

Decision Note – Digital Forensics Infrastructure (5718)



REQUEST FOR DECISION BY THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

	Policing:	Crime:	Fire & Rescue:
This decision relates to:	x		

APPROVAL (for completion by Staffordshire Commissioner only)

Rationale for approval

This investment will result in significant efficiency benefits for the force, improve the quality of investigations and improve the service provided to victims.

STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

Signature

Date 12/07/24

Date decision required by: **15th July 2024**

If an urgent approval is required, please state reasons:

Dell approached Staffordshire Police directly with information appertaining to an indicative increase in the above costs representing a pressure of around [REDACTED] or circa £500k. Steps were taken to verify this and also understand the impact on Cisco and Fortinet for the same reasons. The Dell requirements have been put to the to market to clarify actual costs against the Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) in order to be in a position to place orders by 15th July should this be approved. The ROM for the hardware in the business case [REDACTED] already reflected January 2024 price increases in line with inflation, but this latest increase is due to component increases beyond the control of Dell, relating to SSD and RAM and the continued demand for chips globally.

For completion by Staffordshire Commissioner's Office only:-

Decision Number: SCP/D/202425/003

Date Received: 12th July 2024

	Yes	No
Has the required decision been considered under the guidance of the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	x	
Has the required decision been deemed to be a Key Decision as defined within the Staffordshire Commissioner's Decision-Making Policy?	x	
Who is empowered to make the required decision?		
Staffordshire Commissioner		

Title	Digital Forensics Infrastructure
<p>To approve the purchase of the following IT hardware/ Infrastructure by no later than 15th July 2024 to avoid significant market price increases which will impact project costs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dell Storage and Compute infrastructure 2. Fortigate and Cisco Hardware 	

Recommendation:

This decision is underpinned by a robust business case, and I support the recommendation to proceed at pace in order to secure the contract on current prices, thus avoiding significant increase in cost to the project.

Chief Executive

I hereby approve the recommendation for consideration.

Signature

Date 12/07/2024



REPORT AND ADVICE TO THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

1. Introduction and background

With the rapid digitalisation of crime, Staffordshire Police's strategic initiative to overhaul its digital forensics capabilities is both a necessary response and a progressive step towards modern policing. This Executive Summary provides a detailed overview of the project, aligning with the force's core objectives of ensuring community safety, nurturing an exceptional workforce, fostering productive partnerships, and building an exceptional organisation.

Our Digital Forensics capability and performance is currently constrained by fragmented delivery and lack of prioritised and coordinated enabling services. Ad-hoc investment fixes urgent issues but fails to mitigate the real challenges and medium to longer term risks.

Over 90% of policing investigations have a digital element and often the digital evidence is key to ensure investigations are fair and successful. Many investigations are unnecessarily delayed and investigative resources lack the capability and capacity to deliver in time. The current position is unsustainable with increased use of digital technology leading to an exponential growth in digital forensic examinations and the volume and complexity of data impacting on the quality of investigations.

National attention has never been greater with the emphasis on tackling high risk offending, improving quality and streamlining investigations in both high risk and volume crime. Every case that awaits examination presents a possible safeguarding risk and impacts on victims, witnesses and suspects. Recent reports including the NPCC Digital Forensic Science Strategy (Jul 2020), Operation Soteria (Dec 22) and HMICFRS's report (Dec 22) exposed significant risks and challenges from digital forensics, both to police investigations and victim experience.

The exponential pace of change and the need to become more suspect focused and victim centric requires a radically different approach to meet our longer-term needs and align to the National Strategy. Importantly this

approach should support coherent and systematic end to end digital evidence management. The force must seek better and enduring digital solutions to deliver earlier and more impactful results.

Expected benefits:

- Enhanced operational efficiency through automation, reducing manual workloads, and expediting case resolutions
- Improved data management and security, especially crucial in managing data volumes significantly larger than other police data
- Faster and more effective responses to serious crimes, with enhanced support for victims and the vulnerable
- Ensure an effective, integrated and enduring digital evidence capability for the Force improving utilisation of investigative resources and quality of investigations.
- The realisation of these benefits is expected to commence from the second year of implementation, marking a significant improvement in the operational effectiveness of Staffordshire Police

The decision follows a review of the options for the transformation of the Digital Forensics Unit (DFU). The project involves a considerable investment in infrastructure and software and pricing has been clarified on the preferred option of an on-premises solution for the DFU infrastructure. Three suppliers on the Dell Deal Registration for this project have been approached utilising the NHS SBS DWS framework. All were asked for clarification of pricing based on the specification prepared in conjunction with Softcat Plc. The evaluation was based on price only, and Specialist Computer Centres Plc (SCC) submitted the best price. SCC can be compliantly awarded a contract on this basis.

2. Issues for consideration

The Purchase of the Dell Storage and Compute is the first step in a wider programme of works to deliver the DFU upgrade programme. The delivery and implementation timeline is to be agreed between IT and the Project leads but the configuration and testing is likely to take 12 months.

Additional purchases will be required to fully deliver the project which have been captured in the overall business case, in summary these are Software purchases or changes, Work Case Management System, acquisition workstations and specialist IT skills to support the implementation of the hardware.

It has been necessary to escalate the purchase of the hardware to avoid the cost increases previously articulated, without this action there is potential for the project to become unaffordable.

Costs for approval following procurement activity

██████████ for Dell Compute and Storage (Commercially Confidential – pending supplier award)

██████████ for Cisco and Fortigate Hardware ██████████ with tolerance for local spec change as mid procurement)

The ROM costs for the Core Infrastructure was included in the business case and presented with the wider project costs which were approved in principle. The compute and Storage ROM costs were estimated to be ██████████ as outlined below which is an extract from the business case. As outlined in the table below.

Item	Type	Year 1
		Capital
Storage	Core Infrastructure	██████████
VM Storage	Core Infrastructure	██████████
Compute (Hosts)	Core Infrastructure	██████████
Compute (AD)	Core Infrastructure	██████████
Network Infrastructure	Core Infrastructure	██████████
Client Hardware (Acquisition Workstations)	Core Infrastructure	██████████
	Total Core Infrastructure	██████████

In the capital programme there is £3.1m set aside over the MTFS period. (£1.4m 24/25 and £1.7m 25/26). The core infrastructure for Digital Forensics will be funded from this budget.

It is forecasted a capital financing pressure of £87k, as the costs are higher than budgeted in year 1, but this all depends on whether the infrastructure will become operational in 24/25. This potential one-off cost pressure needs to be offset against the additional pressure form delaying purchase.

3. What other options have been considered?

It has been discussed to continue as is but the current system is no longer fit for purpose to handle and manage the modern demands of policing. A fully cloud system has been considered but the wider force infrastructure is not mature enough to complement this type of venture and also costs are considerably higher, so this path is a hybrid model that allows for cloud migration in the future.

There has been extensive work undertaken to get to a position where the market can be engaged to understand the actual costs of the infrastructure against the Rom costs within the business case to enable delivery under this workstream as part of the wider DFU programme.

There outcome of the business case as verified by the project team, internal stakeholders and the DDaT team internally together with specialist external support who have experience of delivering these solutions within other Police DFU environments.

The only option to present is to purchase the required hardware as outlined in the business case.

4. Consultation and Engagement undertaken

ACC Riggs – Exec Sponsor
 D.Ch Supt Blaiklock, John Beckwith / Claire Millar Insp Chris Hood – SCC Project Leads
 Sarah Wakefield – PMO
 Fiona Peel/Debra Kingham – Commercial Services
 Jasraj Purewal – Chief Accountant
 Kevin Sexton / Sam Harriott – DDaT
 D.Ch Supt Blaiklock, John Beckwith / Claire Millar Insp Chris Hood – SCC Project Leads
 Sarah Wakefield – PMO

Report Implications

5. Monitoring Officer comments:

Business case and programme overview previously presented to:
 Executive Management Board in March 2024.
 Digital Forensic Board – Bi monthly updates and approvals to progress through each stage.

Signature Date 12/07/2024




6. Section 151 Officer comments:

This decision has been requested at some pace due to a short notification of an imminent price rise from the supplier. Whilst this does create risk in relation to truncated decision making timelines this is offset, in my professional view, by the avoidance of additional cost. A compliant procurement process has been undertaken, and from this we can demonstrate value for money for the taxpayer on the proposed purchase. The original timeline was to present this at the August SGB for approval. However, and fortuitously, the procurement process had concluded just prior to the notification received on Thursday 4th July for a price increase from the 16th of July thus allowing us to take this decision outside of the normal governance timeframes.

This spend is contained within the existing capital programme allocation. It leaves c.£0.8m from this allocation for further costs to implement the solution which will be consumed over the life of the remaining project. There is a requirement to prioritise internal resource effort to deliver on Digital Forensics as a Force priority and this has been done within IT, hence the ability to deliver ahead of schedule the infrastructure ask contained in this

paper. There is an outstanding risk that there is no Project Manager assigned to this project from the change team with the project being managed locally with some high-level input corporately – whilst acceptable as a risk during the procurement phase (now concluded) this does need addressing from internal resource as a priority once this decision is supported.

Delivery of MTFS savings around Digital Forensics are dependent up the successful implementation of this solution. Additional productivity gains, allowing for speedier victim service and allowing officers to do the job we want them to do are demonstrated in the business case presented to the Commissioner. There is the potential of a one-off capital financing pressure of £87k in 25/26 should the asset become fully operational before the 31st March 2025 – whilst unlikely that it will be fully operational and thus attract capital financing charges it is nether the less transparent to flag this risk. The force will have to consider how to offset these as part of its planned £500k saving on capital financing charges in 2025/26.

Signature  Date 11.7.2024

	Yes	No
Has legal advice (outside of that provided by the Monitoring Officer) been sought on the content of this report?		X
7. Legal Comments: N/A		
8. Risks - please give the details of any operational or strategic risks that are affected by this decision (add risk reference number and title below)		
Hardware purchase could cost considerably more if purchased after 15 th July 2024 due to the market pressures around component parts in technology.		
9. Equality Comments – please attach the completed EIA		
Attached.		
10. Background/supporting paper		
Please answer the following questions		
11. Public access to information?		X
12. Does this decision involve the processing of personal data? (If yes please attach a completed Data Impact Assessment)		X
13. Is the publication of this form to be deferred? (If yes approx. how long?) No publication prior to contract award.	X	
14. Does this form contain commercial or operationally sensitive information which is to be redacted? (If yes, please provide details with the submission of this note) Commercially confidentiality information relating to pricing relating to the current decision and proposed costs and detail of future procurement phases.	X	

15. ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Author	Fiona Peel
Signed	F. Peel
Date	10 th July 2024



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of this EIA is to ensure you consider any equality issues as part of your decision making when developing / reviewing your policy / procedure.

Please complete the sections below and send to the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office to be quality assured. New / revised policies cannot be published on the policy database until the EIA has passed the quality assurance process.

Title of policy/procedure:	Digital Forensics Infrastructure
Department:	Specialist Crime Command
Date:	10 th July 2024

1. Identify the aims and purpose of the policy

The decision follows a review of the options for the transformation of the Digital Forensics Unit (DFU). The project involves a considerable investment in infrastructure and software and pricing has been clarified on the preferred option of an on-premises solution for the DFU infrastructure.

The purpose of the activity which this EIA relates is to award a contract to an IT reseller for the provision of DELL storage and compute.

The Purchase of the Dell Storage and Compute is the first step in a wider programme of works to deliver the DFU upgrade programme. The delivery and implementation timeline is to be agreed between IT and the Project leads but the configuration and testing is likely to take 12 months.

2. Identify the individuals and organisations who are likely to have an interest in, or be affected by the policy.

The Officers and Staff mainly affected by the outcome of the award are members of Specialist Crime Command including PPU and DDaT who will use or manage the technology change.

The outcomes delivered in terms of outputs the technology delivers will be are all officers and staff relying on digital forensic analysis and victims and offender who's property is subject to analysis.

3. Data

The technology has no impact on individuals until deployed and accredited. The purchase is for IT hardware.

3.1 Age

n/a

3.2 Disability

n/a

3.3 Race

n/a

3.4 Religion or Belief

n/a

3.5 Sex

n/a

3.6 Sexual Orientation

n/a

3.7 Transgender

n/a

4. Research No information relating to protected groups has been considered as part of the purchase which relates to IT hardware.
4.1 Age n/a
4.2 Disability n/a
4.3 Race n/a
4.4 Religion or Belief n/a
4.5 Sex n/a
4.6 Sexual Orientation n/a
4.7 Transgender n/a

5. Consultation

No information relating to protected groups has been considered as part of the purchase which relates to IT hardware.

5.1 Age

n/a

5.2 Disability

n/a

5.3 Race

n/a

5.4 Religion or Belief

n/a

5.5 Sex

n/a

5.6 Sexual Orientation

n/a

5.7 Transgender

n/a

6. Conclusions

Taking into account the results of the monitoring, research and consultation, set out how the policy impacts or could impact on people from the following protected groups? (Include positive and/or negative impacts)

6.1 Age

n/a

6.2 Disability

n/a

6.3 Race

n/a

6.4 Religion or Belief

n/a

6.5 Sex

n/a

6.6 Sexual Orientation

n/a

6.7 Transgender

n/a

7. Decisions

If the policy will have a negative impact on members of one or more of the protected groups, explain how the policy will change or why it is to continue in the same way.

If no changes are proposed, the policy needs to be objectively justified.

No negative impact expected.

8. Monitoring arrangements

If the policy is new what consideration has been given to piloting the policy?

If monitoring is not already in place what arrangements have been made to monitor the effects of the policy on equality and diversity?

This is a technology purchase as part of a wider project delivery, any monitoring will take place within the project management framework.

This equality impact assessment will be published on the SC website.

EIA Form Dated
01/08/2018

Not Protectively Marked