PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

28 FEBRUARY 2024

Strategic Investment & Capital Budget 2024/25 – 2029/30: IT Licensing and Infrastructure

Briefing by Strategic Lead – Customer & Digital Services

PURPOSE OF APPENDIX

This briefing provides additional background information in relation to the proposed investment in IT and digital set out within the Strategic Investment & Capital Budget 2024/25 – 2029/30 report to Council

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Strategic Context

Two key Strategies set out how ICT and Digital are being used to help the Council deliver its corporate ambitions.

Digital Perth & Kinross 2023-27, the Council's Digital Strategy recognizes the importance of "building our infrastructure from strong digital foundations". It identifies IT as a core utility, fundamental to almost all staff for delivering Council services, communicating, and collaborating. A "stable infrastructure, well managed to minimise risk and impact of downtime" keeps us "connected, safe and productive" and provides a launch pad for delivering our strategic aims.

The ICT and Digital Asset Management Strategy 2023-29 and Plan embed approaches for ensuring the Council's ICT and digital assets are effectively managed, throughout their lifecycles, to achieve the best possible outcomes / value for service users and staff. Asset Management focus is on six key areas: ensuring our core infrastructure is optimized, maintained and fit for the future; securing our information assets; driving quality business intelligence from our data assets; building "One Council" approaches for managing the Council's business systems; evolving fit for the future digital classrooms and using digital to contribute to the Council's net-zero targets.

Both of these strategies recognize infrastructure and data security is paramount: increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks, which pose a persistent threat to data, on-line / digital services and the smooth operation of Council services, mean security is at the forefront of programme planning and investment.

Roll-Forward of Programmes (2028/29 & 2029/20)

The report identifies £13.247 million budget provision for delivering IT and Digital Programmes in 2028/29 – 2029/30. These programmes include:

- upgrading and improving the core IT infrastructure (computers; networks; licenses; telephony; connectivity and equipment; datacenters; servers; file storage; back up; security

systems and video conferencing). Standard infrastructure replacement approaches are in place for core infrastructure components, based on sound asset management principles.

- prioritizing safety / securing the Council's information assets. As our data, resources, and users become increasingly dispersed, the likelihood and potential impact of cyber-threats are increasing and evolving. Increasingly sophisticated threats, pose a persistent threat to data, on-line / digital services and the smooth operation of Council services. The challenge of securing our network is becoming more complex: it demands automated defenses and enhanced security / resilience to combat, and stay ahead of, automated cyber-attacks. Ongoing investment is required to deliver industry-standard levels of secure, verified, personalized access to Council resources.

- continuing the School Audio-Visual Replacement Programme, which has delivered access to audio visual (AV) panels in all Perth and Kinross schools and provided consistency of experience and a sustainable management model for these key classroom tools. To maintain fit for the future digital classrooms and exploit available advances in AV technologies, continuing Capital funding is now required to replace / upgrade current equipment as it falls beyond 10 years old.

- delivering the data and analytics governance, tools, technologies, and organization-wide skills required for better business intelligence, to drive informed decision making around resources, priorities and service delivery. The Data & Analytics programme is embedding whole-Council approaches and capabilities for managing our data assets in more effective, efficient, and cohesive ways.

- developing the capabilities, we need to be a truly innovative digital organization. This includes further growth / development of our corporate mobile working and online services platforms. These platforms are creating new digital products and services that enable 24/7 engagement for service users; reduce journeys for our employees (and by extension the Council's carbon footprint) to and between offices through improved scheduling of field-based activities; and give employees access to, and the ability to update in real time, accurate data, out in the field.

  "Supporting Digital" is also driving the Council's Customer Services Strategy. This includes building on the "One Front door" concept and further development of end to end digital services, to simplify and standardize the customer experience, whatever the channel. As more customer portals are developed by business system suppliers, the Programme is also leading the development of standards around how these systems co-exist, to make it as easy and secure as possible for customers to login to multiple systems.

  Other Supporting Digital workstreams include developing and implementing new Microsoft (MS) 365 capabilities (e.g. Virtual assistants, process automation and workflows) and deploying Internet of Things (IoT) / smart technologies that move services from reactive to preventative ways of working, in areas such as housing stock management (e.g. energy efficiency; quicker identification / rectification of defects; and Legionella monitoring).

IT and Digital Projects 2024/25 – 2027/28
Council is also asked to approve budget provision of £6.330 million for IT Capital projects **in addition** to the recommended funding for 2028/29 and 2029/30 described above.

This includes funding to:

- meet annual subscription costs from our evolving MS 365 environment and rectify a previous MS 365 licensing shortfall resulting when additional year allocations beyond 2024/25 were not allocated to the budget. This was identified as a £6.25m funding gap as at 2021. Although partial funding of £0.9m was allocated, it was recognized, at that time, that additional monies would require to be added to the capital budget from 25/26 onwards, and that a future capital budget setting process should allocate funding for missing / future years in line with the principles of the Council's Investment Blueprint, to maintain access to our MS estate.

- Maintain hybrid video conferencing facilities, including for the Council Chambers. Video conferencing is a new infrastructure component, provision for which has not been made in previous capital funding allocations.