

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR COUNCIL SERVICES**

9th July 2013

Report of the Director of Transformation

“SKYPE” AND FLEXIBLE WORKING PILOTS

1 Purpose of Report

To seek approval to extend a pilot on the use of a communication tool Skype, and report on progress of another pilot system, Microsoft's Office Communicator Server, which supports enhanced electronic communication and collaboration whilst reducing the need to travel.

2 Information and Analysis

2.1 Skype

As part of a larger Council cost saving programme, there has been a pilot with a limited number of staff to use “Skype”, a communication and collaboration tool. The product can be used anywhere there is an Internet connection. This enables staff to share and work collaboratively on documents and client case notes, avoiding the time and cost involved in attending meetings. The product supports the objectives of the Smarter Travel Programme within the Changing the Way Derbyshire Works (CWDW) programme and will contribute towards reducing Derbyshire's carbon footprint.

There are two versions of Skype, one of which is free to register and use, and provides simple one-to-one video conferencing and collaboration facilities. There is a “premium” version which costs £2.99 per user per month based on a year's subscription. The premium version enables video sessions between several users (pragmatically up to a maximum of five people) and additional collaboration and support services.

To ensure consistency, Transformation Services have determined the best configuration of the software to work with the Council's other ICT systems and in conjunction with Service Departments have piloted both versions of Skype. The pilots have shown that its use would be especially beneficial and cost effective for groups of staff who are geographically dispersed, such as area offices, yet need to communicate and meet on a regular basis.

The software does have data network requirements which would exceed the current capacity of many of the Council's smaller service outlets and compromise other services such as telephones and ICT applications.

Each video conferencing session is fully encrypted end to end for the duration of the call. Transformation Services can only monitor the fact that a video conferencing session is underway. Managers must therefore ensure that their staff use the Skype tool in an acceptable manner, and that use/abuse is dealt with in the same way as the use of eg Internet/email.

It is proposed that senior management teams in Service Departments wishing to extend the Skype product to more of their staff, work with Transformation Services to ensure deployment is managed in an organised way without threatening the viability of existing ICT systems. Smarter Travel representatives in each Service Department will be able to advise on the most suitable areas for deployment within their own departments, subject to the technical limitations of the data network.

Transformation Services will advise on minimum requirements for the ICT equipment necessary to run the Skype software, and which Council locations the product can best be used from. Transformation Services will manage the installation of Skype onto County Council computers which meet the minimum specifications required by the product.

2.2 Office Communicator Server

A further pilot is underway on Microsoft's Office Communicator Server (OCS) which can more closely integrate email, telephony, document sharing/collaboration and instant messaging into one Windows based tool. Around 50 staff are currently piloting the collaboration functions in OCS.

In collaboration with the supplier hosting the Council's Internet and email service, some aspects of OCS are already being used more widely to provide Instant Messaging (a simple/quick form of email) and "presence" which can assist in determining the availability of staff. These functions are provided to staff as their equipment is upgraded by Transformation Services to Microsoft Windows 7.

The latest version of the OCS product, Microsoft Lync 2013, also incorporates video conferencing including group video meetings. In addition, Microsoft have recently bought Skype, and video conferencing will be more closely integrated into Lync products.

It is proposed to bring a future report to Members once the OCS pilot has been concluded.

3 Financial Considerations

It is proposed that Service Departments wishing to use Skype will pay for any subscriptions directly from their own budgets. Savings made from using the Skype technology will accrue directly to Service Departments and will support the rebalancing of spending towards needs. The overall value of the contract will be periodically reviewed to determine whether a formal procurement exercise should be undertaken.

4 Transport Considerations

Extending the Skype pilot strongly supports the CWDW Smarter Travel Programme objectives to reduce the need to travel to undertake the Council's business and therefore reduce costs and to reduce transport related carbon emissions. As part of the extended pilot and evaluation, managers will be expected to challenge employees to reduce their mileage through the use of Skype and have a demonstrable reduction in their mileage over a 12 month period.

5 Other Considerations

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, and property considerations.

6 Key Decision

No.

7 Call-In

It is not required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in this report.

8 Background papers

Documents relating to the project are held by Luke Sayers (extension 35811) and Cliff York (extension 38706).

9 OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet Member

1. Approve the extension of the Skype pilot to other Council users in a managed way as described in the report.
2. Notes that Service Departments will pay directly for any subscription costs incurred on Skype.
3. Notes that Transformation Services will advise Departments on any technical limitations on their proposed Skype roll-outs.
4. Notes that Transformation Services will bring a further report to Members on Microsoft Office Communicator Server/Lync once the pilot has been concluded.

David Hickman
Director of Transformation