

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Transformation and Digitalisation Committee

approval  noting

Ref KH/GR

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## Progress report on Enhancements to Existing Wide Area Network

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### Executive Summary

In respect of the Programme of Work, PO67 – Digital Economy and Place, the Transformation and Digitalisation Committee at its meeting of 15 May, 2019 approved the contract extension option for the Wide Area Network (WAN). Further at its meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019, committee noted the proposal to retain a small selection of services through the SWAN Framework.

This report provides an overview of the work that has been carried out since the approval via Crown Commercial Services RM1045 for the enhancements required to ensure the council's WAN is capable of the advancement captured as part of the ambition outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

The report provides an update on the progress to date and outline delivery timelines for the enhancements required.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that members of the Transformation and Digitalisation Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report and the progress to date.

### The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Support all children and young people to realise their full potential

Ambition statement (6) Raise attainment and skills for learning, life, and work to enhance opportunities and choices

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 As members are aware the council's current Wide Area Network (WAN) was designed solely to meet the requirements of the council as a corporate entity and did not lend itself to meet the wider ambition outlined in The Plan for North Lanarkshire.
- 1.2 A report on *Contract Options for the Council's Wide Area Network* was submitted to the Transformation and Digitalisation Committee on 15 May, 2019 whereby members approved Option 4 of the report enabling officers to contract via Crown Commercial Services RM1045 for a two-year interim period.

- 1.3 From the suppliers named on RM1045, Virgin Media Business (VMB) the existing contractor for the SWAN was selected to deliver the improved performance and capability of bandwidth in the school estate. Essentially, this returned VMB to direct supplier status to the authority rather than as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party supplier through Capita, as had been the position for the previous 3 years.
- 1.3 As mentioned previously, the award encompasses not only the legal transfer of services to VMB but also the upgrade of all school network links as follows:
- Non-secondary establishments, from 10MB to 50MB
  - Secondary establishments, from 50MB to 1GB
- It was understood that to further realise benefits from the increased schools bandwidth there would be a requirement for internet bandwidth expansion, options for which are currently being reviewed.
- 1.4 As referenced in the DigitalNL Infrastructure report to committee on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 a review of services identified it was economically advantageous to retain the SWAN membership, with 10 corporate sites also being retained through this. Continuing this link with SWAN also facilitated the framework as being available as a future, potential, route to market for the DigitalNL – Infrastructure project.
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## **2. Report**

- 2.1 As per the terms and conditions, the council formally notified Capita of the change of service, initiating the 30 day notice period. However, due to contractual complexities novation (legal transfer) did not complete until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019. This can be attributed to contractual and business complexities within VMB as outline below:
- Although VMB were the supplier to SWAN for majority of NLC provided circuits, it was the Wholesale business unit who supported it. The council deals with VMB Retail, Public Sector Division. I.e. two separate divisions of the one parent company, however due to legislation, these exist as separate entities and cannot share information about customers and clients.
  - VMB Public Sector's initial approach to novation, assumed communication with SWAN could be kept to a minimum and that they could deal directly with VMB Wholesale. However, contractual difficulties in gathering information and engaging with the Wholesale business unit were experienced. This had has an unfortunate, but foreseeable, impact on completing service novation, resulting in delay to both the service and upgrading aspects of the contract.
- 2.2 Retaining some services with SWAN presented challenges to the traditional SWAN delivery model. The remaining 10 SWAN sites still required access to council services; this is achieved via dedicated SWAN interconnect services to the council's datacentres. Capita have subsequently revised their contract model to accommodate connectivity to sites not actually part of their delivery contract, i.e. the datacentres
- 2.3 These interconnect services also provide access to the wider SWAN service model. Potentially council sites, removed from SWAN, would retain access to these services. This represented a challenge to the traditional SWAN delivery and contract model. The Capita delivery board and the SWAN management board identified an agreed workable solution.

## 2.4 Network Enhancement – School Estate

The project for enhancing the service to schools has been planned in three concurrently running work packages:

- Soft Upgrades: predominately non-secondary schools using existing VMB Fibre
- Hardware Upgrades: schools using existing VMB Fibre
- Circuit Upgrades: to schools currently using alternative connectivity

2.5 Soft Upgrades (50 sites) were piloted in two schools during October 2019 to ensure the process is fit for purpose, limits downtime and has achievable roll back operation. Upon completion of pilots it is expected that upgrades will be rolled out across the estate and be completed by November 2019.

2.6 Hardware Upgrades (51) require that the physical equipment within the school is replaced and that upstream network changes are implemented, service interruption may last up to 2hrs. This work will be scheduled to minimise interruption to service, particularly in secondary schools where the network is heavily utilised for curriculum delivery.

The process will be piloted at two sites, commencing October 2019 with full completion anticipated by December 2019.

2.7 Circuit upgrades (13) potentially require completely new circuits to be installed along with new equipment, these have a notional delivery timeline of 10 weeks, and all circuit upgrades will be ordered and run concurrently. The Council is currently awaiting confirmation from VMB on when these orders will be placed.

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## 3. Equality and Diversity

### 3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

There are no requirements for an assessment under the Fairer Scotland duty arising from this report, however, members should be assured that The Fairer Scotland assessment process will be undertaken as appropriate when required.

### 3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no requirements for an assessment.

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## 4. Financial Implications

### 4.1 Financial Impact

A number of costs associated with the transfer were identified, these are detailed as follows and will be met as planned from within existing budgets:

- Retaining SWAN interconnects will cost approx. £36,000p/a.
- New edge firewall and expansion of web filtering solution to accommodate enhanced internet provision will cost approx. £130,000 with ongoing charges of approximately £30,000.

- Internet expansion costs are still being understood, but are estimated to be around £45,000 for installation and first year delivery. Ongoing costs of around £40,000 are estimated.

#### 4.2 **HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

There are no requirements for an assessment

#### 4.3 **Environmental Impact**

There are no requirements for an assessment

#### 4.4 **Risk Impact**

Risk to delivery of soft and hard upgrades will be minimised through piloting.

There is an increased risk with regards to the sites requiring circuit upgrades, due to its reliance upon physical installations and the state of underlying infrastructure, (for instance blocked ducts). This is likely to manifest as an increase in delivery time, rather than financial or operation risk.

Due to delivery gap between initial site upgrades and internet enhancement, there may be the possibility of congestion on existing internet provision. Activity will be monitored and appropriate actions taken to reduce impact.

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### 5. **Measures of success**

- 5.1 Success will be evidenced through technology being efficiently and effectively deployed, minimising disruption.

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### 6. **Supporting documents**

- 6.1 There are no supporting documents for this report.

*Katrina M Howell*

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