

Report to Cabinet

20 October 2021

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| Subject: | Storage Area Network (SAN) refresh, associated professional services and ongoing support and maintenance – 2022 to 2027 |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Maria Crompton - Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources |
| Director: | Neil Cox – Director of Business Strategy and Change |
| Key Decision: | Yes |
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1 Recommendations

That approval be given to:

- 1.1 Authorise the Director – Business Strategy and Change, along with the Director Finance - Section 151 Officer and in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, to award a contract for providing a Storage Area Network (SAN) refresh, for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027 via a compliant further competition process under the NHS Shared Business Services, Digital Workplace Solutions Framework agreement SBS/19/WAB/9411.









- 1.2 That the Director Law and Governance – Monitoring Officer be authorised to execute any documentation necessary to enable the above.
- 1.3 That any necessary exemptions be made to the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules to enable the course of action referred to in 1.1 above.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Authority is sought to authorise the Director – Business Change and Strategy, along with the Director – Finance - Section 151 Officer to approve and award the contract and accept a tender for supplying a SAN including professional services for implementation and migration from the current platform plus annual maintenance and support. The contract will be awarded following a compliant Further Competition and evaluation process under the NHS Shared Business Services, Digital Workplace Solutions Framework agreement.
- 2.2 The contract will allow for the procurement of new storage hardware (the SAN), data management / protection tooling, implementation, migration of data from the current platform and 5 years' support and maintenance for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027.
- 2.3 The new contract will provide an accredited channel reseller to transition the current SAN and replace with new products and services.
- 2.4 The value of the new contract for the 5-year period is estimated to be around £900,000 based on market engagement.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

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|  | Best start in life for children and young people | Most service areas now rely on ICT systems to function effectively. The SAN provides onsite storage for the majority of council data including Office documents, business applications and other functional storage. This is complementary to some cloud services where other council data is stored. |
|  | People live well and age well | |
|  | Strong resilient communities | |
|  | Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods | |
|  | A strong and inclusive economy | |
|  | A connected and accessible Sandwell | Awarding this contract will provide on premise data storage beyond the end of life of the current storage platform. This is necessary for the continuing delivery of most if not all council services and therefore supports the council's ability to achieve all the outcomes detailed in the Corporate plan. |

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The current SAN is provided by the manufacturer - NetApp – some of which has now reached the end of supported life. The last refresh was in 2014. The current support contract also expires on 31st March 2022 and the council would then have to continue with a new, best endeavours contract, due to the potential reduction in the availability of spare parts.



- 4.2 Most, if not all, council services depend on data being stored on the SAN whether this is Office type documents e.g. Word, Excel, images and videos or data in business applications which are hosted from our data centre. It is imperative that the council maintains an up to date, well managed and resilient data storage platform due to the critical nature of its information.
- 4.3 It is also intended as part of this procurement to create a complementing second data storage platform (as part of the new SAN configuration) at a second site to provide resilience. This will ensure easier recovery in the event of a loss scenario at our main data centre or if our data is compromised through some form of cyber-attack or even maybe a malicious incident. Provision will also be made to update our copy to tape capability of all data, so we can be sure we have a totally offsite / offline version of all our data. The capacity and age of our current tape back-up system does not allow for this.
- 4.4 Storage vendors do not deal directly with their customers as is usual practice within the ICT industry. Therefore, the council needs to procure the SAN and services contract via a channel reseller. A procurement exercise will be conducted to appoint a reseller who will renew and support the new SAN and associated software covering the period 01 April 2022 to 21 March 2027.
- 4.5 Invitation to Tender documents will be issued to all suppliers capable of providing the requirements of this tender under the NHS Shared Business Services, Digital Workplace Solutions Framework agreement. Authority is sought to delegate to the Director – Business Strategy and Change and Director – Finance - Section 151 Officer to approve and award the contract and accept a tender for the continued provision of the SAN system and services, following a compliant procurement exercise.
- 4.6 The SAN contract will be a 5-year contract consisting of procurement of equipment, data management software and protection, software licenses, implementation, data migration plus support and maintenance services.



- 4.7 The intention is to procure implementation and data migration services which will have little or no impact on operational services and have negligible impact on service areas.
- 4.8 Given the critical nature of the data being stored and the constant threat from cyber-attack, it is essential that we procure tools to protect the council from such threats - particularly ransomware. Recent events at other local authorities such as London Borough of Hackney and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council have demonstrated that these threats are very real, and the consequence of a successful attack leads to a “total loss” scenario with loss of all council information with little or no possibility of recovery. Such attacks are now so sophisticated that even back-up copies become encrypted. As part of the procurement we will include provision for a complete backup copy of data to tape, meaning we would be in a far better position to restore our data in this scenario. Costs for recovery of attacks run into many millions of pounds plus the impact onto the council’s reputation.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 A "do nothing" approach is not feasible, as it would result in no software updates being available and potentially a lack of availability of spare parts e.g. new discs or system boards in the event of failure. This would present both major cyber security and operational risks for the council if data could not be accessed or is totally lost.
- 5.2 A cloud data storage approach is feasible but not within the timescale for needing to refresh the current on-premise SAN. The council will continue a gradual migration to cloud services where this is the “smart” approach to take e.g. value for money, functionality etc. However, it is not easy to “lift and shift” data from on premise to a cloud service and time is necessary to ensure the data is cleansed and structured ready for migration.



As Covid still presents a significant challenge for the council, it would not be wise to radically change the way our workforce accesses its data and the strategic approach to buy a new SAN is a sound one both commercially and operationally. By the end of the 5-year SAN contract it is envisaged that the council will have orientated towards a “more cloud” than “on premise” approach meaning we would then be able to reduce the need for a SAN of the size we need to purchase now.

6 Implications

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| Resources: | The total value of the contract is estimated to be £900,000. This will be funded from the existing ICT revenue and capital refresh budget. |
| Legal and Governance: | The Council's Contract and Procurement Procedures will be adhered to. |
| Risk: | The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify and assess the risks associated with the recommendations being sought. This has concluded that there are no significant risks that require reporting. Further measures will be put in place to ensure that the risks identified during the procurement process are considered and mitigated to levels within the council's appetite for risk. |
| Equality: | No implications |
| Health and Wellbeing: | No implications |
| Social Value | Social Value will be considered during the procurement process |

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None

