Digital Innovation and Efficiency Committee

Item No.

Report title:	Use of mobile working technology across council services
Date of meeting:	13th March 2019
Responsible Chief Officer:	Simon George, Executive Director of Finance & Commercial Services and Fiona McDiarmid, Executive Director of Strategy and Governance

Strategic impact

Mobile working technologies are already used by Norfolk County Council to enable the efficient delivery of council services. However, there is potential for further benefits to be derived and it is essential that these digitally enabled new ways of working are adopted at pace and fully exploited in order to maximise the effectiveness of local authority funding.

Executive summary

Use of mobile working technologies across the County Council is mature in some areas but ready to be scaled up corporately and can be considered under two main headings.

1. Enabling almost all staff to work from a variety of locations using laptops, tablets, IP Desk phones, Skype functionality and smart or talk and text mobile phones. This flexibility allows County Hall to operate on a 7-10 desk to staff ratio today, helps staff work flexibly and reduces travel time and costs.

2. Enabling specific business systems and functions to be carried out more effectively at remote locations. Examples include Highways staff accessing their line of business systems while out and about via tablet computers. It will also include Social Care staff at hospitals, schools and in people's homes.

These capabilities have been in operation across the council for years, however there have been recent developments which will allow the efficiency and effectiveness of staff using mobile working technology to increase significantly. These are as follows.

1. A new Windows 10 laptop tablet build which incorporates a number of new technologies which make mobile and flexible working much easier for staff to use.

2. The introduction of Govroam Wi-Fi which allows easy and secure access to Wi-Fi access at hundreds of sites around the county and thousands of sites nationally.

3. A significant increase in the numbers of staff with access to smart phones and secure email / calendar access on "bring your own" mobile phones.

4. A mobile working module of the Liquid Logic Social Care System, deployed in conjunction with the above technology, 4G connectivity, plus training, support and

new business processes and policies.

It should be noted that new technology alone will only provide a limited increase in staff productivity. To really exploit the technology, it must be combined with staff training, review of working processes, office accommodation, parking, travel, policies and effective communications leading ultimately to widespread changes in ways of working.

The Councils Information Management and Technology staff have therefore been working in close collaboration with Human Resources, Communications and Property colleagues under the sponsorship of the Executive Director of Strategy and Governance to create a Smarter Working Programme. This Programme has been set up to enable staff to maximise their productivity through the effective use of mobile working technology. This will ultimately evolve into a council wide business transformation programme which will be tasked with achieving significant annual savings.

Recommendations:

1. **To note the contents of this report and consider opportunities to further exploit mobile working technologies across the Council.**

1. Background

1.1.   The council has been using laptops, mobile phones and flexible office accommodation including roaming printing and IP phones for many years. This has allowed many staff to work from a variety of locations for business efficiency reasons and their own work life balance.

1.2.   Some line of business applications such as Mayrise in Highways have been configured (along with the Councils website and Customer Relationship Management system) to allow highways engineers to perform most of their duties while out and about around the county using Android tablets.

1.3.   Norfolk's elected members have all used Apple tablets to perform their duties and access the democratic services systems from any location (over Wi-Fi or using the built in 4G cellular SIM).

1.4.   Over recent years, all social workers have been allocated mobile phones (generally Android smartphones) to aid their mobile working productivity. The councils mobile phone estate is currently composed of around 2,000 smartphones, a further 2,000 talk and text phones and 300 data only SIM cards enabling laptops and tablets to operate over cellular networks.

1.5.   The council manages over 6,000 Windows laptops – almost all of which are now on a standard optimized Windows 10 build with direct access, Office 365 and a variety of other tools provided to increase productivity and improve ease of use. (This will be 100% Windows 10 with a standard build by April 2019). There are also a small number of desktop devices used for specialist applications such as GIS mapping and data analytics power-users.

1.6.   Mobile and flexible working has been used to increase office occupancy rates and reduce the size of the council's office accommodation estate.

2.   Current Developments of Corporate Mobile Technology

2.1.   The council has been evaluating user experience and the associated business case of replacing desktop IP telephony with Microsoft Skype and Teams technologies for voice (in addition to the already available video conferencing and presence functionality). This enables the laptop to act as the users "office" phone and so enable it to work from any location with a fixed or Wi-Fi connection. In addition, it provides the user with much more flexibility over how they handle calls on their laptop and/or mobile phone.

2.2.   Bring your own mobile phone trials have also been conducted and it is expected that this approach will become the standard offer for most staff as mobile contracts come up for renewal from summer 2019/20 onwards, potentially replacing the majority of the existing council provided mobile smart-phones.

2.3.   The council's LAN refresh programme will replace the aging Wi-Fi equipment across all council sites during 2019/20 improving voice and video performance across the entire NCC office estate. When combined with Govroam, this will allow staff to work simply and securely over Wi-Fi networks in any Council site, but also across many NHS sites and district council sites. The planned addition of eduroam compatibility will also enable the same connectivity at hundreds of schools and university sites.

3.   Use of Mobile Working Technology in Adults & Childrens Social Care

3.1.   Following completion of a successful pilot in 2018 and approval of the business case, the Adult Social Services mobile working project is in the later stages of preparation for roll out to around 800 frontline workers and managers over a 12-month period. The draft roll out plan is in an approval round aiming for an early April start. The corporate IT refresh contract has been let and the Lenovo X1 tablet device has been selected. Procurement of new SIM cards is also in progress.

3.2.   An initial round of testing of the Childrens Services apps (LCS and EHM) is nearing completion to support a similar roll out to front line workers in Childrens Services from August 2019.

3.3.   The pilot in Adult Social Services was carried out with 80 staff in six different teams located across the county over the period from July to October 2018. The pilot was set up to test:
- different device types
- connectivity options
- offline working with a new mobile app
- better user of existing productivity tools (including SKYPE, OneNote, etc)
- seek out the greatest opportunities for improving delivery to service users and efficiency by changing ways of working.

3.4.   Weekly surveys and regular face to face feedback was sought. The pilot was able to demonstrate opportunities for worthwhile efficiency savings, for example,

by reducing the need to handwrite notes with a service user and then later type them up in the system back at the office, by capturing signatures electronically, etc. It also showed a number of scenarios where connectivity via mobile data enabled staff and managers to work away from office locations where previously they would have been unable to, for example, when waiting with a service user for an ambulance, performing approvals when out of the office, etc. Despite initial concerns about a device being a barrier to working with service users, the pilot also demonstrated a wide range of improvements to the quality and speed of delivery of service

3.5.   Over the period of the pilot, based on responses received, 516 hours were saved averaging 1.3 hours per person per week. At the end of the pilot, higher performing staff were achieving two or three times this level. Also, as the pilot progressed, time savings were showing an increasing trend, which it is reasonable to conclude, continued after the end of the survey period. By increasing levels of engagement, it is anticipated that more significant time savings will be made.

4. Financial Implications

4.1.   None specifically arising from this report as the current activities are incorporated under existing or planned budgets. However, the savings targets associated with the various projects and programmes referenced in this report are very significant.

5. Issues, risks and innovation

5.1.   There is a risk that the full adoption and exploitation of mobile working technologies will not be achieved if cultural change issues are not considered in conjunction with the introduction of the technology. This is why the combination of people, property, process and technology together is essential in this case to achieve the desired outcomes.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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