

Report of the Assistant Director for Corporate Services

ICT SERVICES REPORT

1. Purpose of Report

To provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee with up-to-date information relating to ICT Services performance, and recent security upgrades and improvements.

2. Recommendation

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to NOTE findings from this report.

3. Detail

ICT Services provides support to approximately 500 users, consisting of Officers and Councillors. The service covers all business systems and infrastructure, with an annual target to ensure all systems are available and accessible 99.5% of the time.

In 2024/25, ICT Services reported 99.67% of all systems were available and accessible, and from the beginning of 2025/26 up to July 2025, all systems have been accessible 99.98% of the time. This shows that ICT Services performs an excellent job in maintaining those environments, and this report can confirm the following;

- The shared network is working
- The laptop build is functioning correctly
- The email service is accessible and stable
- The Council's Internet connectivity is stable and consistent across users
- The automated software / security updates are working as expected

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note that there are several dependencies which are outside of ICT Services' control. These elements include;

- The speed of the Internet service at users' homes. To help users confirm Internet speeds at home, ICT Services can provide a tool to check the speed should issues of delays occur
- Infrequent use of Council-issued laptops may result in delayed performance due to pending updates. Guidance on regular login practices is available.
- Privately owned devices must be kept up to date to maintain compatibility. ICT Services can assist in diagnosing issues related to outdated software or error messages.
- Training may be required to adapt to changes introduced by mandatory security enhancements or Microsoft updates.

A small group of Councillors informed ICT Services about difficulties accessing Council systems, including emails. The Councillors indicated that others might be experiencing similar issues. In response, the Assistant Director of Corporate Services initiated a review to assess the extent of the problem, which include making personal contact with Councillors. The findings revealed that over 70% (31) of Councillors reported no access issues. For the remaining 30% (13), most concerns were resolved through password resets; however, a minority encountered delays due to outstanding device updates.

With regard to password resets, the ICT Service attempts to mitigate any difficulties by sending an automated email reminder six days prior to password expiration, and every day after up to the password expiration. If Councillors do not logon frequently, at least once every six days, they will miss these reminder and may experience difficulties.

With regard to device updates, the ICT Service routinely notify users via email at least one week in advance of any updates or changes that could affect system access. The most recent changes, in addition to following those usual communication procedures, a workshop was held on 19 March 2025 to support Councillors with any technical or training needs. Councillors' that logon frequently will experience fewer issues with outstanding device updates.

Over the past 12 months ICT Services have delivered on a large programme of activity, successfully upgrading key systems such as the rollout of Windows 11, Office 365, and a firewall enhancement to improve cyber security defences. The Council's main data centre which hosts all Council systems and data was also migrated to a new robust, and secure infrastructure without causing any business impact or downtime. These are excellent achievements for the team, and the Council. There are still more changes happening throughout 2025/26, for example, a new network infrastructure will be installed across all Council sites. The ICT Service will continue to ensure that all updates are communicated in advance, and any changes completed with minimal disruption to individual users and the wider business.

Conclusion

In summary, ICT systems remain stable and secure. While most Councillors report no issues, continued support and training will help ensure consistent access across all devices. Councillors will find that they will experience fewer difficulties as they begin accessing the Council's ICT environment more frequently.

4. Financial Implications

Not Applicable

5. Legal Implications

Not Applicable

6. Human Resources Implications

Not Applicable

7. Union Comments

Not Applicable

8. Climate Change Implications

Not Applicable

9. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

Not Applicable

11. Background Papers

Not Applicable