
Agenda Item: IT Provision

Meeting Date: Monday, 28 September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Council's current IT provision and seek approval for an extension to the existing IT contract, together with further IT and cyber security enhancements to help inform the 2027–28 budget-setting process.

Background

Following a review of service provision, the Council sought a one-year IT contract for 2025, as referenced in Minute F200 of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 14 April 2025. Following consideration by the Committee on 21 July 2025 (Minute F435 refers), the Council subsequently entered into a one-year contract with its current provider.

The one-year term was intended to provide the Council with flexibility to assess the quality of service during the contract period and to inform its decision-making regarding future arrangements.

During the contract period, several Council services and systems have been enhanced. These include improvements to IT security, migration to a secure cloud server, the introduction of multi-factor authentication and the adoption of updated technology. These measures have supported greater flexibility and agility for the Council's workforce and improved access to software and systems.

Current Situation

The Council's IT infrastructure remains a critical resource supporting service delivery and day-to-day operations. While significant progress has been made in modernising systems, several projects remain underway and further improvements are planned.

Cyber security remains one of the Council's most significant operational risks, with the potential to disrupt services and compromise data. The Council's IT provider has recommended enhancements to improve resilience and security. Whilst these proposals involve significant expenditure, officers consider it important that the costs are weighed against the risks being mitigated and the protection provided to Council services and operations.

1. IT Service Contract Annual Renewal

To ensure continuity and support the completion of projects, officers are seeking an extension to the current IT support contract. Details are included in the confidential appendix.

2. Cyber Essentials Certification

Cyber Essentials is a UK government backed scheme designed to help organisations protect themselves against common cyber threats. It provides a clear set of security controls to safeguard sensitive data and maintain customer trust.

Achieving Cyber Essentials certification demonstrates the Council's commitment to maintaining appropriate standards of cyber security and strengthening its protection against common cyber threats. Subject to eligibility and opting into the scheme, certification also provides access to cyber liability insurance of up to £25,000, together with a 24-hour incident response service providing access to technical, legal and crisis-management support in the event of a cyber incident.

An option, including associated costs, has been provided by the Council's IT supplier and is set out in the confidential appendix for consideration.

3. Cyber Security Packages

Cyber security remains one of the Council's most significant risks. The proposed enhancements are intended to provide a proactive and ongoing defence across the Council's operations, helping to protect systems, data, officers and Councillors from evolving cyber threats.

The Council's IT provider has presented three options, together with the associated costs, which are set out in the confidential appendix for Members' consideration.

4. Councillor Tablets

In line with previous practice, it is proposed that provision is made within the 2027-28 budget for replacement tablets for Councillors from May 2027. Maintaining appropriate and up-to-date equipment supports secure access to Council systems. This is particularly relevant to the Council's wider information governance and security responsibilities, including the use of gov.uk domain email addresses and the maintenance of current and robust IT policies.

Two options, including associated costs, have been provided by the Council's IT supplier and are set out in the confidential appendix for consideration.

Online Bookings Software

In addition, the Council will shortly be able to introduce an online booking portal, previously approved by the Council, through its website(s). The portal will provide existing and prospective customers with a more convenient and accessible booking service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Committee & Meeting Software

The Council's current committee and meeting software has been in place since 2019 and has been used throughout two Council administrations. While the software provided a range of new functionality when initially introduced, alternative solutions are now available, including options that may offer different functionality and cost structures. Officers consider that this provides an appropriate opportunity to review the current contract ahead of the new administration taking office in May 2027.

A survey will be undertaken to establish which functions of the service are currently used by Councillors and to inform the assessment of the Council's requirements. Further commercial information relating to the software options and current contract is provided in the confidential appendix.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) **Equality** – Enhanced cyber security and the introduction of an online booking portal are expected to have a positive equality impact by improving the security, resilience and accessibility of Council services. The online portal will provide a more convenient way for residents to access services, while alternative access methods will remain available to support those who are unable or prefer not to use digital services.
- b) **Biodiversity** – No impact from the contents of this report.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** – No impact from the contents of this report.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – The proposed enhancements to the Council's IT infrastructure, including the introduction of an online booking portal and new Councillor tablets are expected to have a positive environmental impact by reducing reliance on paper, supporting digital service delivery, and reducing the need for unnecessary travel to Council offices. Where new tablets are purchased, existing devices will be securely wiped and either recycled in accordance with appropriate disposal practices or repurposed for use by local community groups, helping to reduce electronic waste.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The Council's current IT arrangements present several operational and information security risks that should be considered as part of its business continuity planning. While cloud-based

services offer significant benefits, they also introduce dependencies that require appropriate resilience and contingency measures. Maintaining effective cyber security controls is important in reducing exposure to cyber threats, while the continued use of older or unsupported equipment may increase operational and security risks.

The proposed IT solutions represent a significant financial commitment and should therefore be assessed against the level of risk they are intended to mitigate. Any investment should be proportionate, support service resilience and business continuity, and demonstrate value for money for the Council.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Providing an online booking portal offers social value by improving accessibility and convenience for residents, enabling services and facilities to be booked at any time without the need to contact Council staff directly. This can enhance customer experience, and support more efficient service delivery.

Investment in enhanced cyber security also delivers social value by helping to protect residents' personal data, maintain public trust, and ensure the continued resilience of Council services against evolving cyber threats.

Financial implications

- The Council does not need to tender for a new IT contract under Item 5.7 (iv) of the Council's adopted Financial Regulations as it is an extension to the current contract.
- The Council holds an IT Earmarked reserve (EMR 383) which has a current balance of £24,575 from where projects one-off costs may be funded from, if agreed.
 - Councillor Tablets
 - Cyber Essentials Certification
 - Meetings Software
- Approval of additional monthly costs for security enhancements would need to be included in the 2027-28 budget and beyond.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Approve the extension to the current IT provision and services contract with Atomyc Ltd.
2. Consider whether the Council should seek Cyber Essentials certification.
3. Consider the inclusion of a pre-wrapped Security solution for the Council (including officers and Councillors).
4. Consider the allocation of funds in 2027-28 for the purchase and support of new Councillor tablets.

5. Note the updates concerning the Council's Online Bookings and Meetings Management software. NB. A recommendation on future software provision is expected to be presented to Members during the November cycle of meetings. Alternatively, Members may wish to delegate authority to officers to continue evaluating and, where appropriate, progress discussions with potential providers.