Shared Services Joint Committee
18th January 2023

Report Title	Assistive Technology Disaggregation – Change Request (Updated from Draft Report for SSJC October 2022)

Report Author(s)	SROs:
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Executive Member	Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, NNC Cllr Matt Golby, Portfolio Holder for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration, WNC

Key Decision	☐ Yes ☒ No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

Contributors / Checkers / Approvers

Approver	Officer Name	Date Officer Approved Report
North MO	**Adele Wylie**	14/12/2022
North S151	**Janice Gotts**	14/12/2022
Other Director / SME	**David Watts**	14/12/2022
West MO	**Catherine Whitehead**	14/12/2022

| West S151 | Martin Henry | 14/12/2022 |
| Other Director / SME | Stuart Lackenby | 14/12/2022 |

List of Appendices

None

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1.   To seek approval to reprofile the timeline of the Assistive Technology disaggregation from February 2023 to March 2024. This is to enable additional time to disaggregate the service in a safe and legal manner therefore reducing the potential disruption to vulnerable customers of both Councils.

2.   Executive Summary

2.1   The Assistive Technology (AT) Service works across Northamptonshire assessing residents and providing the appropriate items to meet their needs. The AT service provides support to over 4,000 customers in the county each year. The AT service assesses, installs and repairs all of the AT equipment available to residents across Northamptonshire. There are over 100 items / systems / software that the AT service provides support for.

2.2   The AT service is a hosted service hosted by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and provided to North Northamptonshire Council (NNC). The timeframe for disaggregation was set out within the Transformation Task and Finish Group as February 2023.

2.3   To disaggregate, NNC will need to tender for a new equipment procurement framework, the timeline for this would be a minimum 12 months and this work has not commenced. If the service disaggregated in February 2023, NNC could not provide a safe and legal service.

2.4   Approval is thus sought to support the recommendations to re-profile the timeframes for the AT service disaggregation to March 2024.

2.5   In addition to allowing time for the set-up of an equipment procurement framework, the new timeline will allow NNC to scope and develop a strategy to map out the long-term vision for digital and assistive technology, which may include an option to not disaggregate and move to a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health, while continuing the collaboration with health partners that is in place at the moment.

3.   Recommendations

3.1   It is recommended that the Shared Services Joint Committee:

Approve reprofiling the timeline to disaggregate the AT Service and the Blueprint is amended, to reflect the new disaggregation timeline of March 2024.

4   Reasons for the Recommendation:

4.1   The proposed option to reprofile the disaggregation of the AT Service ensures continuous effective service delivery within this function and reduces the significant risk of disruption or reduced service to vulnerable people and reputational damage. Delaying the disaggregation allows:

- NNC to implement an equipment procurement framework
- An options appraisal to be completed to explore the option of a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health.
- The IT procurement and implementation (Cygnum system project) at NNC can be embedded prior to disaggregation.

4.2   Alternative Options Considered

a) Continue with full disaggregation by February 2023. This option is not recommended because:
    i.   NNC procurement have indicated they require 12 months to set up the new equipment procurement framework and so NNC would not be able to provide a safe and legal service by the end of February 2023 as there would not be an equipment procurement framework in place.
    ii.   It does not allow time to explore the option of a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health

b) Not to disaggregate and move to a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health. This option requires further scoping and would be considered as part of the Impact Assessment to disaggregate if this change request is approved.

5   Report Background

5.1   Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment or software that is used to increase, maintain or improve an individual's ability to perform daily tasks or to communicate, learn and live an independent, fulfilling and productive life.

5.2   The AT Service is unique in its problem-solving approach. It does not work from a prescriptive model (i.e. a catalogue which has limitations) but has the freedom to innovate and tailor the approach to the needs of the customer by having access to the wider market and this is reflected in the current framework. This allows the team to take a more bespoke approach in supporting people to live well and maintain independence. There are wider benefits for service users when there is the freedom to innovate.

5.3   WNC have established a new equipment procurement framework effective 2022 – 2024 with an option to extend for one year that enables the service to operate in the manner of a problem-solving approach. As NNC are not included in the framework, if the service disaggregated, NNC would have to procure a separate, equivalent framework.

5.4   The AT team is fully staffed with no vacancies or concerns about the capabilities of the team. The team consists of 12 people, a Team Manager, a Senior Administrative Officer, Administrative and Equipment Officers. The impact assessment on staff or the new structures have not been completed as part of this change request, but it is anticipated that should the service disaggregate, there would be a 50/50 split of staff with a Team Manager required in each authority and a Senior Business Support Assistant in NNC. Staffing levels are not a risk to disaggregation.

5.5   The AT service has established partnerships with Health in the Acute Hospitals and the Call Care Hub. The team has pioneered many pieces of equipment including the development of a reporting tool (Canary) to assess customers at home.

5.6   The Government Social Care Reform (December 2021) has a focus on technology with a commitment of £150 million of additional funding to drive greater adoption of technology and achieve widespread digitisation across social care to support independent living and improve the quality of care.

5.7   The Cygnum IT system contract, used to schedule and monitor care and reablement visits and invoicing / billing for AT, will expire in March 2023. WNC has a project in progress to implement a new system. For AT, ERP Gold will be used for invoicing and a new system for customer management, probably Eclipse, but this is currently being scoped. A project to procure a new system for NNC commenced in July 2022.

5.7   In September 2020, both the North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee and the West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee approved and adopted a Disaggregation Blueprint. One of the decisions that was identified within this Blueprint was a West hosted Assistive Technology service. The risks to disaggregating the service by February 2023 are now identified. Further time is required for this service to disaggregate in a safe and legal way.

6   Issues and Choices

6.1   **Option 1** – Continue with full disaggregation by February 2023 or at the earliest possible date. This choice would incur very significant risk to the ability of the service to provide equipment because there is not enough time for NNC to have a procurement framework in place. This is a key priority service for many vulnerable customers and to attempt to disaggregate prior to March 2024 would incur significant risk for the Service and impact negatively on the reputation of the Council.

6.2   Procurement has not started before this point due to ongoing discussion in NNC about the desired strategy and whether to request a change to the disaggregation timeline. The decision to proceed with requesting a delay was endorsed by the NNC DASS on 12 August 2022.

6.3   **Option 2** – Approval of a delayed disaggregation by end of March 2024. This is the recommended option for the following reasons:

6.4   This allows time to complete an Options Appraisal and Impact Assessment including the option to not disaggregate and move to a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health. The timeline would be:

- Completion of Options Appraisal and Impact Assessment – by end December 2022
- Presentation of recommended option to JOB February 2023
- Presentation of recommended option to SSJC March 2023

6.5   NNC will have the opportunity to formulate an effective long-term strategy and solution including a procurement framework. Without this delay there will not be a procurement framework in place. NNC have an opportunity to transfer existing Crosskeys customers (lifeline monitoring) over to the WNC Call Care hub. This is cost neutral but ensures continuation of service and safety of the vulnerable service users.

6.6   The current collaborative Northamptonshire Assistive Technology Service model can be maintained providing continuity of service to residents. This freedom and approach to the needs of the customer can be reflected in the NNC framework, supporting people to live well and maintain independence.

6.7   There is a strong partnership relationship with Health partners which NNC can build upon prior to disaggregation.

6.8   The IT procurement and implementation (Cygnum system project) at NNC and WNC can be embedded prior to disaggregation.

6.9   **Option 3 -** Not to disaggregate and move to a permanent partnership arrangement between NNC, WNC and Health.

6.10   This option requires further scoping and would be considered as part of the Impact Assessment to disaggregate if this change request is approved.

7   Next Steps

7.1   Pending approval of this change request, the next steps**:**

- Completion of Options Appraisal and – by end December 2022
- Presentation of recommended option to JOB February 2023
- Presentation of recommended option to SSJC March 2023
- Implementation of option March 2023 – March 2024

8   Implications (including financial implications)

8.1   Resources and Financial

8.1.1   No expected change from current hosted arrangements.

8.1.2   NNC will require approximately £80,000 per annum additional funding following disaggregation in order to adequately resource the service (Team Manager and BSA post).

8.2 **Legal and Governance**

8.2.1 The service is currently operating in accordance with the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) that exists between NNC and WNC. If the recommendation proposed within the report is agreed, then the Councils' will approve any further amendments under the IAA to ensure that adequate contract and financial management and governance is in place between the authorities.

8.3 **Relevant Polices and Plans**

8.3.1 Reprofiling disaggregation of AT service amends the requirements of the approved Blueprint, whereby it outlines timeline of the hosted services in each authority that require disaggregating.

8.4 **Risk**

8.4.1 If the service is disaggregated in accordance with the original timescales of February 2023 or at the earliest possible date, the following risks and issues will arise:

Risk Assessment	Mitigating Action
Continuing with disaggregation in February 2023 or earliest possible date would mean the service cannot be delivered in accordance with statutory requirements as there would be no equipment framework in place for NNC.	Recommendation to delay disaggregation to end March 2024 in order to put a framework in place for NNC that delivers best value to the Council and the customer.
If disaggregated in February 2023 or earliest possible date, NNC will require additional funding to continue to deliver the service at the current level or there will be a significant impact to customers. Any additional spend to meet this in 2022/23 will be met by the current budget. Identified budget growth for 2023/24 onwards will be reviewed as part of the MTFP budget build process.	Delay to disaggregation will allow time for budgets to be put into place through the MTFP for the year 2024/25 onwards.
The separate Cygnum System projects are currently underway in both NNC and WNC. Disaggregation in February 2023 or earliest possible date could leave the services vulnerable as new systems will not be fully implemented and embedded.	Delaying disaggregation would allow the service to implement and embed separate ICT systems for NNC and WNC.

Risk Assessment	Mitigating Action

8.5 **Consultation**

8.5.1 Consultation with the Service Area leads and Subject Matter Experts (SME's) has been carried out

8.6 **Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

8.6.1 No considerations arising from this report

8.7 **Consideration by Scrutiny**

8.7.1 No considerations arising from this report

8.8 **Equality Implications**

8.8.1 No considerations arising from this report. The recommendation protects disabled people from potential harm.

8.9 **Climate Impact**

8.9.1 No negative impacts arising from this report.

8.10 **Community Impact**

8.10.1 None arising from this report

8.11 **Crime and Disorder Impact**

8.11.1 None arising from this report