

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

5219

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Department:

People

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Subject:

Move to a software as a service solution for children's and adults case management (Liquidlogic) and ContrOCC systems

Total Value:

£313,991 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

Approval to issue a change control notice to move from the current on premise server hosting of the children's and adults Liquidlogic case management system and ContrOCC application to a cloud hosted platform as a solution with System C (the company contractually providing the Liquidlogic system).

Reasons for the Decision(s)

Liquidlogic is the children's (EHM and LCS) and adults (LAS) case management system. As well as being the only source of case management recording it enables data to be pulled into performance reports, enabling senior management oversight of performance and gathering of themes and trends. ContrOCC is used to manage and report on placement spend and is a vital tool for strategic financial reporting. ContrOCC pulls data from the Liquidlogic case management system to support this. The underlying server infrastructure that supports these systems is held on premise and is outdated and is now out of mainstream support. The servers have been out of mainstream support since 18th October 2018 and fully out of support since 10th October 2023. Since October 2023 the Council has been in period of extended support which comes at a cost. This is limited to three years. This puts the council at increasing compliance risk the longer the unsupported infrastructure remains. As a result of the age of the servers the Liquidlogic case management system utilised by Children's and Adults is becoming increasingly unstable and is slowing down. Upgrades to Liquidlogic are overdue but they cannot occur until a server upgrade is completed. Liquidlogic will only provide system support for 2 upgrades back, which means that the case management system will be out of support, meaning bug and technical fixes will not be supported, placing both adults and children's in a vulnerable position. The age of the servers is causing significant performance issues for Liquidlogic users and the speed of the system and 'bugs' within the system were noted by inspectors in verbal feedback during the last Children's Services monitoring visit. During inspections Annex A data which pulls from Liquidlogic is requested. The data warehouse which pulls this information has become increasingly unstable over the last year and has resulted in Children's Integrated Services being unable to run reports or Annex A information. This is a significant risk for the Authority. An upgrade to the servers and the Liquidlogic system is business critical at this stage. The Council has a current contract with System C to provide the Liquidlogic case management system with an annual cost of £127,776 per annum. This contract was signed in 2022 for a five year period (total contract value £638,882) with the option to extend for a further 2 years. The preferred option would be to issue a variation of the contract to enable System C to provide a platform as a service solution moving to a Software as a Service solution. It is anticipated that this would bring greater efficiencies by enabling System C to access the data and information on their own systems in order to rectify and system or bug issues, rather than the service having to establish where the issue lay (internal IT or external System C), log an issue with System C who would then need to liaise with IT to dial into the servers to investigate and rectify the issue. This causes delays in the identified issue being resolved. With the proposed solution response and resolution times would be significantly reduced. The plan would be that the servers would initially move to the platform as a service solution (cloud hosted servers) moving to Software as a Service Solution at no extra cost. This would provide the council with wrap around technical and system support, increasing efficiencies and response times to any issues - vital given the need to respond to children's and adults needs and regulatory requirements in a timely way to ensure the safety of citizens. System C are the dominant provider in this market and are the only provider who would be able to offer this wrap around Software as a Service solution. As noted the current contract annual cost is £127,776 (plus inflation). The new additional cost of £148,199 per annum would increase the annual contract costs to £275,975 per annum (£551,950 over the remaining 2 year period) with a one off set up cost of £17,595. It would be anticipated that implementation would be from 1st April 2025. This would be the preferred option as on premise servers would incur the costs of purchase of the servers as well as internal staffing resource to be able to maintain and support the system. IT support moving to the hosted arrangement as they are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the skills, expertise and resources needed to support the application and, given competing pressures, will move to a 'best endeavour' response time, increasing the risks of delays to system issues and significant disruption to front line service delivery. As noted above, a platform as a service solution with System C will reduce delays and increase response times, enabling front line users to more effectively perform their duties.

Other Options Considered:

Option 2: Retain the current on premise hosted services maintained by Nottingham City Council IT service and upgrade the servers. This would retain the current arrangements whereby Liquidlogic sits on physical servers which are provided, maintained and updated by NCC IT services. This would require significant initial and ongoing support from IT as they would be responsible for key aspects of server maintenance such as:- Purchasing software licences- Installing and testing patches and new releases- Purchasing, housing and managing servers and other related hardware- Maintaining networks- Managing databases- Safeguarding systems and data- Implementing redundancy measures

This option is not recommended. As part of the medium term financial plan (MTFP) proposals the IT department will be losing further posts which will have a significant impact on their ability to provide dedicated resource to children's and adults services for Liquidlogic and ContrOCC support. They are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the expert technical knowledge that would be required to fully support and resolve any issues with the applications. A move to new servers on premise would be difficult given the lack of resources, which would make it difficult to manage server implementation and maintenance. Corporate Leadership Team agreed the removal of service level agreements under the latest budget savings proposals, moving the response time to a 'best endeavours' basis and reduced helpdesk opening hours. A move to a cloud hosted solution would provide an 'off the shelf' solution that is currently used by a number of other local authorities across the country. A contract with System C providing the Liquidlogic case management system would offer the council a clear set of support arrangements, robust assistance and allow for effective routes of escalation in case of any issues. There would be clear service level agreements governing response times to issues and 24/7 support for out of hours issues. As noted previously there would be increased efficiencies as any system issues could be directed to System C, rather than currently where an investigation is needed as to where the fault lies (internal to NCC or with System C). A move to Cloud hosted with System C would reduce delays in resolution as System C would not need to dial into to the server and would not face any delays or hurdles to diagnosing and resolving the issue.

Option 3: move to a Cloud hosted arrangement with another provider. This is not a recommended option as this would mean that any issues with the liquidlogic system would need to be raised with System C, who would then have to access another provider's server arrangements to rectify the issue, as is currently the case with our on premise server arrangement. This would potentially lead to delays in rectifying the issue, as again the source of the fault would need to be investigated and agreement sought to dial in and resolve the issue should it lie with System C. Option one would ensure that more streamlined processes, clear Service Level Agreements and response times are built into the contract and would enable a timelier and more efficient response to any queries.

Background Papers:

None

Published Works:

None

Affected Wards:

Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

None

Consultations:	Date: 19/06/2024
	Other: Cllrs Cheryl Barnard, Pavlos Kotsonis, Linda Woodings Simon Salmon Head of IT
	<p>Ailsa Barr, director of children's integrated services met with Cllrs Barnard, Kotsonis and Wooding to brief them on the proposal on 19.06.24. The initial growth bid paper was drafted in consultation and input from Head of IT. Comments made in the growth bid paper on 27/02/24 were: IT Advice - Hosting platform: IT support the option to move the hosting of the social care platform to a cloud 'software as a service' offer. The shift represents a move from a traditional capex funding model to a recurrent opex expenditure. The hardware and systems underpinning the service move to become the provider's responsibility. The price point is competitive in the market when compared to similar offers for applications such as Northgate Housing and DWP platforms. This move also makes some ongoing provider issues the responsibility of the provider. The IT Service also face a reduction in capability meaning that some cost displacement through commissioning is needed to rebalance our capability/supply against organisational demand for the service.</p>
	Date: 22/04/2024
	Chief Finance Officer: Ross Brown Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (Sec 151), Shabana Kausar Director of Finance (Deputy S151)
	Growth bid paper reviewed by Ross Brown and Shabana Kausar and funding agreed at meeting on 22.04.24. Ross Brown confirmed agreement to DDM progressing on 18.06.24.
	Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.
Crime and Disorder Implications:	N/A - this decision proposes a move to Software as a Service solution arrangements for a case management system.
Equality:	EIA not required. Reasons: This decision proposes a move to software as a service solution arrangements for a case management system.
Social Value Considerations:	N/A
Any implications affecting IT:	Yes
Decision Type:	Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In: Yes

Call In Expiry date: 04/12/2024

Advice Sought: Legal, Finance, Procurement, IT

Commissioner Comments: The Commissioners are content with this decision

Legal Advice: This report seeks approval to vary an existing contract by moving to a cloud hosted platform in the provision of the Liquidlogic system. Colleagues in Procurement have confirmed that the proposed modification is allowable under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Any variation to the contract must be undertaken in accordance with the variation provisions in the contract. It is unclear whether a Data Protection Impact Assessment has been undertaken; ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to protect the Council and Data Subjects will be a key issue and may require further variation to the contract.. The report suggests that the market for this service is very limited. If that is the case, the Council might usefully look at what steps it can take to test the market in due course, for example when any extension is taken up so that the Council has sufficient time to undertake a proportionate analysis of the market and available options when these contractual arrangements come to an end.

Advice provided by Anthony Heath (Senior Solicitor) on 25/09/2024.

Finance Advice: See attached document. Advice provided by Tania Clayton Perez (Senior Commercial Business Partner) on 14/10/2024.
Advice documents: 24-10 Financial Advice-LL.docx

Procurement Advice: Procurement have been engaged with the client team to ensure that the required contract variation to enable a move from the on-prem system to a PaaS/SaaS system is compliant with both Contract Procedure Rules and PCR 2015. Procurement have stated that there isn't scope for the variation to start before 1 April 2025 due to the increased costs. Variation Schedule as set out in the contract will be completed and form part of the contract going forward. It is suggested that full market analysis is completed in good time ahead of the end of this contract to encourage social value. No procurement concerns. Advice provided by Louise Dobson (Lead Procurement Officer) on 30/09/2024.

IT Advice: IT support the proposed approach, although higher cost than internal provision, the IT service are no longer able to offer effective support to this system.

Simon Salmon 31/10/2024.

Signatures
Cheryl Barnard (Exec Member - Children, Young People, Education)
SIGNED and Dated: 26/11/2024
Jill Colbert (Corporate Director Children and Education Services)
SIGNED and Dated: 26/11/2024