

To receive a report on the Town Council phone infrastructure and consider any actions and associated expenditure.

Report to: P&F

Date of Report: 3.11.25

Officer Writing the Report: Office Manager / Assistant to the Town Clerk

Purpose of the report:

To ensure the Town Council's telephone infrastructure system is robust, flexible, and future-proof meeting the needs of the Town Council operations.

Officers Recommendations

Members are asked to consider:

1. Approving the transition to the Wildix Communications system in the next financial year 2026/27 to improve/future proof the Town Council phone infrastructure;
2. Delegating to the Office Manager / Assistant to the Town Clerk to recycle existing equipment;
3. Budgeting for the transition upfront cost of £2,265 + VAT and annual cost of £1,504 + VAT to purchase telephone equipment against budget code 6300 PF Telephone;
4. Noting there is potential cost savings due to some staff accessing the phone system via works mobile app.

Report Summary

The Town Council's current phone infrastructure - IPECS LIP-9020 desktop telephone units and the IPECS USP 100 unit, has been experiencing persistent issues. These include crackling on the line, dropped calls, and poor connection quality during both internal and external communications. We are experiencing this issue on a daily basis.

Despite several complimentary interventions from the Town Council's telecommunications contractor — including site visits and external line testing — the root cause appears to be the ageing hardware and outdated system setup, which is now over 10 years old. Many of the telephone units have reached the end of their functional lifespan.

In response to these ongoing issues, the Officer Manager sought advice from its telecommunications contractor on potential improvements. Efficient Communications provided a proposal for upgrading to the Wildix Unified Communications system, which eliminates the need for traditional desktop phones and instead supports mobile apps and browser-based calling. For further information, please refer to **Appendix A** and to review the quote please refer to **Appendix B**.

A quick comparison of the current IPECS system and the Wildix is provided below:

Feature	IPECS System	Wildix
Display	4-line greyscale LCD	Colour touchscreen (up to 7")
Programmable Keys	10 flex keys	Up to 106 BLF keys (Welcome Console)
Audio Quality	HD voice, full duplex	Wideband HD, echo cancellation
Connectivity	Ethernet, RJ-9 headset	WiFi, Bluetooth, USB, DECT
UC Integration	Basic SIP/IPKTS	Full UC with presence, video, chat
Ease of use	Traditional button layout	Touchscreen, presence indicators
Scalability and Flexibility	Moderate	High (WebRTC, mobile apps, DECT handsets)

The current IPECS system is no longer functioning reliably and, due to its age, is expected to deteriorate further. While it is possible to purchase newer IPECS USP 100 unit with a replacement cost of approximately over £2,000, this investment will remain to present some of the same issues experienced, lacks flexibility and does not represent a future-proof investment.

Another option considered is Microsoft Teams, which integrates well with the Town Council's existing Microsoft 365 environment. However, Teams telephony requires additional licensing and setup:

- Microsoft 365 license (e.g., Business Basic or Standard)
- Teams Phone license
- Domestic or international calling plans
- Optional Direct Routing setup via a third-party provider

While Teams offers some Private Branch Exchange (PBX) functionality, it often requires add-ons or third-party services to match the full feature offered by Wildix.

PBX is a private telephone network used within an organisation. It enables internal and external communication using VoIP, analogue, or digital lines. Wildix includes a full PBX system, while Teams offers partial PBX features.

Core PBX Features Explained:

Feature	What it does
Call Routing	Automatically directs incoming calls to the right person or department
Auto Attendant (IVR)	Plays a menu ("Press 1 for Sales...") and routes calls based on input
Call Transfer	Let's you move a call from one extension to another
Call Hold & Music	Allows placing a caller on hold with optional music or messages
Voicemail	Stores voice messages when users are unavailable
Call Forwarding	Redirects calls to another number (e.g., mobile or another office)

Conference Calling	Enables multiple people to join a single call
Call Queues	Places callers in line during busy periods, often used in customer service
Call Recording	Records calls for training, compliance, or quality assurance
Presence & Status	Shows if someone is available, busy, or away
Extension Dialling	Short internal numbers for quick communication between staff
Call Analytics	Reports on call volume, duration, missed calls, etc.
Fax over IP	Sends and receives faxes digitally
Integration	Connects with CRM, helpdesk, or other business tools

Based on the comparison of features, flexibility, and cost, Wildix presents a more affordable, scalable, and feature-rich solution for the Town Council's telephony needs. It offers full PBX functionality, modern communication tools, and eliminates the need for traditional desktop phones.

While Microsoft Teams remains a viable alternative, its telephony capabilities are comparatively limited without additional investment in calling plans and third-party integrations, all of which make this a less cost-effective option in comparison to Wildix.

For small teams requiring robust PBX functionality, hardware flexibility, and continued support from our existing telecommunications contractor, it is recommended that Members consider transitioning to the Wildix system in the next financial year to allow for appropriate budgeting and future planning.

Wildix is also at the forefront of AI-driven telephony solutions. Its intelligent call-handling features can automatically answer and route calls to the appropriate departments using AI technology. This could significantly reduce the number of incoming calls that are actually intended for Cornwall Council, helping to streamline communication and free up staff time.

Budget Overview

Monthly costs (based on 14 users):

Item Description	Wildix	Monthly Total Cost	Microsoft Teams (with existing 365 Business Accounts)	Monthly Total Cost
Monthly License Cost	£8.95 per user × 14	£125.30 per month	Teams Phone license: £8 per user × 14	£112 per month
Calling Plan (Domestic)	Included in Wildix PBX	£0.00	£12 per user × 14	£168 per month
Total cost per month		£125.30+vat	Total cost per month	£280+vat

Upfront costs:

Item Description	Wildix	Total Cost	Microsoft Teams (with existing 365 Business Accounts)	Total Cost
Handsets*	£155 per handset x 13	£2,015	Teams certified phones £100-£300 per phone	£1,200 - £3,600
Reception Console	£250 x 1	£250	£300	£100 - £300
Installation and set up	£250	£250	Varies between £200 - £500 via third party	£200 - £500

Customer Discount	-£250	-£250	N/A	£0
Total		£2,265+vat	Total (Approx)	£1,500 - £4,400

* Staff will have alternative options available, including both wireless and corded headsets, with a maximum cost for these of £135.00. However, staff will be expected to use Town Council mobile where issued, they can connect via the Wildix App, which is included in the monthly subscription—resulting in no additional cost and flexibility when out on site or working from home.

The costs mentioned are maximum estimates, and further savings may be possible on the initial spend. Ongoing costs would then be the primary consideration.

Key points:

Wildix offers a lower monthly cost and includes full PBX features.

Microsoft Teams requires additional licensing for full telephony and PBX functionality.

If Teams is used without the Calling Plan, external calls would need to be routed via a third-party provider (Direct Routing), which may reduce costs but adds complexity.

Budgets

Budget Availability: £1,418.12

Budget Codes: 6300 PF Telephone

Committed Spend: £0

Signature of Officer:

Office Manager / Assistant to the Town Clerk