ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL	AUDIT COMMITTEE
Head of ICT and Financial Services	

2003/04 Networking Overview

The Audit Committee of 27 August 2004 requested a report on the measures being taken to address the network issues identified in the Networking Overview by Audit Scotland. Members will recall the update of 30 July 2004 and the difficulties in allocating sufficient resources to progress actions 2, 3 and 4. We have managed to make some progress on these issues within existing resource, and have identified funding from staff vacancies which will be used to hire a contractor to enable us to make further progress in the current financial year. Future progress will also be dependent on resources being available, and the forthcoming budget round will include these areas as new cost pressures and will be considered by Members as part of their review of revenue budgets. Current progress on all of the recommendations is described in more detail below.

Action 1:
We support the creation of an ICT Steering Group and recommend that the ICT Strategy should embrace a network strategy that is capable of supporting the Council's Strategic Objectives

Progress:

A number of reports have been submitted to the SMT, SMOG and SPC in recent months which culminated in approval from the SPC on 7 October to go out to tender for an upgrade to our network. The intention is to have full costs for the preferred option available for consideration in February 2005 when the Council debates the revenue budget for 2005/06 and reviews the capital programme for 2005-2008. This has now been set up as a formal project to provide high bandwidth links between the Council's major sites. The reports and the resulting Project Initiation Document (PID) will form the basis of the new networking strategy to be presented to the ICT Strategy Group at their next meeting.

Action 2:
The responsibility for control and co-ordination of devices connected to the network should be clearly defined. A Council-wide network strategy recommended in point 1 above can serve as good starting point, supported by clearly defined management responsibilities to address this potential risk.

Progress:

Several controls governing the connection of devices to the Council's corporate network have now been introduced and agreed at both the IT Security Forum and the IT User Forum. These include new Port Level Security controls, a new Wireless strategy and a new desktop lockdown policy. The port level security means that no new device can be connected to the Council's corporate network without formal approval from the IT department. Departmental IT engineers are responsible for implementing the new wireless standards and the desktop standards within departments. ICT and Financial Services has a program for implementing these standards for central support services.

Action 3:

Ongoing monitoring of the network's ability to function within acceptable parameters should be implemented. This monitoring should provide valuable information relating to traffic volumes, data flows, trends and anomalies to aid management and strategic planning functions.

Progress:

The networks section has purchased a network monitoring tool called Statscout and is now reactively monitoring the volumes, trends and anomalies outlined above. Statscout provides information about the level of usage of each port and produces warning messages when usage exceeds certain pre-determined levels. This allows an investigation, using the probes now in place on all the main sites, of unusually high levels of activity and appropriate corrective action to be taken where necessary.

In addition, external contractor expertise will be recruited to assist with additional proactive analysis using both Statscout and HP Openview and the costs reflected in the forthcoming budget process. Some funding for this can be made available for this financial year from existing budgets in order to kick-start this activity.

We have identified that network capacity is indeed limited, and have addressed this through a ban on personal access to the Internet as this was taking a considerable chunk of available capacity, and through the progress being made towards an upgrade of capacity for the main sites. This is in addition to the Council's involvement in the Highland and Islands Aggregated Broadband procurement project which will see a significant increase in network capacity for all school and main council offices. The Scottish Executive are funding this project to the extent of £63m. The current project plan foresees a contract award in 2006 with roll-out to sites completed by 2008. The shorter term upgrade of the Council's network being tendered for shortly is intended to bridge the gap until the Broadband project is implemented.

Action 4:

The Council should consider employing an intrusion detection system on their networks to help detect any unauthorised activity. Such monitoring should be automated, with the IDS (Intrusion Detection System) configured to send alerts and reports on activity.

Progress:

An external contractor will be employed to assist in the selection and implementation of an Intruder Detection system. Phase 1 of the project will follow the normal tender procedures and will be concluded this financial year with the selection of an appropriate product and supplier. The implementation will commence at the earliest possible date. All costs for this project will be reflected in the forthcoming budget process.

Action 5

Recent changes to procedures should be documented and collated for ongoing reference as it is being developed and updated.

Progress

Complete. A procedure database has been developed and is updated as changes are agreed.

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