MARKHAM

Report to: General Committee   Meeting Date: September 8, 2020

SUBJECT: **Feasibility of Piloting Microsoft 365 Cloud Service**

PREPARED BY: Nasir Kenea, Chief Information Officer

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report dated September 8, 2020 entitled "Feasibility of Piloting Microsoft 365 Cloud Service" be received;

2. That staff, participate in a free pilot of the Microsoft online productivity solution for up to 50 users for a six month period;

3. That implementation support costs of $25,000 (excluding HST) to execute the pilot be approved;

4. That staff report back on the results of the pilot in Q1 2021; and

5. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

To seek approval to partner with Microsoft and their solution partner to assist in planning and implementing up to 50 City users on a free trial of the Microsoft enterprise online productivity solution.

BACKGROUND:

At the May 19, 2020 General Committee meeting, further to an agenda item: "Continuing Markham's Digital Transformation", staff was directed to investigate the feasibility of implementing an opportunity for a free trial of the Microsoft 365 Enterprise online-integrated software solution, if approved.

In the current environment, staff have access to basic Microsoft productivity tools installed on their local computer which are well used, reliable and functional. However these tools include limited integration with other systems and have some limitations in enabling an effective and collaborative work environment.

The Microsoft Enterprise online productivity solution available through its cloud service not only includes the above mentioned products and email but also provides access to several tools to allow staff to work from home more easily, securely access files, and communicate and collaborate from anywhere, and on any device. Some the additional capabilities include:

1. Microsoft Team –a chat and collaboration platform (such as video and audio conferencing, document sharing etc.) designed to simplify group work in an organization. In addition to the chat-based communications, Team's integration with other Microsoft services allows users access to shared files and calendars and collaborative editing among employees and work teams.
2. One Drive – a Cloud storage drive for intelligent file sharing, enabling collaboration from anywhere, on any device running any standard operating system, from any location with network access.
3. Collaboration – ability to collaborate and share documents internally and externally.
4. Security and Business Continuity – staff can work efficiently using the latest software. Corporate data is secure and protected for maximum security. This keeps communications safer, by targeting phishing attacks, zero-day threats, ransomware and other malware within email attachments and links. The environment provides the ability to fully restore corporate data and ensure quick business recovery.
5. Analytics – includes analytics tools to gain insights on staff adoption of various tools included in the cloud offering, device used, storage utilization, etc.

The pilot will allow an opportunity to explore these capabilities and better understand implementation implications and requirements.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

Following Council direction, staff contacted Microsoft and confirmed the availability of free licenses for Markham to pilot the Microsoft enterprise online productivity solution. Microsoft has agreed to provide 25 users with E3 (mid-level features) licenses and another 25 users with E5 (advanced features) licenses for this pilot. Although the licenses are currently available for only one month as per company policy, staff have negotiated with Microsoft to extend the use for additional five months, for a total of six months at no cost. Microsoft was not able to provide funding for implementation support for the pilot.

To minimize the impact to users participating in the pilot, Microsoft has also recommended a hybrid approach that will allow the existing data to continue to reside on premise and avoid data migration effort which is time consuming undertaking. Any new email or document created by user after the activation of the pilot will be saved on the Microsoft cloud. The users participating in the pilot will continue to have access to both cloud and on premise data.

In order to set up and configure the pilot environment for the 50 users, staff issued a statement of work to the market and is in the process of selecting a Microsoft partner. The Microsoft partner is expected to have experience implementing the solution, and will plan the pilot rollout and successfully execute. The partner's scope of work also includes support during the pilot and customized training to ensure success of the pilot and optimal adoption by users. The cost for this engagement is $25,000 excluding HST, and if the pilot is approved, this will be funded from the Digital Markham Strategy budget (75-5350-16254-005).

The pilot will help staff assess the potential benefits of Microsoft cloud services including identity management, security, user productivity, access to current tools, reliable platform etc. The pilot will also help Council members and staff better understand, training requirements for future rollout, City infrastructure readiness, work effort required to migrate the users from on-premise to the cloud, the business value of solution and overall budgetary implications. The pilot provides an opportunity to assess integrated productivity tools and explore the potential to enhance overall business productivity.

The Microsoft cloud service is a well established and reliable platform. Based on Staff's assessment, it is feasible to proceed with the pilot project for the Microsoft Enterprise online productivity solution

Participants in the pilot will include several members of Council, some senior staff and a cross-section of staff in different departments.

Staff will report back to Council on the results of the pilot, and recommended next steps, in Q1 2021.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
Microsoft will provide 50 free licenses for the six month pilot. Costs of planning, executing and supporting the pilot through a Microsoft partner are $25,000 excluding HST. The pilot will be funded through the Digital Markham Strategy budget – Account# 75-5350-16254-005.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS
No Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:
BMFT - Digital Markham Strategy

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:
Not Applicable

RECOMMENDED BY:

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Trinela Cane   Nasir Kenea
Commissioner, Corporate Services   Chief Information Officer