

Subject:	AZURE VIRTUAL DESKTOP (AVD)
Date:	18 October 2023
Decision to be taken by:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Finance and Housing) & Section 151 Officer
Report of:	Andrew Way, Technology Lead
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Jamie Pout, Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Environmental Services
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Delegated Authority:	Delegation C64 to the Section 151 Officer of Section 6 (Scheme of Officer Delegations) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution: “To authorise new projects up to £50,000 that can be funded within the overall resources of the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan”.
Purpose of the report:	To enable Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) for the Idox Uniform application.
Recommendation:	To approve a new project to enable Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) for the Idox Uniform application.

1. Summary

1.1 DDC has decided to move to a preferred cloud first route for the following the reasons:

- Improved Business Continuity and Security
- Enabling digital transformation
- Leveraging new technologies
- Flexibility of infrastructure (coping with high demand periods)
- Readiness for modernisation of systems (SaaS)
- Eventual reduction in capital ICT costs

1.2 This involves moving ICT systems and data from servers managed at Thanet DC by the (soon to be closed) joint ICT service to “the cloud”. The preferred cloud solution is Software as a Service (SaaS) which is where the company providing the system would host and manage the solution on their infrastructure. If this is not viable the next preferred option is to host them in DDC’s Microsoft Azure cloud.

1.3 The IDOX servers are currently being migrated to the Microsoft Azure platform. The IDOX systems are all web browser based apart from IDOX Uniform. With the servers being in Azure, we now have an option to utilise AVD to run the Uniform application with much higher performance, saving staff time.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 DDC started the journey to cloud when migrating to Microsoft 365 late 2019. Since then, we have moved systems to (SaaS) solutions where viable. The next phase is to start migrating systems with no SaaS option to Microsoft Azure.

- 2.2 The IDOX solution does not have a fully featured SaaS offering currently. This was the reason the servers running IDOX systems were opted to migrate to Azure cloud (See Decision Notice DD06 23 of 15 June 2023).
- 2.3 Idox is used in Planning, Building Control, Trees, Land Charges, Street Naming and Numbering and is used for our Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG). The solution is used by around 90 staff in DDC and some parts of the system are accessed by the public via the DDC website, including planning applications.
- 2.4 There has been a history of performance issues with the IDOX Uniform application, especially when working remotely. As Uniform is used on site by staff in Building Control and Planning, ensuring the application runs at peak performance is important, as this ensures staff time is used efficiently.
- 2.5 AVD is a solution within Microsoft Azure which allows the data processing of an application to all be done within Azure, only requiring a small amount of data to be sent from the laptop to the server, making a big difference to performance of high data transfer applications like IDOX Uniform. Currently running the Uniform application remotely can take 3-4 minutes to open and logon completely, depending on the speed of the internet connection. With AVD it will be ready to use in around 30 seconds, it also runs much faster in general while using with AVD.
- 2.6 This report is to approve a project to enable AVD for all IDOX Uniform users.
3. **Identification of Options**
 - 3.1 Option1 – Do nothing.
 - 3.2 Option 2 – Approve project to enable AVD for the IDOX Uniform application.
4. **Evaluation of Options**
 - 4.1 The option to run IDOX Uniform directly from the Azure servers has been considered, but a Proof of Concept has been run with AVD and it has proved to run much faster and is more stable, helping with time efficiency of Uniform application users.
 - 4.2 The recommended option is to approve the project to enable AVD for the IDOX Uniform application.
 - 4.3 ROCK are one of the only UK Partners to get funding for the analysis work within Azure and have experts within this area. They enabled AVD as a Proof of Concept during the Azure IDOX server setup, this means the only cost for AVD is the compute and storage costs in Microsoft Azure.
5. **Resource Implications**
 - 5.1 There is budget allocated in the ICT reserve for this project.
 - 5.2 Previously a similar on-premise solution called Citrix was utilised in DDC, AVD removes the requirement for physical hardware and is much cheaper to utilise for one off applications, as most systems used in DDC now run via web browsers or are optimised for use remotely.
 - 5.3 The initial monthly cost for running AVD is £350. This cost will reduce over the first 3 months as we work with ROCK to optimise the running of the servers in Azure. We cannot specifically say yet what the exact reduction will be until the servers are relocated to Azure. We envisage this to be 20% to 40% reduction.
 - 5.4 Total Year 1 cost will be £4,200.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

6.1 No comments received.

7. **Corporate Implications**

7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy have been consulted on the report and have no further comments to add. (AG)

7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.

7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'This report recommending the approval of a new project to enable Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) for the Idox Uniform application, does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>'.

7.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

8. **Appendices**

None.

9. **Background Papers**

Relevant papers on Digital Services files

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