

Committee: **Governance & Audit Committee**
Date of meeting: **8th March 2023**
Report Subject: **Shared Resource Service (SRS)**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Steve Thomas, Leader of the Council /
Cabinet Member Corporate Overview and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias – Chief Officer Commercial and
Customer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance and Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
WC 07/11/22	10/11/22		08/03/23		22/11/22	07/12/22		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a position statement against the objectives set out in the Business Case on the Shared Resource Service (SRS) Wales provision of ICT services for Blaenau Gwent.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 In May 2016 the Council approved the Business Case for Blaenau Gwent ICT services to become part of the SRS following a review of the internal provision.

2.2 The business case set out 3 main objectives over an initial 5-year period for delivery based on what was considered important for Blaenau Gwent.

2.3 The impact of the COVID19 pandemic has resulted in some work continuing into 2022.

2.4 The objectives were:

2.4.1 Objective 1: People

To integrate Blaenau Gwent ICT workforce into a collaborative business model to improve the quality of service through the creation of resilience and synergies.

2.4.2 Objective 2: Organisational

To meet and deliver existing and future service and organisational needs whilst addressing previously identified gaps.

2.4.3 Objective 3: Infrastructure and systems

To integrate Blaenau Gwent's ICT infrastructure and systems into shared services to ensure value for money through economies of scale.

2.4.4 A briefing session for elected members on the work of the SRS was delivered on 8th November 2022.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option One**

The Governance & Audit Committee to:

- (a) Consider and support the position statement confirming Audit and Governance arrangements are in place against the objectives set out in the Business Case, and
- (b) Receive annual updates as part of the ongoing partnership with SRS.

3.2 **Option Two**

The Governance & Audit Committee to:

- (a) Consider the position statement confirming Audit & Governance arrangements are in place against the objectives set out in the Business Case and make recommendations on where improvements can be made to the current monitoring processes; and
- (b) Receive annual updates as part of the ongoing partnership with SRS.

4. **Evidence of how the report supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan.**

4.1 The SRS as a strategic partner supports delivery of the Corporate Plan:

- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place;
- Supports the council in its delivery of services against key policy directives such as the Digital Strategy for Wales.

5. **Implications**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

5.1 The SRS agrees a budget with Blaenau Gwent each year through the Finance and Governance Board, which the Chief Officer Resources sits on. Over the 5 years of the Business Case there has been savings of around £633,000 against the original budget which has been returned to Blaenau Gwent or sits in the Blaenau Gwent surplus within the SRS.

5.1.2 Schools SLA in place, 3 year rolling programme which every school has signed up to, current SLA in place from April 2022 to March 2025

5.1.3 The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council budget for 2022/23 is £2m which is 10% less than the target set by the Council in the 2016 business case

5.1.4 The review and management of contract requirements of the Council-controllable elements included within the SRS management fee has resulted in a saving of over 15% for the 2023/24 budget against the

2022/23 budget for the third party/contract spend elements when accounting for estimated inflationary increases.

5.1.5 The budget covers staff, accommodation costs and a number of contracts with third party suppliers (approximately £652,000) which the SRS manage on behalf of the Council.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

The SRS has a comprehensive risk register. The current key risks highlighted to the Strategic Board as those of concern with accompanying mitigations, are:

- global supply chain - Raised status level due to noncompliance with SLA and limited feedback from supplier on availability. Cisco kit is an issue with latest update to partners that this continues to be monitored.
- cyber security awareness – update due in full system audit planned for Q3 as per timetable below; and
- recruitment and retention of SRS staff.

Audits	Type of Audit	Status	Update
Change Management	Full System	Complete	Substantial Assurance
Cybersecurity SIEM/SOC	Full System	Planned Q4	
Firewall	Full System	In Progress	
Virtualisation	Full System	In Progress	Fieldwork in progress
O365	Full System	Complete	Full Assurance
Financial Regulations	Full System	Complete	Report received
Data Centre	Full System	Planned Q2	Moved to Q4 due to delay in Education move to Vantage
ISMS	Full System	Planned Q4	
IT Governance	Full System	Complete	Full Assurance
Mobile Computing	Full System	Complete	Full Assurance
Performance Management	Full System	Planned Q4	
IT Service Continuity	Full System	Complete	Full Assurance

Strategic board continue to receive updates on key risks and also audits undertaken as per table above.

5.3 **Legal**

5.3.1 The SRS is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that all partners agreed to when joining the SRS through a Deed of Adherence. The original MoU is being reviewed and updated to include all partners. Torfaen County Borough Council is leading this work.

5.3.2 There is also an SLA in place which is approved each year at Strategic Board, contents of which form part of Delivery group updates, i.e. Performance of SRS and Engagement Request analysis

5.3.3 Latest SLA in respect of delivery for 2022/23 has recently been approved at Strategic board and no significant changes were made, this document supports the delivery for each partner

5.3.4 It is anticipated that a more in-depth review of the SLA for 2024/25 onwards will be undertaken with partners in due course

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct human resource implications associated with this report.

The governance arrangements supporting the SRS model includes representation on the following boards:

- Strategic Board Chief Executive and Councillor Jules Gardner as the nominated elected member
- Finance and Governance Board (Chief Officer Resources or delegated representative)
- Business and collaboration Board (Chief Officer Commercial and Customer, Service Manager Customer Experience & Transformation or delegated representative).

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

A summary of key activity against each objective is set out below:

6.1.1 **Improvement Objective 1: People**

All resources were integrated into a single operating model and this has been working successfully for a number of years.

6.1.2 **Improvement Objective 2: Organisational**

The identified gaps in provision have been addressed through the partnership with the SRS and this continues to plan and meet future organisational needs and ambitions, and key projects include:

- *Migration of all local authority Partners to the single instance of System Centre Configuration Manager (SCCM)*

SCCM is a tool for building laptop images and rolling out Windows devices. All local authority partners have been migrated to a single solution removing the need and complexities of having multiple instances per partner organisation and allows the SRS to utilise the same base build. Through doing so it has broken down barriers in terms of technological complexities when rolling out patches for software and now provides a central solution for builds packages and patching which is of benefit to the local authority partners.

- *Software Asset Management*

Discussions took place in 2021-22 around the implementation of Software Asset Management within the SRS. With agreement from all partners and the appointment of a Licence Officer, the SRS and partners have started the Licence Management journey, commenced the license management tools are available to drive efficiencies from the current Microsoft contract, as an example.

- *Microsoft 365 implementation & Always on VPN connection (AOVPN), enabling the Councils new operating model*

The use of the M365 apps and tools will support and sustain the future of the new operating model. This is an ongoing programme of work, however much of the planning and development has happened over the last year. The SRS has developed the AOVPN capability and has migrated approximately 90% of the workforce away from Pulse and onto AOVPN. The initiation of the development of OneDrive was completed, which will enable agile working by supporting data access across devices. The planning for OneNote being set to follow after OneDrive is implemented and there are projects in train around Sharepoint websites and Teams telephony.

- *Migrated to a new content management system for the website.*

This was an essential piece of work to support the Public Services Network (PSN) accreditation and ensure that BGCBC's website is updated and patched as part of the compliance programme. It also enables users to have a richer set of features from the Content Management System to improve the services that can be offered via the website.

6.1.3 **Improvement objective 3: Infrastructure and systems**

The entire Blaenau Gwent infrastructure has been removed and moved onto a shared infrastructure procured with three other local authorities. The following has been undertaken to support this objective:

- *Partner Infrastructure refresh plans*

After a prolonged period of running with older equipment, SRS engineers alongside Senior Management costed, planned, ordered, and began implementing an entire Network equipment refresh across all SRS Partners. As equipment is delivered, rollout plans will be continued on a rolling basis to ensure we keep up to date with the latest, supportable infrastructure moving forward.

- *Creation of the One Wales Structured Query Language (SQL) Database cluster at Vantage data and the ongoing successful migration of partner applications*

The implementation of the new One Wales SQL cluster at Vantage data, ties in with the ongoing migration work taking place to move partner organisations from their pre-existing data centres to the new provision in Newport. This will place all partners onto one database environment with the potential of reducing licensing costs.

- *Migration of TCBC/MCC and BGCBC to a OneWales platform*

The removal of 100+ physical servers from corporate infrastructures (physical and virtual machines) in both Blaenavon, Newport and Ebbw Vale datacentres. An implementation of a single platform providing access to multiple applications from a single supportable platform. Servers have been decommissioned which will reduce the footprint of servers required at the new Vantage Data Centre moving forward.

- *Education*

The SRS has rolled out over 5,500 devices across the four local authorities in the financial year 2021-22. The full breakdown is shown below for Blaenau Gwent specifically and this has been based on putting schools needs at the heart of the work.

	<u>BGCBC</u>
Laptop	172
Desktop	294
Monitors	4
Chromebooks	112
iPads	287
MacMini	28
Charging Trolley	38
	935

- *Planning for the decommission of the Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale*

The Ebbw Vale computer room facility was recognised as a high risk in the due diligence of the business case.

The move from the Civic Centre to the Vantage Data Centre was a complex, business critical project. With careful planning and strong partnership working the project was delivered successfully with minimal impact to the organisation. SRS re-prioritised Blaenau Gwent to move first, to support the decommissioning of the civic centre timeframe.

- *Relocation of Democratic Services Hub to the General Offices*

Work to support the move from the Civic Centre was undertaken in line with the move to hybrid working.

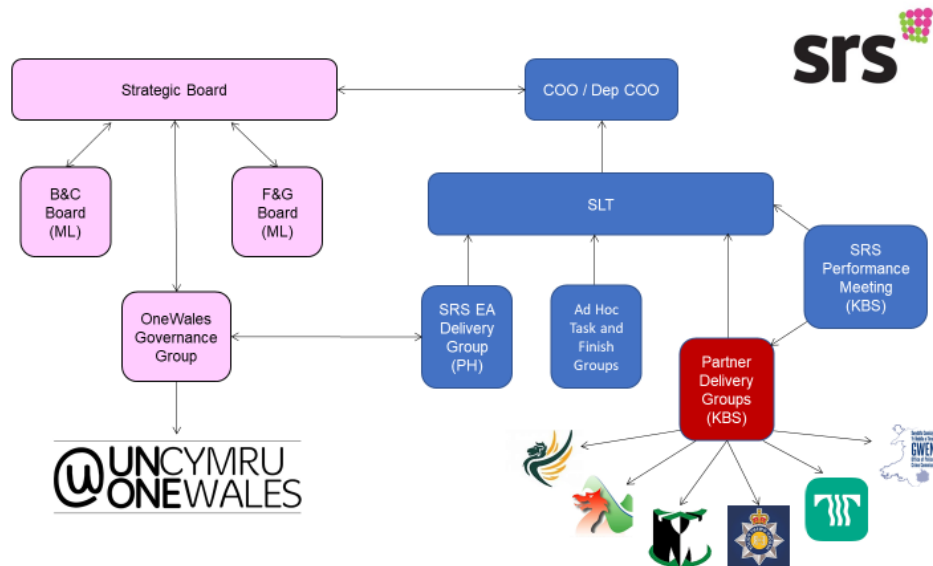
6.2 Expected outcome for the public

A number of the projects implemented with the SRS have improved effectiveness of service delivery to benefit residents.

6.3 Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)

A variety of Blaenau Gwent staff are involved and regularly engage with the SRS on its activities. Projects also include involvement of users of the service so their views can shape the design and delivery.

This governance diagram shows the Boards and Blaenau Gwent has a place in all of these meetings.



6.4 Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)

Net zero is a key consideration at the SRS and supports the Council’s commitment. Examples include:

- Data Centre Footprint - the extensive work involved in moving from multiple provisions across all Local Government partners into one

footprint in the new Vantage data centre has reduced the environmental impact of four separate implementations into one single environment.

- Data Centre Energy - the four separate provisions all used energy in different ways. Even the well specified Blaenavon facility is less efficient than the new Vantage provision due to improvements in technology. When the migrations are complete towards the end of 2022, the SRS will be able to compare the previous energy usage to the total consumption in the new location and provide an estimate of the energy reduction impact. In addition to this, the Vantage data centre uses 100% certified renewable energy.
- Moving to Sharepoint Online - by moving large amounts of on premise Sharepoint functionality into Office 365, the SRS has been able to remove large amounts of infrastructure across the organisations. This reduces energy consumption and physical footprint.
- Disposals contract – embedded a new disposals policy which reduces the carbon footprint and saves money, devices are now recycled into the community instead of being destroyed and still meets all security requirements.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work of the SRS supports service areas who are delivering preventative functions and explores the use of digital solutions to support preventative work.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The SRS is an entirely collaborative provision to multiple partners.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The SRS projects support services across the organisation.

6.8 **Monitoring Arrangements**

An annual monitoring report will be included on the forward work programme of the relevant scrutiny committee.

The Boards set out in the governance arrangements receive performance monitoring information and progress updates. Monthly meetings between SRS and officers review the programme progress.

The SRS is monitored by the Chief Operating Officer; additional assurance is provided from Torfaen internal audit as the chosen auditor of the partners for the SRS.

It is anticipated that a more in-depth review of the SLA for 2024/25 onwards will be undertaken with partners in due course

