be possible to have charging points where any device requiring that connection could be plugged in which would be a boon to any officer.

As a wider solution, we should be using Google Chrome as our default browser as it is internationally recognised as the most secure internet browser (noted as being broken for the first time in the 2012 Pwn2Own contest where hackers are pitted against browsers). In addition, using android based devices, a profile could be used which would ensure that the users desktop experience would be mimicked on their mobile browser which should end up in saving lots of time.

Certainly the best solution from an IT standpoint would be that we use Windows based mobile solutions.

The user would be familiar with the controls and interface

The machine would be running compatible software

The IT support should be parallel to the normal desktop support

Direct support for Outlook an MS Office as a whole would be default

I do understand that Windows based mobile devices cost more but I would wager that the long term saving could well outweigh the initial outlay on hardware and as a council it is our on-going costs which I would expect us to focus upon.

To return to the problem in and around the use of Apple devices also applies to the creation of local WiFi networks. People know what Facetime is and will have heard about people getting iPads for free (which is how it will be viewed) so pointing it out to them by labelling the networks in such an obvious fashion it is rubbing salt into the wound. Surely it should be labelled up simply as network 1, 2 and 3.

 In regard to the broader use of mobile devices, if certain officers are being given these devices as part of their work then there should be a facility which is well publicised where other officers should be able to register a piece of their personal IT equipment for use in the office. For example, I have a tablet and would find it useful to be able to access my email from anywhere in the council. Surely it makes sense for the council to support me in this as it would lead to higher productivity for no outlay on hardware and yet the only advice I have had is that it's a potential security problem. If senior officers can have a free gadget which isn't a security problem then I should be able to volunteer my own device to be secured and used for work purposes.

Going back to Google, it would make sense to approach this as a whole issue if you're looking for real cost reductions. Perhaps approaching Google as Hillingdon Borough Council did would yield savings both in the current setup of the Council's IT and any expansion into mobile computing. Perhaps through an approach, discounts could be arranged on the purchase of devices, better mobile solutions could be looked into and a partnership could be developed so that our staff could be cross trained and we may be able to tap into their resources to solve some of the long standing IT issues which plague us on a daily basis such as arranging the various databases which use address information to all reference one singular list of addresses. A quick search has yielded me the following link http://www.google.co.uk/enterprise/apps/government/ which shows some of what Google are currently doing to save costs in the public sector.

I know that this will seem like an over reaching suggestion for saving costs but looking at the overall picture it seems that the current ICT support is struggling to meet the demands of the users (I use Confirm, Servitor and Opti-Time on a daily basis and the three don't work together as an integrated whole which causes us many issues and cost) therefore by taking some of the load away from ICT it should be possible to ensure that the business needs are met as well as saving on costs related to licensing, support and infrastructure."

Response:

ICT continues to test the market and evaluate new technologies as they become available, to assess both their utility, cost effectiveness and suitability for deployment within the organisation. Apple products have been trialled with Councillors and senior Council officers as part of this approach, and have led to productivity increases and a reduction in costs, particularly paper.

ICT are actively in the process of replacing Blackberry devices with Windows smartphones which are cheaper to buy and maintain as well as offering a better user experience.

ICT has been working closely with colleagues in Information Governance and the Joint Information Security Team (JIST) group to develop a "bring your own device" policy, complemented with an appropriate technology solution which would:
> Enable staff with a valid business case to use their own privately owned device to access email and calendar entries.
> Ensure that all Council information was appropriately encrypted and secured to minimise the risk of sensitive information finding its way into unauthorised hands.

ICT are also trialling Windows tablets to see if they offer a better cost and usability alternative to iPads for deployment within the Council.

The ICT Strategy since April 2011 has been to adopt software which could operate using any browser, rather than any manufacturer specific product. This requirement has been built into procurement of all ICT systems. It is the case, however, that older ICT systems do not always have this capability. Procurement and implementation of new systems is not a trivial matter, involving significant cost, time, planning and testing to ensure success. This is also true for integrating systems, which can be very costly: nevertheless, automation of processes through increased integration is high on our agenda where there is a clear business case to do so.

Regarding a wider adoption of Google technologies, ICT has continued to monitor changes in the market. We are also actively engaged with our counterparts in Warwickshire County Council who have been trialling Google Apps for some time. There are significant challenges, including integration with existing applications and also commercial considerations. Furthermore, ICT recently entered into a new Enterprise Agreement with Microsoft: this agreement has provided the organisation with access to the latest technologies compatible with our existing products at a competitive rate whilst ensuring that the Council is fully compliant with necessary licensing.

Suggestion:
"A few ideas around IT services which I believe could make good long term savings Development of an Access hub of people to develop simple database solutions for internal customers. It would be most useful in Business Services but could potentially

go Council-wide. The saving would be that a lot of manual processes are being carried out with repetitive operations/ calculations. With wider use of Access these processes could be computerised. Also with simple solutions such as putting the flexi sheets on an access setup then it would be far simpler for a manager to keep an eye on the timekeeping of all the staff rather than having to go through the individual sheets/ records.

IT Support tends to be done at a department level and there is little done for a team. For example we receive a lot of reports from Confirm which no longer have any purpose or need to be updated. To get these altered would require long conversations with IT staff who often are unaware of the need for the changes requested and it would be more efficient if we had someone with access on the floor who could take on these tasks and communicate with IT where necessary but otherwise work on their own initiative. This would allow the various systems in use by the Council to be properly tuned to the department they are used in."

Response:

ICT fully support the use of technology to optimise business processes, particularly if those process are currently manual. However, the use of Microsoft Access is not a sustainable solution. Microsoft Access allows for data to be stored in non-secure and unstructured/inefficient way. ICT are continually working to consolidate the number of systems and data stores that we have as an organisation (we currently have upwards of 300). We would not support the creation of more ad-hoc data stores and therefore potentially uncontrolled data-sets. Traditionally we have found that, where Microsoft Access has been used to provide a Business Solution, there has been inconsistency in how those systems are supported by the business. Generally the databases have been created by a single person who has then left the organisation with all of the knowledge as to how the database has been created and how to support and maintain it. If there are genuine business requirements for an ICT solution we encourage service areas to raise the matter with their ICT Business Account Manager

In terms of services having a greater level of access to configure their business systems then this is something that we can investigate. However, careful consideration would need to be given to the functionality of the line of business system and the access that is required. The primary concern has to be the protection of the data and security/integrity of the system. There would also need to be the enforcement of a robust Change Management process to ensure that any changes being made to configuration are performed in a controlled and safe manner. If there are specific examples/requirements for system configuration changes this should be the subject of a dialogue with the relevant ICT Business Account Manager.

Suggestion:

"Not having 3G on ipads"

Response:

The iPads currently provided for use by Council staff are provided primarily as replacements for Blackberry devices where other functionality is required, subject to a business case. Whilst it is possible for iPad users to connect via Wi-Fi to access emails and corporate systems in an increasing number of locations, Wi-Fi connectivity is not yet ubiquitous. Therefore a 3G connection is required to ensure that iPad users can send and receive emails, connect to council systems etc. where there is no available WiFi connection.

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