

Decision maker:	Officer: Chris Baird – Interim Director of Childrens Wellbeing
Decision date:	02 August 2017
Title of report:	Servelec HSC Synergy annual software renewal.
Report by:	Business Applications Manager

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To secure approval for the continued provision of license and support for the Servelec – Synergy software application suite which supports the 3 statutory services of Admissions, Family Information Service and Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) Servelec Synergy software application suite support and maintenance is extended until the 31 March 2018 at a cost of £74k;**
- (b) a softmarket review and internal business review is started to ensure best value is being received.**

Alternative options

- 1 **To retender.** A preliminary soft market test was undertaken in order to compare the viability of similar systems in the market place. The result of this indicated that there are only really 3 options. Servelec – synergy being one of these options is without doubt leading the way in some key areas such as the statutory admissions management therefore reassuringly Herefordshire Council is well equipped. The other two would introduce significant cost of change not only in data migration, retraining, de-coupling existing integrations, project management, infrastructure design, staff user acceptance testing but also solution re-procurement and higher running annual costs. Strategically the Council already has Mosaic which is from Servelec HSC and there is likely to be closer links in this business area and potential further integrations and data sharing. This option is therefore not recommended.
- 2 Non-renewal of Servelec Synergy licences: This is not recommended as the council would have to cease using the software applications to remain compliant with the licence agreement. The application suite is used extensively through the Childrens Wellbeing directorate to deliver statutory functions which carry penalties if not delivered correctly such as school admissions.

Reasons for recommendations

- 3 To ensure continuation of existing service with least cost and reduce the significant risk associated with implementing new systems and practices.

Key considerations

- 4 The agreement with Servelec synergy for the provision of an education, admissions, routing and educational needs suite was first implemented in 2003 and included the implementation of the system and associated licences as well as support and maintenance on the system. From this time the product offering and statutory requirements have grown which Servelec have helped to deliver.
- 5 The Servelec Synergy suite is 1 of 3 main suppliers in the education area the others being Capita and CACI. There is evidence to show that there have been some moves away from the Capita solution (Durham, Dudley and Surrey). Annual cost going from 122k to 80k for Durham.
- 6 There has been a preliminary assessment of the other vendor options and from this there is little to drive a move away from Servelec Synergy due to reductions in cost or better more efficient practices. The cost of change alone would be the biggest determining factor on remaining with Servelec.
- 7 The council has also made a significant investment in integrating Servelec Synergy with other applications including the web; there would be considerable effort and additional cost required to de-couple this environment. There are potentially more integrations coming up with Mosaic which is also a Servelec product therefore should be more straight forward than other vendors.
- 8 In addition to the review of the annual maintenance extension and recommendation based on this, it is also recommended that a request for information is completed and sent out to do a more rigorous market assessment (part way complete for send out). This will be informed by the exercise of reviewing the Servelec implementation and business strategy direction.

- 9 Consequently, and in view of the councils draft IT strategy, which outlines a guiding principle that there should be only one software application in use to provide a specific area of functionality and ensure reduced costs to the council in overheads.
- 10 It is recommended that license extensions be undertaken annually as necessary provided that there is a review at least every third year as to the continued cost effectiveness and suitability of the Servelec Synergy.
- 11 Firstly procured in 2003 with a contract prior to officer decision notice requirements. The contract didn't not state duration it was annually renewable and required a termination notice to be served 3 months prior to renewal date.

Community impact

- 12 If Servelec Synergy is not available to the council staff it would adversely affect services provided to the residents of Herefordshire.
- 13 The recommended approach seeks to maintain the standard of service and expected cost, effectively supporting achievement of the corporate plan priority to secure better services, quality of life and value for money.

Equality duty

- 14 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying "due regard" in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
- 15 Synergy is our central repository of records within Education and as such is our go to source for all diversity information. This means that we use it to identify groups to monitor the performance of. The system is able to record the 9 "protected characteristics" as defined by the Equality Act, and others that we identify locally.
- 16 Synergy is largely, but not fully, accessible for disabled employees to use. Users of screen readers could use most of its functionality. We continue to push for full compatibility and this is being delivered as the functionality is rewritten into more modern languages.

Financial implications

- 17 The extension to 31 March 2018 is £74k – although compensation may be applied if a 5 year contract is negotiated after further research is carried out and the RFI is analysed. The cost is included within the budget and outturn for 17-18.
- 18 If the extension is not renewed there may be a breach of contract applied as notice of termination has to be given 3 months before the end of the maintenance window therefore should have been in December 2016.

Legal implications

- 19 The council has a number of statutory duties to provide education related services, including acting as admissions authority for school places (School Standards Framework Act 1998 and School Admissions Code 2012); ensuring appropriate special education needs provision is available and appropriately allocated (Children and

Families Act 2014); and to ensure a sufficiency of placements, collate and make available information on early years provision (Childcare Act 2006, as amended). The software provided and maintained by Servelec HSC Synergy enables the council to carry out these functions, providing a means of storing, sharing and sorting relevant information.

- 20 The current contract includes maintenance provisions, which continue on an annual renewal basis unless termination notices are served in relation to each specific service area, giving three months' notice. The renewal date for these contracts was March 2017.
- 21 As no termination notices were served in March 2017 the contracts have renewed automatically under the terms of the contract (clause 7.23) and the council is therefore liable to pay the costs under the contract incurred under the contract for these services.

Risk management

- 22 There is a risk of loss of service provisioning to the public without this system and renewing license ensures continuity in support and maintenance.
- 23 There is a risk that Servelec synergy will start legal proceedings due to the failure in giving a 3 month notice of termination.

Consultees

None

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None