



**Un Llais Cymru
One Voice Wales**

Community & Town Councils Digital Guidance

Management of Council Information Technology

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Introduction

In today's digital age, organisations of all types and sizes, including Community and Town Councils in Wales, rely heavily on IT equipment such as computers, printers, phones, and tablets to efficiently carry out their operations. Proper support and maintenance of these devices is crucial to ensure their longevity, reliability, and performance. Engaging with this topic is essential for Councils to avoid disruptions, safeguard data, and optimize resources.

Proper support procedures helps ensure that all your computer equipment and software run efficiently and can help prevent issues before they become major problems. By having a robust support and maintenance plan, you ensure that your IT systems remain reliable and secure. Key elements of support include troubleshooting problems, providing technical assistance, and offering training to staff. Maintenance involves regular updates, backups, and monitoring systems to catch any issues early.

Planning for IT Support and Maintenance

Planning for IT support and maintenance involves several key steps. Some of these steps will be internal to Council – to be carried out by the clerk or other staff. Others will best be undertaken by an external supplier as part of an ongoing support contract. This will usually be accompanied by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) outlining the activities which the supplier will undertake and the standards and measures to which they will conform.

Internal Actions

Inventory Management:

Maintain an up-to-date inventory of all IT Equipment. This should include

- Details of the equipment, including purchase dates, warranty information, and specifications.
- Details of where the Equipment is kept and if it is assigned to any specific member of staff or councillor.
- Councils will also want to add devices to their asset register and maintain a record of the remaining value of any equipment which is considered as a capital asset.

Policy Development:

Establish clear policies and procedures for the use, maintenance, and security of IT Equipment by staff and councillors. This should include

- Regular software updates
- Data backup instructions including procedures and how often backups need to be undertaken or checked
- Suitable Access Controls such as passwords to avoid misuse of Equipment
- Guidelines on day to day use such as the installation of software and, permissible use for personal matters

Training:

Ensure staff are adequately trained on, proper equipment usage, basic troubleshooting and recognizing potential security threats.

Routine Checks:

Schedule regular internal reviews to check the health and performance of IT equipment, identifying any issues early. These might include

- Devices working slowly or frequently becoming unresponsive
- Cracked or damaged screens or peripherals such as keyboards
- Storage limitations being reached

External Services

To complement internal efforts, Councils should consider contracting with IT Services companies for certain Services. The scale of these Services will vary depending on the size of the council

IT Support Contracts:

Engage with IT service providers for ongoing support, including helpdesk services, remote assistance, and on-site visits for critical issues.

Maintenance Services:

Contract maintenance services for repairs to broken items, and upgrades.

Security Solutions:

Employ external security experts to implement and monitor advanced security measures, such as firewalls, antivirus software, and intrusion detection systems.

Data Backup and Recovery:

Utilize third-party services for secure data backup and recovery.

Options for Engaging Suppliers

1 Local or Regional Commercial Service Providers

Overview

Commercial service providers can offer a wide range of IT services, often with a high level of expertise and the ability to stay up-to-date with the latest technologies.

Suppliers should be selected through issuing a clear tender document to which they can respond. This will allow a comparison of pricing and services to ensure best value is obtained by the council

Pros and Cons

This option could offer high-quality services and access to the latest technologies. However, it may also involve higher costs and potential challenges in ensuring the provider understands the specific needs of the council.

2 Shared Services in Local Clusters of Councils

Overview

Shared services in local clusters of Councils could provide the benefits of working with commercial service providers but with the potential for cost savings through shared resources and procurement.

Pros and Cons

This option could offer cost savings and the opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing. However, it will also involve challenges in coordinating between different Councils.

3. Support from Principal Councils

Overview

Principal Councils in Wales each have IT departments with people, processes and tools to provide IT support. They are also local to Councils within their areas and will often have an overlap of their elected members with those serving on Community and Town Councils. Therefore, it may be possible to negotiate an extension of their service to local Councils. There is an example of this approach at Carmarthenshire County Council.

Pros and Cons

This option could offer more customization to local needs and potentially more responsive service. Unitary authorities would expect Community and Town Councils to conform to basic standards in terms of equipment and systems used to make support on a cost-effective basis feasible.

Cost Elements

The cost of IT support and maintenance can vary based on several factors. Councils are advised to consider all elements and make suitable allocations in their annual budgets to support their ongoing needs:

- Initial Setup Costs: One-time expenses for setting up IT infrastructure, including hardware purchases, installation, and configuration.
- Ongoing Support Fees: Recurring fees for IT support contracts, which can be billed monthly or annually.

- **Maintenance Costs:** Costs for periodic maintenance Services or for repair of broken items.
- **Security Solutions:** Investment in security measures, including software licenses, monitoring services, and security audits.
- **Training and Development:** Budget for staff training sessions and workshops to keep them informed about best practices and emerging threats.
- **Contingency Fund:** Allocate funds for unexpected IT issues or emergencies that require immediate attention.

Conclusion

For Community and Town Councils in Wales, addressing IT support and maintenance is not just a technical necessity but a strategic imperative. By taking proactive steps and engaging with both internal and external resources, Councils can ensure their IT infrastructure remains robust, secure, and efficient, ultimately supporting their mission to serve their communities effectively.

Version History

	Date	Issuer	Reason	Review Date
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