

IT WORKING PARTY held at 6.00 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 10 MAY 2001

Present:- Councillor R A Merrion – Chairman.
Councillors Mrs D Cornell, R W L Stone and A R Thawley.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs L Bunting, J K Mercer and A Wood.

IT18 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2001 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

IT19 **BUSINESS ARISING**

(i) Minute IT16 – Telephone System

In answer to a query from Councillor Stone, the Head of IT and Audit Services reported that the Office Manager had now issued new instructions to users requesting that wherever possible the voicemail should not be used during office hours.

(ii) Minute IT17 – e-Government

The Head of IT and Audit Services reported that the Council was required by the Government to produce a detailed e-Government Strategy, including costings up to the year 2005, by the end of July 2001. He said that Government funding would be needed to enable the Council to meet the 2005 deadline.

IT20 **ICT PROJECTS – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Head of IT and Audit Services updated Members on the progress of ICT projects scheduled for the first quarter of 2001.

(i) Office 2000 Project

The project to replace ICL Officepower, the Council's office automation system, with Microsoft Office 2000 had been completed by the deadline of 31 March 2001. All staff were now using the new system and had received, in total, 760 days of training. It was hoped that two users from each section would be designated for extra training, including a Microsoft examination, to enable them to assist colleagues with minor problems on the system.

As part of the project, Officepower documents requiring retention had been converted into the Office 2000 format. All database applications had been re-written in Access 2000 and as part of this exercise, a car park management system had been developed, which went live at the beginning of April 2001.

The system managed car park and on-street parking fines, on-street parking permits and car park season tickets.

(ii) Internet and Intranet

Further Intranet development had taken place over recent weeks, including the installation of a complete set of on-line Office 2000 manuals. Some issues were still outstanding, including the introduction of on-line discussion forums and providing Intranet access to local government and planning law encyclopaedias. The Head of IT and Audit Services said that the work would take place in the next few weeks.

The initial phase of the development of the new Uttlesford web site was now nearing completion. The Head of IT and Audit Services gave a demonstration of the web site. The site had been designed for ease of public access and it was intended that over a period of time detailed information about all Council services would be provided. In addition, links to other web sites, such as Saffire and Essex County Council, had been established. Access to tourist information would remain on the Saffire site, at least for the time being.

The Head of IT and Audit Services and the Senior Support Officer then answered questions from Members on the new web site.

(iii) Other projects

An upgrade to the underlying Oracle database of the Ocella system had been successfully completed, whilst a similar project was being carried out in respect of the First Software housing system. As part of the latter project, the application was being transferred from a Unix to a Windows NT platform. This move was being made to simplify future upgrades and reduce upgrade costs.

It was reported that the year end procedures had been successfully completed on the financial, revenues and housing systems.

Completion of a central computerised document management system had been delayed due to the upgrade work described above. It was expected that the build of the "live" system would be completed within the next month, enabling data input to begin. The system would replace the paper based central filing system in Office Services.

(iv) Members' project

The Head of IT and Audit Services reported on the results of a questionnaire which had been sent to Members seeking views in three areas:

(a) Preferences for the future delivery of committee papers

The possibility of withdrawing some, or all, of the postal deliveries of committee papers had been canvassed.

After discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that, where Members agree, to withdraw the postal delivery of committee papers for meetings that those Members do not attend.

(b) Out-of-office-hours ICT support requirements.

A number of options had been canvassed, ranging from the existing office-hours only arrangement to a 7 day a week, daytime and evening service. This issue was discussed and it was

RECOMMENDED that the existing day time only support be continued.

(c) Future ICT training requirements

An indication was also sought of training requirements for 2001/02. Whilst the formal training sessions held last year had been successful, there had been little demand for evening "drop in" sessions. Informal, one to one, sessions were currently proving more popular and effective. The Head of IT and Audit Services advised the Working Party of the potential demand for training which had been identified from the results of the questionnaire. He also suggested that daytime courses could be run for Members together with staff. The general opinion was that this would be a good way of keeping training costs to a minimum.

The Members' dial-up system had been working reasonably well, although some problems had been experienced with its reliability and performance. This matter had been taken up with the providers and the service had improved in recent weeks. Various improvements to the Council's ICT infrastructure were in progress which would also aid system performance and reliability. Scheduled work included an upgrade to the speed of the Internet connection and the addition of a further Citrix server into server pool.

At the last meeting of the Working Party the possibility of diverting personal Email to the Uttlesford Outlook system had been discussed. It had been agreed that officers would investigate the ramifications of this matter and report back. However, the Chairman stated that the intention had not been to divert personal email via the laptops. Therefore it was agreed to disregard the matter.

IT20

FUTURE OF THE IT WORKING PARTY

The future of the Working Party was discussed in the light of the new Committee structure which was due to begin in September 2001. The Head of IT and Audit Services stated that e-Government would make a significant impact on the way the Council worked. The Chairman then proposed that the Working Party should continue, with the same Members, as and when required.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm.