

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
Resources Committee
24th August 2016**

**Unified Communications Project
Report by Depute Chief Executive & Director of Corporate
Development**

Agenda Item	24
Report No	RES/ 63/16

Summary

This report is an update to Members on the Unified Communications (UC) Project progress since the last report in November 2015.

Additionally, this report seeks to update Members re the Video Conferencing (VC) element of the UC Project, as we appreciate delivery of new VC solutions to Area Offices is of particular interest.

Since the last report to Committee, the sponsorship of the UC Project has changed from the Corporate Improvement Programme Manager to the new Head of People and Transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Unified Communications is the integration of a number of telecommunication functions that allow Officers, Elected Members and members of the public to communicate, take part in meetings or observe meetings without the need to travel. The systems and technology involved include:

- Telephony
- Telephone Conferencing
- Instant Messaging (online chat)
- Presence (office attendance information)
- Video Conferencing
- Sharing Computer Desktops

1.2 These technologies have significant advantages for an area as large as the Highlands. Benefits of the UC Project include:

- Affordable replacement of ageing and failing telephone systems;
- Support for mobile and flexible working;
- Reduction in the requirement for expensive phone lines;
- Reduction in call charges;
- Affordable replacement of ageing and failing VC systems;
- Ability to reduce the need for and cost of travel.

1.3 Since the last update to Members the project has continued to carry our market engagement via technical workshops to assist with the overall design of its UC solution and to determine what the best solutions to deploy are. The UC Project is

OFFICIAL

currently finalising business requirements, full technical designs and procurement specifications for its three key work streams:

- Schools Telephony
- Unified Communications
- Video Conferencing

2. WORK STREAM UPDATES

2.1 Schools Telephony

2.1.1 The chosen option for schools telephony is a conventional, but modern and functional solution from Avaya (IP Office). This solution fits the relatively fixed nature of telephony needed in schools. To date Avaya IP Office telephony solutions have been deployed to 43 Highland schools, with the priority given to schools with older and failing systems.

2.1.2 The project will deploy a new Avaya IP Office solution to an additional 48 Schools. The associated procurement exercise is underway with tender submissions deadline of 22nd July 2016. Evaluation of submitted tenders and preferred bidder selection is on schedule for completion in August 2016, with actual solution deployment to Schools commencing August/September 2016 and completing by August 2017.

2.2 Unified Communications

2.2.1 Since the last update to Members, new opportunities have become available to Highland Council through:

- The increased investment and deployment of Avaya infrastructure throughout the Highland Council estate;
- The formation of the ICT Communications Team and the subsequent in-house technical knowledge and expertise that now offers Highland Council.
- The forthcoming Transformation Programme being delivered by the latest ICT Re-provision contract.

2.2.2 Utilising these opportunities allows for a change of thinking and approach as to how best and cost effectively the UC Project delivers its UC solution.

2.2.3 Rather than design and deploy a full UC solution to Council staff now, which would result in certain backend infrastructure and desktop elements (and their associated technical and financial investment) being rendered superfluous by the forthcoming Transformation Programme (circa April/May 2017), it is the preference of the UC Project to deliver its UC solution in a phased approach.

- Phase1 – Deliver the UC solution backbone infrastructure and Corporate Telephony refresh
- Phase2 – Integrate the UC solution backbone infrastructure and Corporate Telephony with the Microsoft Skype for Business / Office 365 solution (being delivered by the Transformation Programme).

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

2.2.4 This phased approach will not impact on the expected completion date of the UC Project with current key milestones still delivered:

- Complete technical design and procure UC solution backbone infrastructure and Corporate Telephony by October 2016.
- Ready to pilot new Corporate Telephony by November 2016.
- Wider Corporate Telephony rollout complete approximately 12 months from completion of pilot.
- Integration with Microsoft Skype for Business / Office 365 solution Spring 2017.
- UC solution deployment complete by early 2018.

2.3 Video Conferencing

2.3.1 The project is currently engaging Committee Services and Business Support to ensure the final room based VC solution scope meets the requirements of current and future Committees and other 'heavy users' within the Council, as well as considering the potential opportunities for sharing VC facilities with other public sector partners.

2.3.2 Additionally, the project is continuing market engagement and technical design workshops to determine the most suitable VC solution (e.g. Cloud based or on premises) to meet Council requirements and give the Council a fully unified solution across desktop VC and room based VC.

2.3.3 The project aims to:

- Complete VC technical design August 2016.
- Complete VC procurement by September 2016.
- Commence VC solution deployment October 2016.
- Complete VC solution deployment March 2017.

3. COSTS AND BUDGET

3.1 The UC project budget summary is shown below:

	£000
Unified Communications Budget 15/16	1,287
Less Expenditure 15/16	-121
Unified Communications Budget 16/17	1,166
Less Forecast Spend to 31 st March 2017	-437
Forecast Unified Communications Budget 17/18	729

3.2 Based on market engagement to date, it is forecast that the budget available will allow for delivery of the three key work streams of Schools Telephony, Unified Communications and Video Conferencing.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Resource Implications: Existing dedicated resource within ICT Service Project Management Team (ICT Project Manager) is being utilised to manage this project.
- 4.2 Legal Implications: There are no legal implications at this time.
- 4.3 Equality Implications: There are no equality implications arising from this report.
- 4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever Implications: Unified Communications is a key building block in the modernisation of the Council's work-styles and supporting mobile and flexible working. This project will assist in reducing the Council's carbon emissions by delivering unified communications and video conferencing solutions which will offer an alternative to the requirement for Council staff and Members to travel for meetings.
- 4.5 Risk Implications: Replacement of old telephony systems and old video conferencing systems will reduce risk of failure and provide opportunities for more resilient arrangements to be put in place.
- 4.6 Gaelic Implications: There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.
- 4.7 Rural Implications: The rollout of UC will enable a more flexible and mobile workforce, thus allowing employees to operate more effectively away from main Council offices. This is dependent however on connectivity via WiFi or mobile networks, which is out of scope for this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- Note the update on the Unified Communications project;
- Note the change of approach for Unified Communications work stream as reported in Section 2.2;
- Note the update on Video Conferencing work stream as reported in Section 2.3;
- Note the current Unified Communication project budget position as reported in Section 3.

Signature: Michelle Morris
Designation: Depute Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Development
Authors: Steve Walsh, Head of People and Transformation
Brian Davidson, ICT Project Manager
Date: 03 August 2016