



**Un Llais Cymru**  
**One Voice Wales**

## Community & Town Councils Digital Guidance

### Using Office Collaboration Tools

January 2025

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# Office Collaboration Tools: An Overview for Community and Town Councils

In today's digital age, office collaboration suites have become indispensable tools for organisations of all sizes. These sets of applications provide productivity tools such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and email. Their online features enable teams to work together, regardless of their physical location. Two of the most prominent office collaboration suites available today are Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace. There are also numerous competitors offered on both a free to use and a subscription basis.

This document aims to provide an overview of these suites, their key features, benefits, and pricing, as well as how small organizations can use them. Additionally, it will address some challenges such as privacy, security, and user training.

The document assumes that the reader is familiar with the concept of word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and emails. This will likely have been via prior exposure to Microsoft Products such as Microsoft Word.

## Key Office Collaboration Suites

### Microsoft 365

#### Key Features

- Office Applications: Word processing - Word, Spreadsheets - Excel, Presentations - PowerPoint, Email and Calendar – Outlook and many others.
- Cloud Storage: OneDrive provides 1 TB of storage per user.
- Collaboration Tools: Teams for video conferencing and communication.
- Email: Outlook email is integrated into the suite
- Security: Security features are built into the suite
- Integration with other Microsoft services and third-party applications.

#### Benefits

- Familiarity: Many people are familiar with Microsoft Products which are widely deployed by large organisations in the public and private sectors
- Comprehensive suite of tools for various business needs.
- Scalability: Councils can add additional users for new staff or councillors.

#### Pricing (2024)

This is the annual pricing available direct from Microsoft for subscription to Microsoft 365. Details are available [here](#)

#### [Microsoft 365 for Business | Small Business | Microsoft 365](#)

- Microsoft 365 Business Basic: £4.90 excluding VAT per user per month. Web and mobile versions of Office apps and 1 TB of cloud storage per user.

- Microsoft 365 Business Standard: £10.30 excluding VAT per user per month. As Basic plus desktop applications, advanced collaboration tools, and additional storage.
- Microsoft 365 Business Premium: £18.10 excluding VAT per user per month. Business Premium includes all the features of Business Standard, along with advanced security measures and device management capabilities.

Microsoft 365 also offers a free Service targeted at personal users. This provides the online only versions of Word, Excel

## Google Workspace

### Key Features

- Office Applications: Word processing - Google Docs, Spreadsheets - Sheets, Presentations - Slides, Email and Calendar – Gmail and many others
- Cloud Storage: Google Drive provides from 30 GB to unlimited storage depending on the plan.
- Collaboration Tools: Google Meet for video conferencing and Chat for messaging.
- Email Hosting: Gmail for professional email services.
- Security: Security features are built into the suite
- Integration: Integration with various Google services and third-party applications.

### Benefits

- Accessibility: Cloud-based platform accessible from any device with internet.
- Collaboration: Real-time collaboration features enhance teamwork.
- Simplicity: User-friendly interface and seamless Google integration.

### Pricing (2024)

This is the annual pricing available direct from Google for subscription to Google Workspace. Details are available [here](#)

- Business Starter: £5 per user per month excluding VAT. Web and mobile versions of apps and 30Gb of cloud storage per user.
- 
- Business Standard: £10 per user per month.
- Business Plus: £15 per user per month.

## Other Competing Products

In addition to Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace, there are several other office collaboration suites available, including open-source options that can be highly beneficial for small organizations. Notable mentions include:

## Zoho Workplace

### Key Features

- Office Applications: Includes Writer, Sheet, and Show for document creation.
- Cloud Storage: Zoho WorkDrive offers centralized file management.
- Collaboration Tools: Cliq for messaging and Zoho Meeting for video conferencing.
- Email Hosting: Zoho Mail for professional email services.
- Security: Ensures data encryption and compliance with industry standards.

### Benefits

- Customization: Highly customizable to fit specific business requirements.
- Integration: Seamlessly integrates with other Zoho services and numerous third-party applications.
- Affordability: Generally more cost-effective compared to other premium suites.

### Pricing (2024)

- Workplace Standard: £2.40 per user per month.
- Workplace Professional: £4.80 per user per month.

## LibreOffice

### Key Features

- Office Applications: Includes Writer (word processor), Calc (spreadsheet), and Impress (presentation).
- Open Source: Free and open-source software.
- Compatibility: Compatible with other major office suites.

### Benefits

- Cost: Completely free to use, making it an excellent choice for budget-conscious organizations.
- Community Support: Backed by a large community of developers and users for support and updates.
- Flexibility: Can be installed on various operating systems without licensing issues.

### Pricing

- LibreOffice: Free

### Notes

- LibreOffice does not provide a cloud Service similar to Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace. Councils would need to procure a separate cloud Service for storage and file sharing.

## Utilization by Small Organizations

For small organizations with only a few employees, Office collaboration suites offer significant benefits. Here are some ways these suites can be effectively utilized:

- **Communication:** Tools like Microsoft Teams and Google Meet enable video conferencing and messaging, facilitating communication among staff and elected members even in rural areas.
- **Collaboration:** Real-time document editing and sharing capabilities enhance collaboration on projects and activities.
- **Storage and File Sharing:** With cloud storage options, staff and members can store, access, and share files securely from anywhere.
- **Email and Calendars:** Professional email services help manage communications, while integrated calendars simplify scheduling and coordination.
- **Productivity:** Access to a variety of office applications ensures that employees have the tools they need to manage their tasks efficiently.

## Utilization in the Welsh Language

Microsoft 365 offers support for multiple languages, including Welsh. The ability to use applications like Word, Excel, and Powerpoint in Welsh allows for more straightforward development of materials for councils operating through the medium of Welsh or with a policy of offering publication of documents in bilingually. Additionally, Microsoft Teams support meetings in Welsh via transcription, enhancing inclusivity and ensuring that all team members can participate fully.

LibreOffice also provides support for the Welsh language, making it a viable option for councils working in Welsh. It allows users to work in Welsh across a range of its applications such as Writer, Calc, and Impress.

Google Workspace offers support for the Welsh language in some of its applications such as Gmail but doesn't present a full interface in the language.

## Challenges

While these office collaboration suites offer numerous benefits, there are also challenges that small organizations need to consider:

### Privacy

Managing data privacy is crucial. Both Microsoft 365 and Google Workspace comply with various data protection regulations, but organizations must ensure that they implement the necessary measures to protect sensitive information.

### Security

Security threats such as phishing, malware, and unauthorized access are persistent concerns. It is essential for councils to educate their employees on best practices and maintain regular security audits.

## User Training

Adopting a new collaboration suite can be challenging for employees who are accustomed to different tools. Providing comprehensive training and continuous support is vital to ensure a smooth transition and maximize the benefits of these platforms.

## Version History

	Date	Issuer	Reason	Review Date
V1	21/01/25	Justin Horrell	Initial Version	21/01/26



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