Remember that level playing field for Open Source Software?

Just this week, in a reply to an MP's request for an update on government progress to open standards and open source software the Minister for the Cabinet Office replied:

We are strongly in favour of using open source software wherever possible. We have established that that can cut the cost of providing digital services massively, while producing better results. On a recent visit to silicon valley, I and a number of colleagues found businesses that were capable of cutting those costs on a massive scale.

But don't get too excited. As we said:

- it all hinges on what you mean by "wherever possible"

and also that

- "wherever possible" includes "nowhere"

and here's one they prepared later.

Staffordshire County Council had just published a tender for a contract worth up to £28 million for a three year contract divided into 16 lots:

- servers; storage; ICT spares; workstations; portable devices; Apple iOS devices; Microsoft software; network infrastructure components; managed wireless; cabling components; data cabinets; peripherals; support partnership; curriculum software; network management; and bundled items

Yes, that's right, despite specifying brands in a tender being contrary to EU procurement rulesStaffordshire wants Microsoft and Apple.

Of course, even if the Minister for the Cabinet Office were inclined to get the heavy roller out, he might first want have to look at a recent decision by Cabinet Office to accept a free implementation (see tweet)

of Microsoft software because that might be deemed illegal state aid.

-- Gerry Gavigan, Chair, 23 March 2012

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