NFNPA RAPC 518/23

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 4 SEPTEMBER 2023

ICT UPDATE

Report by: Nigel Stone, Head of Resources (CFO)

1.   Purpose

1.1   To update members of the Committee on the recent and upcoming work of the Authority's ICT Team.

2.   Background

2.1   Due to a number of largely external factors, not least the covid outbreak, increasing global cyber security threats and ever-changing technology, it has been a very busy few years for the ICT team at the Authority.   This paper sets out some of the key changes/achievements from that time, as well as the current priorities and those coming up in the near future.

2.2   In terms of staffing resources, the Authority is currently undergoing some personnel changes within its ICT team, with the final proposed structure set to be:
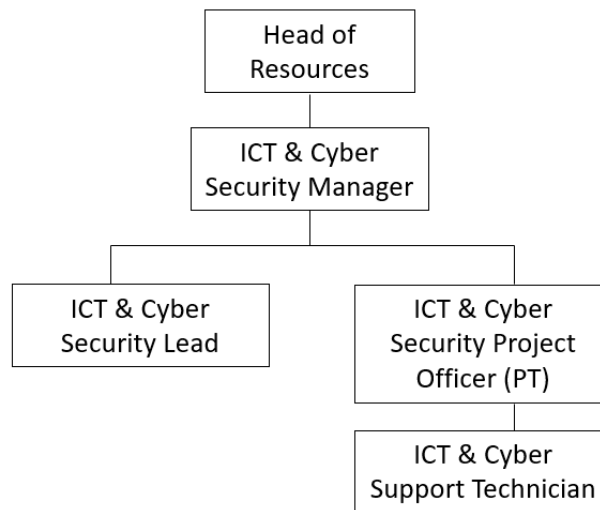
The team all regularly undertake training and development to familiarise themselves with new technologies and understand how they can be utilised to make our systems safer, more efficient and more effective. We also have strong contacts with the ICT teams from the other National Parks and nearby local authorities.

2.3 Historically the Authority's ICT budget has been around £220-230,000 of ongoing annual costs, plus a further £40-50,000 of capital costs to renew/replace its ICT infrastructure. In recent years, whilst the ongoing revenue costs have remained fairly consistent, still reducing slightly, the Authority has been able to more significantly reduce its infrastructure costs by moving to newer cloud–based (online) systems and storage.

3. Completed Works

3.1 In the past couple of years the team has implemented some key actions, including:
- A full rollout of Microsoft Office packages
- An improved ICT Helpdesk facility for users
- Remote working capacity, including online meetings
- Updated the Financial (Unit 4 Business World) and HR (ITrent) systems
- Moving the majority of our servers/storage from physical machines at the Town Hall to cloud-hosted setups
- A review of the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan
- Updated the Media Library
- Had an internal audit of our ICT Policies and Procedures
- Completed a defra cyber-security audit
- Conducted an internal ICT-user survey
- A new Security system
- Moved the GIS (mapping) database and web maps to the cloud
- Updated the Planning system (still some work to complete!).

3.2 Our systems have been kept full up-to-date and secure throughout this time and system downtime has been minimal/negligible. The most significant issues have been around external cyber security threats and the implementation of the new Planning System (Agile).

4. Current Priorities

4.1 Our current priorities for the next year or so are:
- Maintain the remaining physical infrastructure, continuing to replace/modernising it whenever possible
- Keeping all our systems, hardware, software and data safe and secure
- Updating the main ICT Policy (user guidance) – an initial draft has been completed and will shortly be subject to staff/union consultation before coming to this Committee for comment too
- Complete the remaining parts of the new Agile Planning System – namely the enforcement and pre-application Citizen Portals, plus converting over 1 million tif documents to pdf enabling full accessibility to these files for users
- Draft and test our Cyber Security Response Plan – we have engaged some external consultants to take this forward with us over the coming months
- Update our ageing phone system – to allow use of Teams for internal and external calls
- Migrating from Windows 10 to Windows 11
- Working with the Information and Data Protection Officer to implement the retention policies
- Fully review our GIS (mapping) SLA provision and support for users, updating and improving as necessary
- Consider our ICT requirements for any new office space following the end of the Town Hall lease in 2026 – much of the work done in recent years has been to make our ICT less physical / location-specific anyway which already stands us in good stead for this project.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

Papers:
NFNPA/RAPC 518/23   Cover paper

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Equality and Diversity Implications:
There are no specific Equality, Diversity or Inclusion implications arising out of this report.