Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

18 October 2012

Update on the Cloud Programme

Purpose of report

1. This report is to update the committee on the progress that has been made in the development of Cloud Computing solutions for Wiltshire Council.

Background

2. Cloud computing is a model for enabling convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources (e.g., networks, servers, storage, applications, and services) that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction.

3. From a business perspective, resources in the cloud are typically leased as required (and paid from revenue as a utility service), with responsibility for support, backups, disaster recovery and capacity planning being the responsibility of the provider. This contrasts with a more traditional model where resources are purchased (using capital), with responsibility for support, backup, disaster recovery, capacity planning and end of life replacement lying with the organisation.

4. The Cloud Computing Programme, which is led within the Transformation Programme, has been initiated to take advantage of the benefits afforded by Cloud Computing - as previously identified by the Programme and highlighted in Wiltshire Council's, "Information Services Technology Plan 2011-15". The exploitation of 'Cloud' solutions has been endorsed by CLT and Cabinet and the previous ICT Scrutiny Task Group.

5. In the Local Government arena, Wiltshire Council has successfully pioneered the introduction of a number of Microsoft products to reduce long term costs and improve delivery – among them Windows 7, Lync and SharePoint 2010. This along with Microsoft's desire to improve its market position for Cloud services in this sector gives a mutually beneficial, window of opportunity for partnering and co-development.

6. A hybrid cloud platform with multiple service providers is being targeted as our long term goal.

Business Goals

7.   To transform delivery and support low cost, sustainable resilient services that are relevant to the public and delivered when and where required.

8.   To improve partnership working: Enabler for the public sector in Wiltshire; Develop high-value, strategic partnerships with leading cloud service providers.

9.   Deliver tangible service enhancements at reduced cost.

10. Security: Ensure Government Code of Connection/Public Services Network compliance; work with CESG accredited host environment for data.

11. Decrease time to deploy services to 3rd parties and partner organisations.

12. Improve accessibility and resilience whilst decreasing management overheads of major software platforms (e.g. Exchange 2010, SharePoint 2010 online) through migration to remote fully hosted solutions.

13. Move in-house developed public facing web applications to a more resilient, functionally rich, scalable platform, allowing for greater use of 'Apps' and more rapid development.

Progress to date

14. Wiltshire Council has worked in close partnership with Microsoft to investigate the suitability of Microsoft's Office 365 cloud based Microsoft Office solution and other cloud based hosting solutions for the council. Following the investigations, Microsoft subsequently committed to providing the technical expertise and funding to support Wiltshire in migrating to the Office 365 cloud solution.

15. Wiltshire Council is continuing to assist Microsoft with its endeavours to attain CESG (Communications Electronic Security Group) accreditation. This is a mutually beneficial outcome.

16. Microsoft Office 365 was deployed to a pilot group of 50 Wiltshire Council Users. A roll-out has followed with approximately two thirds of Wiltshire Council users currently migrated to Office 365.

17. Full migration of the estate is planned to complete by December 2012. Decommissioning of the existing email infrastructure will follow and be completed during the first quarter of 2013.

18. In conjunction with the migration of users to Office 365, a separately sponsored project to implement an email Protective Marking Scheme has been introduced to classify email relative to its sensitivity / confidentiality. The Protective Marking Scheme adopted by Wiltshire Council involves classifying information in three categories – 'unclassified', 'protect' and 'restricted' mirroring those already in use across the Public Sector and delivering a significant functionality increase within Wiltshire.

19. Wiltshire Council initially deployed a Smartphone email solution called Good. This solution allows both Corporate and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Smartphones to receive Wiltshire email. , Good does not work within a Cloud based email environment. Alternative solutions have been investigated as part of the programme and the deployment of a Microsoft solution has commenced, although its deployment is dependent on the maintenance of existing staff resource levels within the project.

20. In alignment with Central Government's data publishing initiative, 'OpenData', the council offers a number of datasets to the public for free reuse. These datasets have previously been hosted on internal servers.

21. Datasets have successfully been migrated to a Microsoft Cloud solution, extending the number of data formats and increasing visibility of the data by publishing the data on a more accessible Marketplace at lower cost to the council.

22. A number of other applications have been trialled in Microsoft Cloud solutions with the aim of further advancing the adoption of quicker to deploy, resilient cloud solutions. A bus timetable solution and SharePoint development environments have been successfully established in the Microsoft cloud and will be exploited over the coming eighteen months.

23. In line with the strategy of allowing greater use of 'Apps', a cloud project has been initiated to introduce a hosted web based portal and Smartphone app to allow members of the public to report issues traditionally reported though telephone calls.

24. The supplier of the hosted solution is My Council Services, a different provider, contributing to the goal of introducing a hybrid cloud platform with multiple service providers and exploiting the ability of the Cloud approach to support 'best in class' solutions rather than one size fits all.

25. The initial scope of the app is to cover Streetscene issues such as Street Litter and Fly Tipping, although the solution is scalable to allow the addition of other service areas.

26. It is intended to launch the Smartphone app before end October 2012.

27. The ability to report issues to the Council using a Smartphone app combined with full integration will reduce the resource requirement involved in answering phone calls and emails and also links directly to Wiltshire Councils communication strategy.

28. Third party developed Smartphone apps are continuing to be developed and offered on commercial terms. It is Wiltshire Council's strategy to grow the capability to develop in house public facing Smartphone apps to deliver service enhancements at lower cost and increased speed of deployment.

Conclusion

29.   To note the progress and achievements made to date on the Cloud Programme
       in line with CLT approvals.

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Background papers
Wiltshire Council, "Information Services Technology Plan 2011-15" explains how
Cloud fits with Wiltshire's IS strategy.

Appendices
None