

Committee: IT Working Group
Date: 14 October 2009
Title: Data and System Backups and Disaster Recovery
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Agenda Item

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Item for
Information

Summary

1. This report is to advise Members of an issue around the council's backup system, the course of action undertaken and the three diverse ways in which backups will be undertaken in the future.

Recommendations

2. None.

Background Papers

None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	A report has been submitted to Finance and Administration Committee on 12 October requesting an additional capital sum of £30,000 over two years.
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None.

Situation

3. Attached as Appendix One is the report that is being presented to Finance and Administration Committee on 12 October. A verbal update on the outcome of that meeting will be given to this Working Group.
4. The council is looking to reduce the risk of backup failure and downtime following a disaster. To that end three different ways of backup and service delivery are being looked at.

Method One

5. The additional funding would give the council the potential to move to disk to disk backup rather than the current tape solution. Previous experiences of tape recovery following system failures are not good. Exchange (Outlook) took 9 days to recover and Revenues and Benefits took 5 days.
6. The tape backup device is located in the lodge and would in reality be either lost or within an inaccessible area should the main council offices be lost. It is therefore proposed to locate the new backup solution at Walden Place, a sheltered unit to the north of the town centre.
7. It is also proposed to evaluate the potential of using one of the community rooms at Walden Place as an ICT recovery suite in the event of a disaster. The room would be networked and broadband lines established in advance so as to give a semi-hot recovery centre. On a day-to day basis this room could be used by the council as more office space for teams such as the Housing Wardens.

Method Two

8. The progress of the blade server project (agenda item 8) means that officers can explore potential partnerships with nearby councils. It is proposed that a number of blade servers are located at Chelmsford Borough Councils offices with replication of those systems identified in agenda item 8, being drip fed down the Essex Extranet to Chelmsford on a 24x7 basis. This means the systems stored at Chelmsford will at all times be an exact replica of those being operated out of the Saffron Walden offices. In the event of a major disaster the blade servers would be retrieved and located in the temporary offices. Recovery of systems identified in agenda item 8 should therefore be no more than 72 hours which includes a period of infrastructure change and setup.
9. This partnership would be reciprocated with blade servers from Chelmsford being located at the Saffron Walden offices.

Method Three

10. The final method is outsourcing of services and therefore backups and recovery. The council already outsources Revenues and Benefits and the associated backups and recovery. Officers are currently exploring the possibility of entering in to an agreement with Microsoft for them to host Exchange (Outlook).

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11. The system is hosted from a data centre in Ireland with a mirror image being kept for data recovery purposes within the same building. There is then a second copy of the system replicated to Microsoft's own disaster recovery suite in Amsterdam.
12. As well as the advantage of remote hosting and therefore backups and data recovery there are a number of other positives
 - a. The council uses Outlook 2003 and would have a cost of migrating to Outlook 2007. The Microsoft solution is already Outlook 2007 with an upgrade path to Outlook 2010 planned.
 - b. The solution also supports webmail and Blackberrys
 - c. Anti-virus and anti-spam are included which means a savings on the existing software.
 - d. Email archiving would also be part of the package which enables current annual support on the existing solution to be cancelled
 - e. A significant number of expensive backup licences would also be cancelled as backup would be the responsibility of Microsoft
13. The Microsoft option is still being evaluated and it is hoped to give Members a verbal update on the costs at the meeting.