

	<p style="text-align: center;">Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10th February 2008</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Head of IT</p>
<p>For Action Wards Affected: NONE</p>	
<p>Members IT</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 A report outlining recent issues and problems with Members IT, changes to Connecta and future plans.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members to note and comment on the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Recent issues and problems

3.1.1 Internet Explorer security issue

There was a serious security warning on Friday 12/12/08 about a global vulnerability in Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) web browser. No counter measures were available from either Microsoft or the anti-virus providers and the only alternatives were to ignore the threat or to disable the use of IE.

Given the serious nature of the vulnerability and the recent high profile virus outbreaks in public sector IT systems the decision was taken to disable internet access via IE but to continue to allow the use of Firefox as an interim solution. Councillors were not able to use Firefox initially as they were still using a separate proxy server to the rest to the council (migration to the new proxy server was scheduled for later in the year) but interim measures to allow them to use Firefox were implemented on 16 December.

Microsoft released a patch for the security threat on 17 December and this was tested immediately and rolled out across all Brent PCs by 22 December.

Progress was reported on the IT Unit Intranet Status Page.

3.1.2 Current outstanding Issues

There is currently one outstanding Helpdesk call for Members - 198941 Office 2007 documents not downloading from Hotmail on Brent PC. This appears to be a permissions problem which ITU are investigating. Downloading is ok on non Brent PCs.

There have been 27 calls to the Helpdesk for Members IT issues over the last 6 months.

3.2 Changes to Connecta

We are in the process of moving from the old Cisco IPsec VPN (virtual private network) to a new version of the Connecta SSL VPN (which will be called iConnect). The new system has several advantages – it is easier to use, more stable, more resilient, does not require client software and it is required for the future migration from Lotus Notes email to Microsoft email.

iConnect uses 2 factor authentication where you need to have a token which generates a unique number which you enter when you log on to the system. This is much more secure than just a name and password and is now required as part of the programme of national security measures which all local authorities are adopting.

These security measures are part of the Code of Connection required to join the Government Secure Extranet (GCSx) which is scheduled for April 2009 and will allow councils to exchange confidential data with central government departments such as Revenues & Benefits with DWP.

The Code of Connection imposes a wide range of additional security requirements upon the council and these include greater staff awareness of security risks, encryption of data taken outside the council (such as on laptops or USB devices), more complex passwords and restrictions on the automatic forwarding of emails, mobile devices and use of wireless connections.

3.3 Future of Members IT

As referred to above, there are several imminent changes planned in the short term. The last major review of Members IT was at the end of 2003 and the new Director of Business Transformation would like to have a comprehensive review later this year.

Significant changes which are already planned in the medium term include –

1. Upgrading Microsoft Office to Office 2007 which has now been completed.

2. Move from Cisco IPsec VPN to iConnect for secure authentication with the council network. This is in progress and most Members have already moved to iConnect.
3. Move from Lotus Notes email to Microsoft email. This will provide a significantly improved email environment which will be much more attractive and easier to use. The installation and testing of Microsoft Exchange/Outlook has just started and the overall migration process will take 12 months starting in the summer. Dates for Members to move to Microsoft email have not yet been decided.
4. Move from the old RAS domain to the standard Brent0 domain. This is part of the overall migration of all council PCs to a single environment. This will allow standard software management across the whole council and improves efficiency and responsiveness to changes. It requires the laptops to be brought in and reconfigured. This should be completed for all Members by the end of February.
5. Move from current network drives to Sharepoint for document storage. This is part of an overall change in how documents are stored across the council. It will be integrated with Microsoft Office and email and will make it easier to file and retrieve documents. Dates for Members have not yet been decided.
6. Additional security changes to comply with the GCSx Code of Connection – these are still being discussed with Government Connect but may require more complex passwords and restrictions on the automatic forwarding of emails and use of wireless routers. Any changes necessary will need to be implemented before April 2009 to meet DWP target dates.

4.0 Financial Implications

None

5.0 Legal Implications

None

6.0 Diversity Implications

None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

None

Background Papers

None

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