



## Finance Strategic Policy Committee

### Dublin City Council's ICT Transition and Response to Covid 19

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## **1. Introduction**

This report outlines the actions carried out by the IS department in support of the business changes required to support Dublin City Council (DCC) through the Covid 19 Crisis. It outlines how the business continuity plan was invoked by the IS department to allow DCC ICT services to be remotely provided.

It will also outline how additional services were developed by DCC in an agile fashion to allow critical needs to be delivered to very tight timelines.

## **2. Remote Working and Business Continuity**

DCC's technical architecture has always been designed by the IS department to support access from any device from any location to all services. In addition, the systems are concentrated in an internal cloud style service with high levels of availability from multiple data centres. This allow great flexibility in terms of business continuity and disaster recovery. The business continuity requirements have been planned over many years so while this specific requirement was unique it was possible to quickly provide the services that were available in the Offices to a remote environment.

All applications and access to all data was possible within the normal secured environments in DCC.

### **2.1 Citrix Remote Working**

DCC's desktop policy includes the use of Citrix desktops. These are used both as Thin clients in the Civic offices & Area offices and from remote clients connected securely over the internet. This service became the primary remote working solution for DCC. Remote working was immediately made available by the IS department for 1,200 remote users. This was increased up to 2,200 users to meet the final demand from business for remote working by increasing the number of servers and broadband utilised.

### **2.2 Laptops**

With the increased number of remote workers, the demand for laptops by users became critical to the delivery of service. Use was made of our strategic supply partners to ensure the quick delivery of additional laptops. These were configured by the Technical and End User staff of the IS department. Over 850 laptops were provided by IS to the business in a brief time to meet this demand.

### **2.3 Mobile Phones and Tablets**

To support the increased number of remote workers and the requirement to provide secure access to services additional mobile phones and Tablets were provided by the IS department.. Working with Vodafone our partner for mobile services the technical support team configured over 450 additional phones and 200 additional tablets for use by DCC staff.

### **2.4 Security**

With a strategic corporate desktop environment, build on Citrix there is a high level of security available for remote working. We did not need to build a new environment but could scale up the existing environment, which significantly reduced the risks associated with this level of remote working.

With the increased use of remote applications and technical environment, an independent security review in line with our normal procedures was carried out. This highlighted no risks to the environment.

### **3. Remote Telephony**

A number of measures were put in place to allow remote access to DCC's telephony systems where required by the business. This allowed for the management of the telephony channel to include remote workers as well as staff based in the offices. The Covid Helpline was also setup to help at risk members of the public in accessing non-emergency and non-medical supports and advice during the current public health emergency.

### **4. Microsoft Teams**

A pilot had been underway in DCC for the use of Microsoft Office 365 including the Teams client. This was accelerated by DCC when the crisis arose to allow for secure video and audio conferencing of staff. The Pilot was ramped up by the IS Department from 100 users to 1,500 users. This was supported by the availability of 1,000 free licences for a period of time from Microsoft as part of their support of Covid 19 initiatives.

Utilisation of these services immediately increased and are now heavily utilised by the staff of DCC. A support team was established by the IS department internally to support this new environment and to rollout additional features to meet business needs as they change.

### **5. New Applications**

In addition to the technical availability of remote working with the additional video conferencing, there were a number of additional applications required. These were mainly public facing systems but some internal systems were also required.

The greatest demand was to support a number of government initiatives such as the Restart Grant, Restart Grant plus, Community Grant, and the Rates Waiver.

To develop these in days rather than months as would be usual it was decided by the IS department to utilise a cloud based development environment from Microsoft. This was supported by the supply of free licences for a period by Microsoft. The applications were developed in an agile fashion with weekly deliverables from our development partners.

Very tight timeframes were achieved by IS and our development partner. Flexibility was provided by this approach to meet changing business requirements as the need arose.

### **6. Service Level Agreement**

The IS Department has operated under the ITIL methodology for service management for over twenty years. This allows the level of service delivered to the business by the IS Department to be monitored and evaluated against agreed service levels. With the IS department itself now operating substantially remotely, it was important that the level of service was still achieved. Even with over 630 calls per week, all SLAs were achieved for all services. In addition, the level of availability of systems was also achieved. This shows the level of service provided by the IS department and its support partners in this difficult time even with substantial changes in the client environment that was underway.

**Brian Curtis**  
**ICT Manager**

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