WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology

Corporate Services Committee: 19 May 2021
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Subject: Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) Trunking Project

1.   Purpose

1.1   The purpose of this report is to seek approval to tender for a SIP solution to facilitate the transition from legacy ISDN30 telephone lines & Virgin Media Centrex lines. This is necessary due to the decommissioning of legacy copper cabling by 2025.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   The Committee is asked to:

2.1.1 Note that the business case was approved by ICT Steering Board and the Chief Executive in March 2021 to proceed to Committee;

2.1.2 Approve the tender for a SIP Trunking telephony solution to replace the existing legacy analogue telephony lines;

2.1.3 Note that approval will be sought from Tendering Committee to award the SIP Trunking telephony solution to the successful supplier; and

2.1.4 On award, the implementation plan will be developed relevant to the tender solution and remitted to the Strategic Recovery and Resilience Group (SRRG).

3.   Background

3.1   The Office of Communications (Ofcom) have advised that due to the decommissioning of both Openreach and Virgin Media legacy analogue Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) services by 2025, organisations require to move to digital Internet Protocol (IP) based service.

3.2   A Prior Information Notice (PIN) was presented to the marketplace via Procurement Scotland public contracts Scotland website on 18th June 2020 to ensure the financial implications of the project could be gathered prior to seeking project approval.

3.3   The PIN generated interest from a number of organisations and indicated potential savings of 40% on ISDN call and rental charges per annum and 60% on annual Centrex call and rental charges. Based on these indicative figures

and current spend, this would result in a potential saving of £76,000 per year, £48,000 saving on ISDN and £28,000 on Centrex.

3.4 The savings on call charges was based on spend during 19-20 which may now have changed due to different working practices during COVID-19. In addition there may be further changes that impact the level of savings that can be achieved.

3.5 The SIP solution, subject to Committee approval will
- Replace legacy ISDN30 telephone lines with Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) trunks. The scope will replace 21 ISDN30 telephone lines in large offices, PPP Schools, Leisure Trust HQ & any new builds; and

- Includes the legacy Virgin Media Centrex lines to achieve maximum savings in accordance with the information provided during the PIN response.

3.6 Remaining analogue circuits, for example, small sites, small halls, legacy primary schools, lift lines and alarm lines will be examined with a view to replacing with alternate technologies such as mobile phones 3/4G sim cards and VoIP telephony where appropriate.

3.7 In addition to the SIP information gathered as part of the PIN, two suppliers (Openreach and Virgin Media) indicated that charges for legacy technologies are likely to increase in the current financial year. The suppliers have indicated that this may be up to 50% of the current costs for some technologies.

4. **Main Issues**

4.1 The Council's telephony infrastructure must be changed from analogue to digital by 2025.

4.2 The work will include an assessment of which buildings the SIP trunk circuits will be presented from. This is from a capacity and a resilience perspective as well as ensuring it meets the Council's asset management plans.

4.3 Consideration will be given to the capacity of the trunks and also the resilience of the solution. This will have a direct correlation to the cost and potential savings.

4.4 Consideration will include the impact of COVID-19 on
- working practices and telephony needs. It will consider what these practices may look like in the future. This will have a direct correlation to the costs and potential savings of the project.

- Consideration will be given to physical site access as some devices will need to be relocated alongside equipment replacement and installs.

4.4 During implementation, a detailed analysis of existing telephone ranges and caller line identity will be vital to help ensure the number porting process and end user communication is accurate and timely.

5. People Implications

5.1 The project will require a full time resource allocated for its duration. The intention is for this to be allocated to existing resources within the ICT Network team.

5.2 There will be a requirement for close inter team working as this project may have dependencies and impact other projects such as the Secure Payment Card (PCI DSS), asset rationalisation and community alarm projects.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 The PIN notice has indicated that a capital outlay of approximately £120,000 is required to purchase the new voice data circuits, porting charges voice gateways and other project implementation costs. It is envisaged that this will be funded from the Transformation budget.

6.2 Due to the potential savings identified during the PIN process, the intention now is to liaise with the appropriate Council services to secure funding from Transformation budget for this project with the Return on Investment (ROI) being achieved in years 2-3 of project implementation.

6.3 The Procurement exercise will include consideration of existing SIP trunking frameworks already in place via for example Procurement Scotland and Crown Commercial Services.

6.4 A new setup for invoicing and payment will be designed and implemented in conjunction with Finance and Business Support teams and is likely to be a centralised telephony budget. The current model of telephony costs being paid by the Schools/ Service areas may therefore need to be reviewed and this may deliver time releasing savings within the service areas and school offices.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There is a risk that WDC see an increase in costs for current telephony services as per feedback from Virgin Media and Openreach during the PIN process.

7.2 The secure card payment project will impact on this SIP trunking project because some existing council telephone numbers (sections who take

payments) need to be ported to a third party "secure payment platform" e.g. Contact Centre, Finance debt recovery etc.

7.3 Consideration will be given to new working practices and the potential impact on resilience and SIP trunking locations and this in turn may impact the level of savings that can be achieved.

7.4 Consideration will be given to the transfer process as there is likely to be disruption while the numbers are transferred to the new platform and there is a potential requirement for some phone numbers to be changed.

7.5 There are technical risks during the implementation phase of the project due to porting of the numbers, particularly for high profile number such as Contact Centre and Council Tax etc. Consideration will be given to porting after hours or at weekends at potentially additional costing in order to minimise disruption.

7.6 Transition from legacy technologies to SIP based solutions will need to take place as a minimum before 2025.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An equalities impact assessment was carried out and there are no adverse equalities issues identified. Where specific telephony needs are identified these are and will continue to be provided for.

9. Environmental Sustainability

9.1 Centrex basic handsets will be replaced by VoIP Cisco handsets. In some circumstances these handsets may be suitable for repurpose to sites/schools where VoIP Cisco handsets are not currently in use. Some Centrex handsets will be disposed of due to wear & tear and deemed no longer fit for purpose.

10. Consultation

10.1 Legal, CPU, Education and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted on the content of this paper. It was not necessary to consult with our Trades Union colleagues on this report. However, the Council's digital strategy and activity is regularly discussed with the Convenors group.

11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 High quality voice services contribute to the Council's strategic priority of delivering Public services.

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Appendix:

Background papers:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/137966/future-fixed-telephone-services.pdf