Agenda item 6

For decision – IT systems upgrade
Authors: Sarah Williams, Business Manager & RFO and Cllr Andy Jones

We have commissioned a review of the IT infrastructure at the Town Hall and to ensure efficient work flows and a higher level of security, we need to carry out an extensive upgrade project. Some background to our current set up is provided below and in more detail in the consultant's report at Appendix 6.1, on the website here.

In 2019 we reviewed our IT provision vis a vis a new onsite server or 'moving to the cloud'. Considering all the options at the time we chose a new onsite server knowing that the reduced cost would enable us to 'move fully to the cloud' in two years with no financial loss should we choose to then.

In 2020 Covid happened, all FTC staff worked from home and leapt over to using TEAMS and its functionality for the first time - successfully working from home very quickly but without a structured plan. Since returning to the Town Hall on a permanent basis we have been aware that using the two systems in parallel (some docs on the onsite server and some cloud based files) is not good practice.

Re-organising all our data, documents and filing policies (part of the migration to the cloud process) would address GDPR concerns as well as improve information distribution. The estimated cost of the initial migration project is in the region of £10k to £14k but a formal tender process will be undertaken. Ongoing costs are estimated to be similar to the current IT support contract.

We had also long considered as part of this project an FTC database/CRM system (customer relationship management – essentially a business and contacts directory) which it was hoped could enhance workflows whilst also feeding into searches on FTC websites including Discover Frome. Initial quotes for such a 'mothership' of a database came in at £44k and whilst we paused on the decision making we retained the budget in an EMR.

In December 2023 we sought an objective independent IT expert and commissioned David Wilde to conduct a full review of our IT infrastructure including the relevance of a CRM database. His report can be found at Appendix 6.1 on the website here. The report proposes a number of IT upgrade stages and recommends that a CRM would not meet our needs now, but that FTC should look at the collaboration platforms that have become available. This research is already partly being undertaken by the Discover Frome/Town Centre interest group.

We seek Council approval to proceed with the consultant's recommendations in section 5.3 of the report in the appendix in a staged format with further discussions and collaboration between the Business Manager, the Marketing & Communications Manager, Cllr Andy Jones and other stakeholders, as necessary.

Recommendation

Approve the IT upgrade work recommended in the report from David Wilde IT consultant using funding as required from the Database and Discover Frome EMR's as appropriate.