

Update on IT and Digital Services

IT and Digital Services

1. The County Council's (the Council) IT systems in normal times provide essential services to allow council business to be carried out for staff, residents and with our partners. With limited occupancy of our office facilities, supporting remote working has been essential as has the development of new applications or solutions for specific pandemic responses.

System Performance and resilience:

2. All remote working systems have performed well supporting the vast majority of Council staff to work remotely. Outages remain unusual even given the increased usage of our systems as highlighted here:

- 2900 Users on VPN - Peak number Connected simultaneously to our VPN
- 50% - 60% Internet Circuit – Average daily bandwidth usage of Internet Circuit
- 1000+ Video Calls – Average number of video calls per week (increase from average of 30 per week prior to COVID--19)
- In addition to our primary Internet Data Circuit located within County Hall, a secondary Internet Data Circuit has now been installed at Wildwood. This now ensures that there is a fully resilient internet connection that can be switched to, in the event that County Hall becomes unavailable. This is critical in ensuring our remote working system remains available and so that the increased number of cloud hosted systems we now have would still be available for staff.
- We have now upgraded a key link within the system from a 1 Gigabit per second to a 10 Gigabits per second link. This has added further resilience to our network infrastructure, enhancing the performance of our remote working system.

Digital Apps:

3. A number of specific applications have been developed to respond to various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic as shown here:

- Here2Help Website & App
- Volunteer Redeployment App
- Absence from Work due to COVID-19 App
- Existing Medical Condition Declaration App
- Previous Care Experience App
- COVID-19 Testing App
- COVID-19 Test Result App
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Request Form App

Technology Solutions:

4. A number of specific solutions have been developed to respond to various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic as shown here.

- Desktop Background Rollout
- Telephony Contact Centre Changes
- Adults Access Contact Centre
- Here2Help Contact Centre
- Gov Notify to Text/Send Letters to residents
- Provision of Zoom accounts for internal/external video calls
- 25 Scanners provided to Registration Services
- 100+ additional laptop devices provided

Other Business Support:

5. A number of other business support activities have been taken to respond to various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Shielded Cohort Data - Analysis of Shielded Data against Social Care Data
- Digital Devices for Vulnerable Children - Co-ordination of procurement & distribution
- Staff Moves - Moving Discharge Team from Aconbury House to the Skye Building at Worcestershire Royal Hospital
- Out of Hours support – Extended to cover a wider range of issues
- Online Council Meetings - Preparation for public Council meetings being held online via Zoom.

Business as Usual (BAU) Activities

6. Despite the current situation the IT & Digital Service have been able to continue to deliver a number of key BAU activities:

- Internet Circuit Maintenance – Resilient Internet Circuit now installed in Wildwood
- Liquid Logic - Post Go live Liquid Logic Upgrade & CPIS (Child Protection Information System) implementation
- Civica Contact Centre – Transfer of the service back to WCC completed on 1 April.
- Babcock insourcing – IT & Digital elements of the project have been progressed and were ready for go-live on the 1 June 2020.
- Digital Worcestershire Website - www.worcestershire.gov.uk/digital - The site showcases the digital work we are delivering as a Council and will also provide digital resources for residents and businesses to help with digital inclusion.
- Liquid Logic
- Improvements to Liquid Logic have also focussed on improving the resilience of the system. We have worked with Liquid Logic to implement a third application server to improve the memory and increase the number of users who are able to access the system at any time.

- Video Conferencing
- Throughout the COVID-19 crisis we have seen a dramatic increase in the amount of Lync video conferencing meetings being undertaken by staff. This has placed a huge load on the servers resulting in a drop in quality of both video and audio calls, as both types of calls are delivered by the same servers. To address this issue and restore the quality of our audio calls an options paper was drafted with a recommendation to roll out the Zoom Video Conferencing client to all Count Council machines. This will be configured in such a way that the network traffic is routed directly to the Zoom Cloud servers and avoids impacting our own network performance. Work is underway with the rollout and we expect to complete this work later in June).

7. The pandemic has tested the resilience of our systems and the pace at which the team can develop applications and solutions. Whilst each of these elements has so far stood up well to the test and incremental improvements as outlined above have been made, there is still more that can be done to assist the organisation in its progress to being truly digital first and having safe resilient systems, increasingly hosted off premise. Our Digital Strategy and Future Technology Transformation Programme are well advanced and map out how we can better support customers and the workforce building on recent investments in our systems and infrastructure.