

Question	Strata Response
<p>To ask the Committee, to confirm the total cost of purchasing Member iPads at East Devon District Council including maintenance and repairs, and to share all relevant papers containing the business case with Councillors.</p>	<p>In March 2018, Strata submitted a discussion document to the three authorities to present options for the support of councillor IT (attached).</p> <p>Previously councillors provided their own IT, and there was an expectation that Strata would be able to support this privately owned IT.</p> <p>One option that was presented was for the authority to provide councillors with a portable device enabling councillors to access emails, calendars, documents and the Modern Gov environment in a more consistent and supported manner. This enabled TDC and EDDC councillors to operate in a similar way to ECC councillors who had been using authority provisioned tablet devices for five years.</p> <p>After internal debate within EDDC and TDC, Strata were advised to proceed with the purchase of portable devices for councillors and a project was initiated to procure, build, test and deploy Apple iPad devices to councillors.</p> <p>EDDC made a decision to purchase the Apple iPad 12.9 inch Pro WiFi 64Gb for each councillor (see attached invoice)</p> <p>TDC decided to purchase a smaller iPad device for each councillor, at a cheaper price.</p> <p>The total cost for EDDC based on a five year usage of the Apple iPad devices is :</p> <p>Total five year cost = £ 48,104</p> <p>This cost is made up of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application licensing included in Strata Core Licensing and base budgets. • Councillor support provided as part of the Strata Service Desk service • Councillor training provided as part of the Strata IT Training service. • Initial iPad cost £ 47,089 • Current repair costs of £1,015 <p>The costs for the devices were included and approved in the 2019/2020 budget process, ultimately by council in February 2019.</p> <p>After deployment of the devices some councillors raised concern that they needed to be able to access emails, calendars from private devices (in addition to the iPad devices provide by the authority). To provide this functionality and to deliver access in a secure manner, Strata needed to purchase additional Microsoft O365 licences and Mimecast email security filtering.</p> <p>The cost of this additional functionality over five years for the councillors who requested (36) this level of access is:</p> <p>Total five year cost = £ 40,960</p>

- EMS E3 Add-on (EDDC Cllrs) = £42.00 per user per year
- Mimecast Additional Email Security Filter (1st year free) £8,350 per Annum

These figures were presented to EDDC and they authorised Strata to proceed.

Strata believe that the provision of iPads to the councillors across all three authorities has:

- Enabled the authorities to provide a consistent delivery of Cllr content via a single supported device
- Helped to reduce print and paper usage, which has had a positive impact on the environment and costs.
- Provided improved levels of security for council data
- Improved levels of IT support for councillors
- Provided access to IT training (should it be required) via the Strata trainer.
- Provided a platform for the deployment of the Modern Gov application making it easier for Dem Services to support councillors
- Provided councillors with a lightweight device which can be used for all council related work and can be access remotely or whilst on council premises.
- Supported the secure deployment of the Zoom platform and enabled officers and councillors to operate effectively during the Covid19 crisis.
- Enabled councillors to access emails and content securely not just from the provided device but also from privately owned devices.
- In using Strata for the deployment and support of the devices there has been no additional charge made to the three authorities.
- Enabled Strata to offer a higher degree of support to Councillors than previously has been available.
- Using a single device has removed the previous high level of support burden on Strata, meaning that we have been able to keep support costs under control and delivered savings in excess of the original expectations.

<p>To ask the Committee, what progress they are making in assessing the potential for hybrid meetings.</p>	<p>Strata have written a paper (attached) and this has been submitted to the Democratic Services teams of all three Councils with a handful of technical solutions to run hybrid meetings.</p> <p>The paper also highlighted some challenges that we will come with running hybrid meetings, including the anticipated number of participants for meetings. The recommended solution would change if there were 10 people in attendance to if there were 20, for example.</p> <p>Strata have recommend waiting to see how Teignbridge District Council's Hybrid meeting approach performs, which we are anticipating will begin initial testing later in September. TDC purchased a solution prior to Covid19 using the Public-I solution, though the implementation was delayed because of it. The three Democratic Services teams have worked well together through the pandemic, sharing knowledge and thinking, and we are encouraging that EDDC and ECC are involved with the testing of TDC's new solution as a way of helping to assess the viability within their own councils.</p> <p>EDDC Democratic Services have accepted Strata's recommendation of reviewing the TDC hybrid project.</p>
<p>To ask the Committee, have any town and parish Councils in the District approached STRATA or support since the Coronavirus Act 2020.</p>	<p>Strata have not received any requests from either Town or Parish councils within EDDC since the Coronavirus Act 2020.</p> <p>In August 2020, we did receive a request from Dawlish Town Council regarding GIS data and in Sept 2020, we received a request from the Devon Association of Local Councils as to whether we could assist with the provision of training services.</p> <p>In previous years, Strata have received enquiries from Seaton Town Council (2017) and Dawlish Town Council (2019).</p>
<p>To ask the Committee, does it remain the policy to wind up the STRATA Joint Scrutiny Committee and has this been assessed in terms of transparency and Member/democratic oversight?</p>	<p>The operation of Strata has been subject to scrutiny since the formation of the organisation in 2014 / 2015.</p> <p>Currently there are multiple levels of governance of Strata, these include the Strata Management Team, the Strata Board, the individual IRB's of each authority, the Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Executive Committee. There are also external audit controls in place to monitor the organisation both in terms of financial and process / performance, these are provided by Francis Clarke (financial auditors) and the Devon Audit Partnership.</p> <p>Strata produce a highly detailed monthly report for the three authorities along with an annual Business Plan, these documents are circulated widely and are discussed at a Strata Board and individual IRB level.</p>

After five years of the successful operation of Strata which has seen considerable achievement against the original objectives of Reduced Risk, Reduced Cost and the provision of an IT service which has capacity and capability.

Financial performance is strong with Strata delivering in excess of £1m of savings in the financial year 2019/20, this added to the savings from previous years shows the original saving targets can not only be met and exceeded.

Devon Audit Partnership has shown Strata to be of a 'Good' standard and offers substantial assurance of the IT service.

Adding all existing governance commitments together, it shows that there is already considerable scrutiny of Strata and it's operation at multiple levels by all three authorities both individually and jointly.

We feel that given the success of the Strata business the time has come to simplify the governance structure, whilst ensuring that each authority still has the ability to scrutinise Strata through individual scrutiny committees, rather than having one Strata scrutiny committee.

Our plans prior to Covid were to review the existing governance structure and to reduce the governance burden on Strata, allowing Strata to focus on the delivery of exceptional IT service.

In October 2019, Strata produced a discussion document entitled 'Governance Framework', and this was subsequently presented to the JSC and JEC and discussed with a recommendation that we undertook a review of the Shareholder Agreement and worked to put into place the required changes.

However, unfortunately this has not been progressed further at this stage due to the demands put on Strata and the management team during the Covid 19 crisis and this has had to be a priority.

Moving forward once the current level of demand drops, it is the intention of the Strata Board to re-commence the work to make the change to the governance framework of Strata.