

**TO:** Policy and Resources Committee

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## **ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ICT SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Policy and Resources Committee of the outcome of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement (Schedule 4), for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, undertaken by the Assistant Director ICT and OHU for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and the ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- 2.1.1 consider the outcomes of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement,  
2.1.2 note the continued achievement of the aims of improved resilience, flexibility, cover, quality and customer focus.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 **Economic** – although taking advantage of more efficient ICT systems and solutions involves an upfront financial outlay, once in place, their proactive and robust management can be linked to many economic benefits. The existence of the ICT Shared Service Agreement is a mechanism through which such benefits can be realised.
- 3.2 **Technological** – new systems and solutions lead to improved services for all stakeholders whilst bringing new challenges and a requirement for a myriad of skill sets to meet them. The ICT Shared Service recognises the need to remain focussed yet flexible and regularly review its structure to meet these challenges.
- 3.3 **Legislative** – the Service recognises the need to retain and embed existing quality standards, using them to drive business change. The Authority must remain legally compliant and make the necessary provisions to meet changes such as the General Data Protection Regulations.

#### **4. Background of the ICT Shared Service**

- 4.1 On 22 October 2013 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority authorised an ICT Shared Service Agreement with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority for a term of five years. This agreement, made on 31 October 2013, included establishing an ICT Shared Service Governance Board to provide oversight and management control of the services delivered to both Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). The agreement has since been extended twice (in five-year periods) and a revised document for a further five-year period was signed by both parties in January 2025 (backdated to October 2023).
- 4.2 The ICT Shared Service Governance Board meets on a quarterly basis to consider and oversee the quality and delivery of services, consider prioritisation and new work streams. The Board consists of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (CFRS), Deputy Chief Officer (BFRS) and Head of ICT from both services as well as the ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager.

#### **5. ICT Shared Service Agreement and Review**

- 5.1 The ICT Shared Service Agreement sets out the scope of the service and includes amongst others the arrangements for accommodation, an asset register, costs and liabilities, insurance, staffing, finance and intellectual property.
- 5.2 The Agreement requires the establishment of an ICT Shared Service Governance Board and Schedule 4 of the Agreement sets out the functions and powers of the Board. A copy of Schedule 4 to the Agreement is shown at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 Schedule 4 also requires that an annual review of the operation of the Agreement be conducted. The review is passed to the ICT Shared Service Governance Board and subsequently reported to the structures in each Authority accordingly.
- 5.4 This report puts forward the summary of the review for the period covering 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 5.5 The review covers the following areas as set down in Schedule 4 of the Agreement;
- the quality of the shared service,
  - the effectiveness of budgetary and financial management arrangements,
  - the effectiveness of systems, processes and procedures,
  - development in legislation and policy guidance,
  - planning for the development of the shared services.

#### **6. Executive Summary of the Review of Operations 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025**

- 6.1 Investments in technology have continued throughout this reporting period. This has ensured that technology provision continues to meet the needs of the Service and that we are well placed to adopt new technologies as required.
- 6.2 The ICT Shared Service continues to deliver value for money. The ability to be flexible with resources within it to support large and complex projects across either organisation adds value and customer satisfaction rates remain consistently high for service provision.

6.3 The resigning of the ICT Shared Service Agreement with BFRS has added certainty to the arrangement until October 2028.

## 7. The Quality of the ICT Shared Service

7.1 The quality of the ICT Shared Service is reviewed throughout the year through the ICT Shared Service Governance Board, including the extent to which the aims and outcomes of it have been met and its effectiveness. The quantitative aspects of the ICT service are a measure of its adherence to Service Level Agreements (SLA's) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) as well as customer surveys and monitoring of project delivery.

7.2 **Customer Focus** – one of the key aims has always been to embed customer focus within the ICT Shared Service as this aspect encompasses not only day to day service delivery but also the engagement with customers for both organisations.

7.3 The Service Desk software in use automatically canvasses users for their level of satisfaction with how their incident was handled and any additional comments they may have every time an incident is closed. The results of the analysis are detailed below; BFRS results are included for comparison purposes. A more detailed survey of colleagues is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025.

Section	Satisfaction Score %	Average Incident Resolution Time (Hours)	Average Request Resolution Time (Hours)
Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service	100	19.82	15.17
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	100	12.28	12.28
ICT Shared Service	100	16.05	13.72

7.4 The ICT Shared Service has continued to progress and deliver internal projects and support organisation driven projects during this reporting period.

7.5 The following provides a high-level overview of key works undertaken over the reporting year in CFRS, significant work has also been undertaken for BFRS (not included in the list below);

- Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) rollout,
- upgraded MDT software,
- Microsoft Teams rooms refresh of hardware,
- commenced Windows 11 rollout,
- management of cyber incident,
- creation of new gold image for both services,
- Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) migration,
- additional email security implemented,
- integration of firewall logs into Security Incident and Event Management (SIEM) tool (cyber security),
- backup solution upgraded,
- refresh of on-premise data storage,

- St Ives – closure of secondary fire control,
- upgrade of tools to assist with software rollout,
- upgrade of database environment,
- Station End Equipment (SEE) aerial replacements and maintenance,
- migration and upgrade of existing cloud infrastructure,
- Local Area Network (LAN) hardware refresh for both organisations,
- over two tons of WEEE collected from CFRS,
- maintained ISO27001 accreditation in CFRS,
- assistance with ICCS and Mobilisation system projects in CFRS.

## 8. The Effectiveness of Budgetary and Financial Management Arrangements

8.1 The review included the effectiveness of arrangements to ensure appropriate monitoring of budgets and financial management of the ICT Shared Service. Financial arrangements cover costs associated with;

- staff costs including individual consumption by each respective organisation and joint consumption,
- use of temporary agency staff,
- joint procurement opportunities aimed at reducing costs,
- monitoring, at six monthly periods, the apportionment of staff costs.

8.2 Costs are subject to each organisations own approval process including ICT Shared Service joint projects and temporary agency staff. A framework for accounting for time and costs is in place and end of year procedures for cross charging are undertaken and reviewed by the ICT Shared Service Board. The table below shows the total costs for ICT Shared Service staff; BFRS costs are shown here as a comparison. The increased costs for CFRS this reporting year are explained below.

April 2023 to March 2024	BFRS	CFRS	Total
Total costs of ICT Shared Service staff	£533,654	<b>£525,171</b>	£1,058,825
April 2024 to March 2025	BFRS	CFRS	Total
Total costs of ICT Shared Service staff	£530,353	<b>£593,050</b>	£1,123,403

## 9. Time split between Services

9.1 The consumption of staff resources by each organisation has a direct impact on annual costs and as such are scrutinised as part of the annual review. The demands placed on ICT compared to capacity show that a lean environment exists. The shared service arrangement effectively provides a method of financial risk mitigation in that, where an organisation consumes less resource it does not pay for it, as a lean environment exists in which demand outstrips supply there is no risk of over-supply of ICT resources.

9.2 Both organisations have traditionally consumed approximately 50% of the resources each. It is pleasing to note that over the duration of the shared service more work is being conducted jointly, resulting in benefits through collaboration and shared learning. This year's increase in CFRS usage is primarily due to the additional work implementing the new MDTs and the significant work required

supporting the ICCS and Mobilisation system projects. It is likely that BFRS will consume more resource next year due to their own significant upcoming projects.

<b>Time split of ICT Shared Service activities between CFRS and BFRS (%)</b>												
<b>Year</b>	13/ 14	14/ 15	15/ 16	16/ 17	17/ 18	18/ 19	19/ 20	20/ 21	21/ 22	22/ 23	23/ 24	<b>24/ 25</b>
<b>BFRS</b>	37	36	38	42	33	27	29	30	24	21	15	<b>11</b>
<b>CFRS</b>	45	44	36	30	29	26	24	27	18	19	17	<b>20</b>
<b>Shared</b>	18	20	26	28	38	47	46	43	58	60	68	<b>69</b>

## 10. Capital Investment

- 10.1 Both partners in the ICT Shared Service have capital replacement programmes which are aligned particularly in respect to infrastructure renewals and contracts.
- 10.2 Opportunities for joint procurement continue to deliver benefits, including price advantages through economies of scale. Procurement is undertaken by CFRS and BFRS procurement teams through their respective controls and systems. Agreements are in place through these teams for one Service to lead and contract on behalf of the other where this is appropriate and beneficial. Traditionally CFRS has undertaken more procurement activities on behalf of the Shared Service than Bedfordshire, but this is slowly being adjusted.

## 11. The Effectiveness of Systems, Processes and Procedures

- 11.1 Systems, processes and procedures, including KPI's are in place and the ICT Shared Service adopt best practice by aligning to the ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) framework. KPI's are monitored by ICT Shared Service Management and reported through the ICT Shared Service Governance Board.
- 11.2 Audits of the ICT functions are conducted by the Information Governance Manager in CFRS and by third parties as part of the ISO27001 accreditation. The department is also audited in relation to the Cyber Essentials Plus certification in BFRS. An audit of asset management across the shared service function was conducted by our internal auditors during the reporting period.

## 12. Project Delivery

- 12.1 The ICT Programme Board continues to manage the project work being undertaken by the ICT Shared Service. The Board comprises the Heads of IT for each organisation, ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager, ICT Shared Service Project Manager, ICT Shared Service Infrastructure Manager and the ICT Shared Service Support Manager.
- 12.2 The role of the Board is to review the progress of projects underway and to agree the scope and schedule of new projects. The Board reports to the ICT Shared

Service Governance Board for agreement and decisions on priority and resourcing.

12.3 The ICT Shared Service continues to be under pressure due to the amount of work that is currently in progress requiring ICT resources. As well as the continued essential upgrades of both Services ICT infrastructures both organisations have large ICT related projects underway.

12.4 There is limited capacity in the ICT Shared Service establishment to proactively maintain the ICT infrastructure and deliver multiple large projects in both organisations. To enable IT projects to be successfully delivered it is essential that additional resources are made available and such costs are included within the initiation process of new projects. This is managed by the ICT Shared Service Programme Board that has been established to monitor project demands and escalate issues to the Governance Board.

### **13. Development in Legislation and Policy Guidance**

13.1 The Heads of ICT work with the ICT Shared Service Manager to identify and address developments in legislation and align policy to guidance. No new legislation has been introduced this year that impacts on ICT service delivery.

### **14. Planning for the Development of the Shared Service**

14.1 **Establishment** – two members of the ICT Shared Service elected to take early retirement during the past year; one member of the server team, the other from the user support team. This enabled a secondment opportunity to be offered in the server team and to offer our apprentice (who had just completed his course) a permanent role. Apprenticeships have proved extremely beneficial to the ICT Shared Service over recent years. In addition, a network engineer resigned to pursue a career in a different field entirely.

14.2 The newly created role of Cyber Security Engineer has proven difficult to recruit to. Cyber security is an extremely competitive market and expectations and criteria for this role may need to be adjusted.

14.3 **Transport** – fleet provision has been reviewed; one car is provided by each organisation and this is meeting current requirements.

14.4 **Terms and Conditions** - the variances in terms and conditions between the two organisations have not had a major impact on staff but have complicated the roles of managers. A pragmatic approach is taken wherever possible to harmonise requirements as much as possible, although no formal agreement has been reached between the organisations to rectify this problem. This is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

14.5 **Resilience** – the ICT Team continues to provide 24x7x365 cover for mission and business critical systems. Additionally, the ICT Service Desk operates from 0800 to 2100 hours Monday to Thursday to enable On-Call staff and those on shift patterns to access ICT assistance in a timely manner.

14.6 **Changing Technology** – the 999 over Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) was deployed in CFRS as part of the new mobilising system. This has moved our incoming 999 telephone lines off the soon to be retired PSTN. Further work is required to migrate the secondary bearers for the SEE off the PSTN, but work is

underway to agree an alternative solution. This is the last element of the migration and we are well placed to be fully migrated in advance of switch off. A cloud readiness project was undertaken and has given us direction of our future infrastructure requirements. Further discovery work is due to be undertaken during this year relating to cloud readiness.

- 14.7 **Governance** - the ICT Shared Service is governed through the ICT Shared Service Governance Board. The Board meets on a quarterly basis to monitor progress. Both partners have established organisationally focussed ICT strategies which are underpinned by an ICT Shared Service Technical Response Plan.
- 14.8 A key challenge for the Governance Board is to manage the expectations of each organisation. Demands on resources are sometimes individual to a services business priorities and risk appetite. Therefore, the Board looks to align business priorities, remove conflicts and align work streams and funding availability to maximise the benefits of a shared service.
- 14.9 The KPI reports showing performance against the ICT Shared Service Catalogues are published monthly. The reports detail performance for each organisation on a monthly and rolling six monthly basis. These reports are scrutinised at the Governance Board meetings and progress is monitored.

## **15. Conclusion**

- 15.1 The review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service has demonstrated that progress has continued to be made in developing services and improving technology provision despite the current challenging financial environment.
- 15.2 A number of significant projects have been delivered during this reporting period.
- 15.3 The ICT Shared Service continues to provide a value for money solution in supporting technology provision for both CFRS and BFRS.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<b>Source Document</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
ICT Shared Service Governance Board Schedule 4 Agreement	Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon PE29 2NA	John Fagg  Assistant Director ICT and OHU  john.fagg@cambsfire.gov.uk

**Schedule 4**

**1. ICT Shared Service Governance Board**

**1.1 Establishment**

The Parties shall establish an ICT Shared Service Governance Board with the functions and powers set out in this Schedule. The Board will not be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the shared services, which will remain the responsibility of the ICT Service Delivery Manager.

**1.2 Role**

The Role of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall be to;

1.2.1 ensure that the ICT Shared Service is effective, efficient and resilient,

1.2.2 agree the Budget for the following financial year in accordance with the budget setting process of each party,

1.2.3 identify opportunities for innovation and improvement to the approach taken to delivering the ICT Shared Service in a way that is effective, efficient and provides value for money, whilst maintaining resilience and reviewing reports from the ICT Service Delivery Manager on how this may be achieved,

1.2.4 seek further financial benefits which do not compromise the effectiveness and resilience of the ICT Shared Service,

1.2.5 to ensure that an annual review of the operation of the Agreement is carried out, using information provided by both parties to assess the delivery of the shared services and the provision of those services within budget.

The Board shall consider and make recommendations, as appropriate, on the following matters;

- i. the quality of the shared services, including the extent to which the aims and outcomes of the Agreement have been met and the effectiveness of the shared services,
- ii. the effectiveness of budgetary and financial management arrangements,
- iii. the effectiveness of systems, processes and procedures,
- iv. any developments in relevant legislation and policy guidance that may impact on the shared services,
- v. forward planning for the development of the shared services.

### **1.3 Responsibilities**

In performing its role, the ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall;

- 1.3.1 consider further opportunities for partnership working and synergies where this represents opportunities and benefits,
- 1.3.2 determine and ensure the sharing of the financial benefits relating to the ICT Shared Services on a fair basis between the parties that minimises unnecessary costs,
- 1.3.3 review requests for change in relation to the Agreement,
- 1.3.4 receive and consider disputes where escalated to the ICT Shared Service Governance Board.

### **1.4 Membership**

The ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall be comprised of the following representatives;

- 1.4.1 Principal Officer responsible for ICT from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- 1.4.2 Principal Officer responsible for ICT from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- 1.4.3 Head of ICT from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- 1.4.4 Head of ICT from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- 1.4.5 ICT Shared Service Manager,
- 1.4.6 Other members who are co-opted as required and agreed by the parties,
- 1.4.7 Substitutions may be made as necessary.

### **1.5 Chairmanship**

The ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall be chaired by the Principal Officers of both parties, with the Chairmanship being rotated alternately on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

### **1.6 Frequency of Meetings**

The ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall meet at least four times in each financial year. Additional meetings may be organised as necessary with the agreement of both parties.

### **1.7 Quorum**

The ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall be quorate for decisions where the Principal Officers of each party, or their agreed substitutes, are present.

### **1.8 Decision making**

The parties shall ensure that their representatives at the meetings of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board have the necessary delegated authority for decision making. Decisions shall be reached on a unanimous basis and the only voting representatives shall be the Principal Officers of each party.

### **1.9 Support**

The ICT Shared Service Governance Board shall be serviced by the party hosting the meeting.