

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/24/14
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	25 MARCH 2024
SUBJECT OF REPORT	DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY (DDAT) TRANSFORMATION UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Finance and Corporate Services (Treasurer)
RECOMMENDATIONS	That the report be noted.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (the Authority) resolved on 31 October 2023 to support internal reform of the DDaT department as opposed to outsourcing the function to DELT Shared Services Ltd. (Minute DSFRA/23/24 refers). A condition of this support was that the lead director and other senior officers provide the Authority with an update on progress within six months.</p> <p>This report provides this update and focuses on key issues that needed to be addressed and the positive progress that has been made in each of these areas.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	N/A
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	N/A
APPENDICES	<p>A. Draft Customer Charter</p> <p>B. Staff / customer feedback</p>
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Minute DSFRA/24 refer.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (the Authority) resolved on 31 October 2023 to support internal reform of the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) department as opposed to outsourcing the function to DELT Shared Services Ltd. (Minute DSFRA/23/24 refers). A condition of this support was that the lead director and other senior officers provide the Authority with an update on progress within six months.
- 1.2. This report provides this update and focuses on key issues that needed to be addressed and the positive progress that has been made in each of these areas.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The DDaT department (previously known as ICT) had been subjected to a total of five audit and performance reviews since 2020, which concluded that although the Service performs well in some areas, the department was not fully meeting its customer needs.
- 2.2. These reviews led to 9 strategic recommendations and 24 actions. As well as this staff feedback suggested that the Digital Strategy and its implementation had not met internal customer expectations. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) supported this in their inspection of 2021/22 stating *"we spoke to some staff who told us that the Service releases several new IT applications; however, these aren't always further developed and limited support is provided when the applications are released."*² As a result, delivery risks were identified across all departments associated with DDaT and there was a significant backlog in change requests together with a number of programmes in development that were well behind schedule.
- 2.3. The drivers for change were not exclusively to reduce cost or achieve economies of scale. The spectrum was wider and deeper, driven by a need to demonstrate a data-led, risk-based, and intelligent organisation. A Service that is agile with the capability and capacity to meet the needs of a modern, innovative Fire Service and the communities it serves.
- 2.4. In April 2023, a Business Case was commissioned by the Executive Board (EB) to review DELT Shared Service as an option. During this period, staff were engaged and additional evidence was collected. The full Business Case was presented to the Authority on 31 October 2023. The Authority resolved not proceed with moving to DELT as a Shared Service, but to instead reform the DDaT department internally (Minute DSFRA/23/24 refers).

3. KEY ISSUES TO ADDRESS

- 3.1. After the review, it was essential to ensure the Service understood the key factors which had led to the review. After consultation with Senior Leaders and the team, it was agreed that there were 5 key issue areas to focus on, namely:
 - Lack of strategic leadership;

- Cost of the Service;
- Build vs buy direction and cost for this;
- Lack of engagement with Services users; and
- Lack of understanding of DDaT Service from service users as above.

4. **INTERNAL REFORM – PROGRESS TO DATE**

4.1. There have been significant changes within the DDaT department, which is leading to more positive relationships and outcomes for the department and the Service. The key issues are reviewed below.

Lack of strategic leadership

4.2. A full review has been completed of the DDaT structure and functions. In August 2023, recruitment took place and a new Head of DDaT was appointed. A key focus since then has been working with all team members to understand all aspects of the department, what they are looking to achieve and how affective they are. This has resulted in agreement of 5 core functions.

- Business Relationship (new function);
- Service Delivery;
- Development;
- Information Governance; and
- Data, Insights and Analytics.

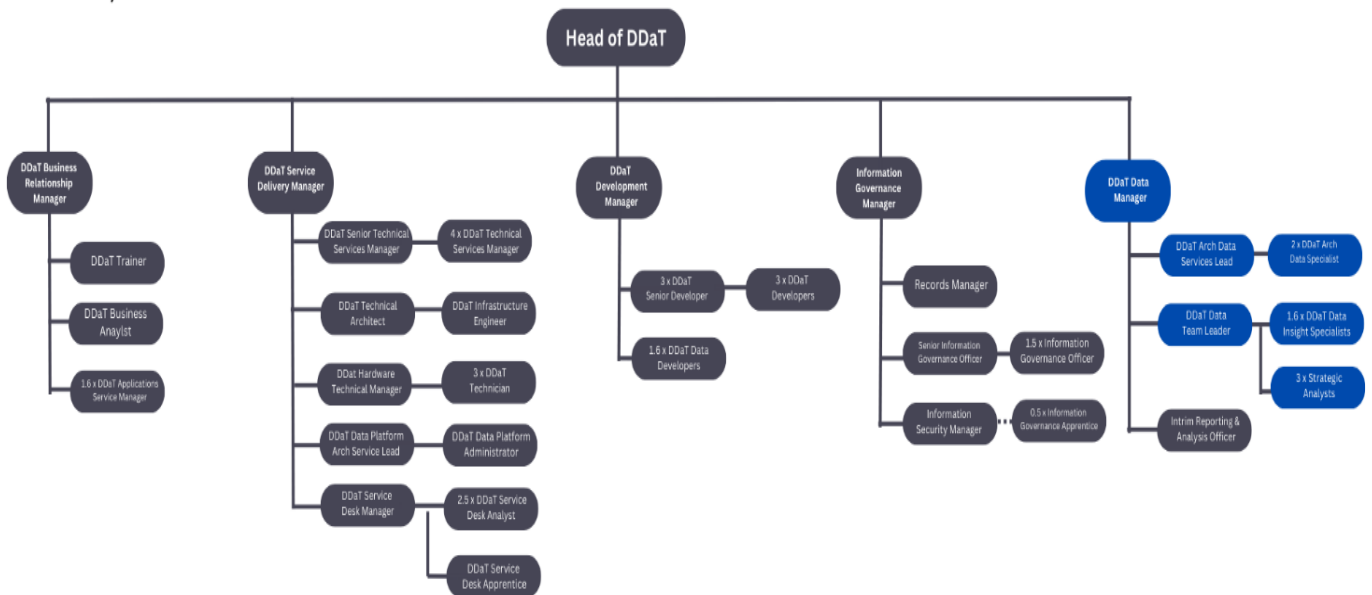
4.3. Alongside the functions, it was identified that collaboration across departments, security and customer service need to run throughout the department.

DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT - FUNCTIONS



4.4. This has also resulted in a structure review and the new Business Relationship function being added to the department. This structure (as below) is still under review and the Service and department are aware of the need to make some changes as this progresses to ensure all functions work as needed.

DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

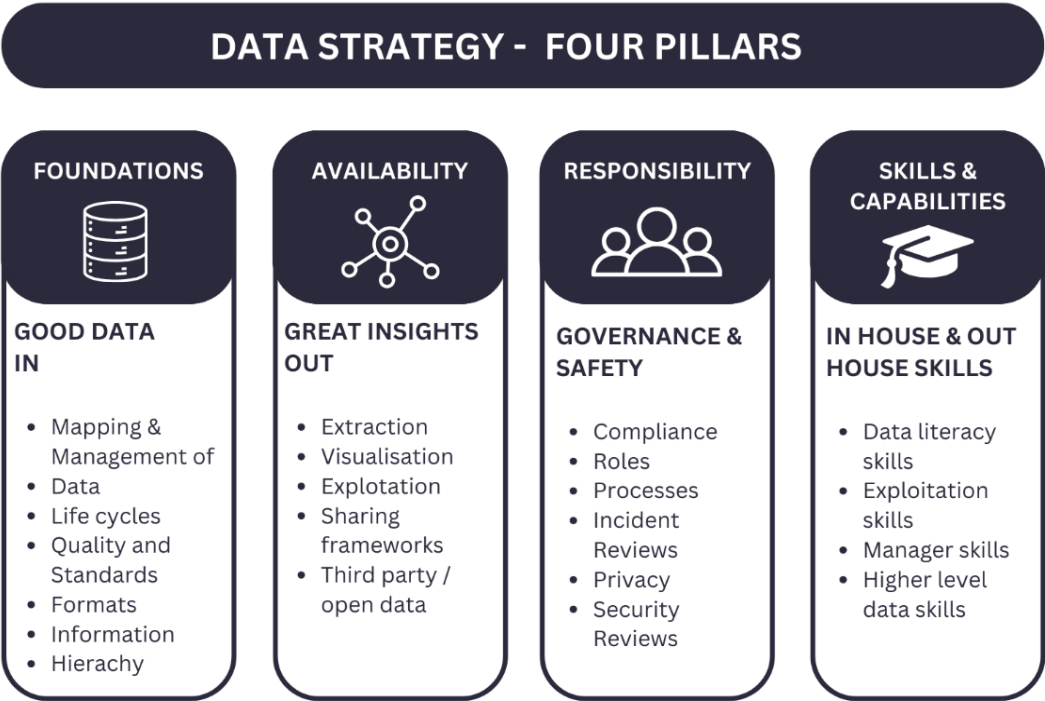


4.5. A new vision has been developed and agreed for the department:

“We are a customer-first department, utilising digital to drive transformation and effectiveness. We are the go-to subject matter experts who enable technologies for the whole Service”.



- 4.6. The department has been advised that, over the next 18 months, there are 5 main priorities:
- Structure and Recruitment – Initial structure, reviews at 18 and 36 months, new posts Technical Architect, Trainer and Reporting Officer;
 - Training and Competencies - Asking do we have the right competencies in the department? Are we providing you with enough/relevant training? Do we have gaps?;
 - Data – Data and Information strategy, production of clear Standards / Sets / Guidance, full systems mapping, data quality;
 - Customer Service Focus - New Business Relationship function, customer charter, help guides and video, new customer support pages, new support system;
 - Cyber security - Review and production of department and Service wide plan, building resilience in the team and providing expert support and guidance; and
 - Clear objectives have been set for team members and these are linked to the Service objectives, so staff understand what is expected and how this links to the wider picture. As well as these functions, we are reviewing priorities and have become more agile in support based on Service needs.
- 4.7. These principles and strategies for the department are under discussion. Over the next few months, the Department will be working on digital principles instead of digital strategy to allow for changes to embed, but also to allow us to focus in on Data and Information Strategies to inform the wider digital strategy.
- 4.8. Work has begun around the Data and Information Strategy initially looking at Data pillars to allow us to build foundations for this work.



4.9. The focus on providing strategic leadership has been a key focus and is proving to be effective. Relationships across the Service are being effectively built and there is open / honest communication being built across department and at Senior levels.

Cost of the Service

4.10. As part of the full Business Case, a full review of costs was undertaken. This review also compared costs of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service against other Fire Services. This showed that in many cases, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service was comparable in terms of spend. The review showcased that a lot of expenditure is out of the control of DDaT including Airwave and systems / applications purchased by other departments. To avoid the misunderstanding of costs for the department, it has been agreed in the next financial year that the Department will look to create a new budget to show all costs out of DDaT control, allowing us to showcase and be reviewed based on actual spend.

Cost comparison shown in full Business Case.

	% of core <u>gross</u> revenue spending on DDaT (includes reserves and Airwave)				
Financial year	DSFRS	FRS A	FRS B	FRS C	Avg FRS spending
2021/22	6.6	5.2	6.1	5.5	5.6
2022/23	6.2	5.3	7.0	5.4	5.9
2023/24 (budget and forecast)	6.6	5.6	7.9	6.3	6.6

4.11. The Head of DDaT has completed a full review of budgets and has already highlighted some areas for savings. This includes:

- removal of a licenced training system that was not being utilised, saving £16k;
- review with other department to remove data software that is no longer needed, saving around £9k; and
- Removal of e-Learning programme for Information Governance, saving £12k.

4.12. In addition, the Department is also:

- Reviewing our overtime expenditure;

- Reducing with a view to removing all contract staff and instead recruiting full time staff with skills needed to support the department and Service; and
- Potentially removing CMAP pro (moving from on premise to Cloud version), saving £4k.

Build vs buy direction and cost for this.

- 4.13. Around 10 years ago, the Head of ICT and the former Executive Board adopted a strategy to build instead of buying off the shelf solution. This led to the building of a multitude of applications that were deemed suitable for the Service. This was built under the umbrella of 'Workbench' and currently consists of 21 apps and 6 dashboards. This takes significant resource to support and maintain.
- 4.14. In 2023, the decision was taken by the current Executive Board to move from the build approach to 'build appropriate' approach. The approach does not mean that the Service will not continue to build applications as needed (which will also include Microsoft 365), but the change moves the direction to looking at the most appropriate solution. In many cases, the Service is now introducing new 3rd party systems and removing some of the applications built. The Service is in the process of creating a roadmap which will show the applications that should be removed and will allow a focus on applications that will support the Service the most.
- 4.15. By reducing the number of applications supported, the Service will need less resource and moving away from using consultants in this area. Previously, this was a function which had a significant number of consultants which was not financially viable for the Service. The new approach will be to bring in full-time roles instead, however, recruitment is proving challenging.
- 4.16. A key focus in this area has been looking to reduce Business as Usual (BAU) "backlog" that had been identified as an area of concern following the DELT review into the ICT service at Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service. DELT had proposed that they could reduce the backlog by 80%, however, this was through the application of an approach that did not meet with the team's and DDaT's philosophy. Following the decision to not proceed with DELT and to look to internal transformation in DDaT, the team reviewed the backlog and identified a more suitable, more customer focussed and engaged process, though still with the ambitious target to bring numbers down by 80% by the end of April 2024.
- 4.17. Work to date has reduced the number from 124 to 38 which is a reduction of 69%, this means that the team are on target to reach the 80% reduction within the agreed timeframe. In addition to this reduction in the backlog, the way the team has gone about engaging with customers, involving them in the process and working with them on solutions and testing has also seen an improvement in the relationships between areas of the service. This should also be considered a very positive outcome from the focussed efforts of the team.

Lack of engagement with Services users and lack of understanding of DDaT Service from service users

- 4.18. As part of the structural review of the department the Service has introduced a new Business Relationship function within the Department. This function aims to:
- Serve as a liaison between customers and upper management, executives, and stakeholders;
 - Review and maintain customer-facing processes;
 - Establish initiatives to support customer relations; and
 - Inform future DDaT strategies.
- 4.19. The Service recruited into this role in March 2024 and is already seeing positive results. This function is allowing the Department to ensure it has the time needed to invest in relationships ensuring the “customer first” approach.
- 4.20. The Department is in the process of creating a customer charter (see appendix A of this report for the draft) that will allow us to clearly inform end users of what the Department does, why and how support is provided. This will align with the Service’s wide customer charter.
- 4.21. The Department is currently running a short questionnaire to look at Digital Maturity within the Service. This has started with a short survey to all users, which will allow the Department to refine its focus and carry out a full digital maturity assessment in April 2024. The assessment is designed to help organisations understand their own digital capabilities and the capabilities and compatibilities of information systems across other organisations. The outcomes will inform our digital, data and information strategy moving forwards.
- 4.22. A key focus currently is around improving engagement with Operational staff. Previously, the focus has not been on the impacts that Operational staff may feel due to the changes made by DDaT. The Department is striving to be more acceptable, visiting stations and sending out specific Operational communications to staff. In addition to this, the department is in the process of recruiting a new Digital trainer who will provide a range of support to all staff across the Service based on needs.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. Over that past 5 months, the DDaT team and Service have embraced changes to improve efficiency and effectiveness within the department. Feedback is showing that the team feel more empowered, and they feel they are part of the journey. Relationships across the departments at all levels are becoming positive and there is a clear drive around collaboration and supporting each other to ensure digital transformation to succeed.

SHAYNE SCOTT

Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer)