Executive Team – for decision

Date: 03/03/2022

Prepared for: Executive Team

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Topic: Proposed approach for DPPC 2022

Reason for decision: To successfully run a summer conference we need to begin preparations now. These include allocating staff time, committing to expenditure (e.g. agreeing suppliers, paying deposits etc) and liaising with potential delegates. We would like to publish an update for potential delegates, giving an indication of format and timing, in the March ICO newsletter.

Purpose of report: To set out a proposed approach to DPPC 2022, including discussion of:
- DPPC format in person / hybrid / online
- When the DPPC should be held
- Additional event – Information Commissioner vision speech

Time required: 10 mins

Background:

The **Data protection practitioners conference,** commonly known as the DPPC, is one of the key set pieces in the ICO calendar.

This annual event gives us an opportunity to speak directly with hundreds of practitioners. We typically have their attention for an entire day, and have an opportunity to explain our policy thinking, provide practical advice and answer questions. We are also able to listen and take feedback to inform future work and improve our service.

The in-person event has historically been over-subscribed. The change in 2018 to begin charging delegates to attend had little impact on demand, and for 2020's cancelled event with a charge of £195 per delegate we sold all 800 tickets.

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In 2021 we hosted the DPPC entirely online on a bespoke platform. We did not, in line with the pandemic etiquette, charge delegates to attend the online conference.

Feedback on the digital event was very positive. While there is always room for improvement, the overwhelming picture was of an event that practitioners found informative, practically helpful, and inspirational. And with the online element we were able to reach more DPOs from across the UK.

This year's event will be similarly popular. We announced in our January newsletter that the conference in 2022 would be in summertime, rather than the usual springtime event.

Discussion:

1. What format do we want for this year's conference, e.g. digital or in-person?
2. When will we hold the conference?
3. Do we want the conference to be run with a cost recovery model?

Options for format of the event:

a) In-person event
b) Hybrid event
c) Digital only event
d) Digital DPPC + in person 'Commissioner's vision speech' event

a) **In person conference** (with live stream element, as we held pre pandemic)

We would look for a large venue to accommodate 600 – 800 delegates with multiple options for breakout rooms / workshops and exhibition space. The online option would be limited to people watching the plenary, and potentially a small number of workshops.

Advantages	Disadvantages
John's major keynote to a live audience - dynamic end to the listening series.	Unsure of appetite for in person gatherings. Narrows the scope of attendees simply due to travel costs / time away from office.
Networking opportunities	Limited availability for large spaces in Manchester in the summer.
	Additional cost for the AV and Tech requirements as well as venue hire
	We may find the short lead time means speakers are unavailable.
Chance to host the Information markets with a wide range of industry experts and exhibitors	Short turn around time now may find exhibitors are already booked up in the summer.
Opportunity for staff to get involved in large project i.e. volunteer to run a workshop / help on the day.	It can be difficult to get commitment from staff early in the planning, additional cost implication.

b) Hybrid events

This would be an in-person event for around 200 people, made up of invited guest speakers and key stakeholders.

Advantages	Disadvantages
John's major keynote to a live audience - dynamic end to the listening series.	Deciding who can be at the in-person aspect would need careful consideration. One option, dependent on the theme of the event, would be to hold a series of panel discussions, and only invite panellists to be in the room.
Networking opportunities	Limited availability for large spaces in Manchester in the summer.
	We may find the short lead time means speakers are unavailable.

Chance to host the Information markets with varied exhibitors	Short turn around time now may find exhibitors are already booked up in the summer.
Opportunity for staff to get involved in large project i.e. volunteer to run a workshop / help on the day.	It can be difficult to get commitment from staff early in the planning, additional cost implication.
	Additional cost for the AV and Tech requirements as well as venue hire. Plus challenges of pricing in-person and digital tickets in an equitable way.
Allows for greater number of attendees digitally, and for people to join from across the country	Hybrid events are still an emerging approach, and there are challenges in offering digital delegates the same sense of interactivity and involvement as in person delegates.

c) Digital – online only

The feedback from the 2021 digital DPPC was largely positive with an attendance of 3,000 + delegates.

We have not appointed a supplier, but Amplitude provided the DPPC2021 platform, and we would again approach them for this service.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Wider scope of attendees and no capacity limitations.	Minimal networking opportunities
We may find that speakers are more prepared to attend an online event panel – with a short time commitment no travel / time away offices.	John's keynote delivered solely via video link
Lead time is not a big problem since not physical space is required	
Options to still have digital networking space and online marketplace.	
Reduces costs of venue hire and staff travel.	

Opportunity for staff to get involved in large project i.e. volunteer to run a workshop. With no additional cost implications.	It can be difficult to get commitment from staff early in the planning.

d) **Digital + Information Commissioner vision speech event**

Hold the DPPC2022 as a digital event as outlined above but organise an additional in person event for a vision speech from John outlining what he gathered from the listening series and his vision for the future.

This provides the benefits of a digital event, with the opportunities and networking of an in person event, but without the challenges brought by a hybrid event.

There would be an option to link the vision speech with the publication of the ICO's annual report in June (TBC).

Advantages	Disadvantages
Advantages of a digital DPPC (see above)	Cost of hosting an additional, in person event
Plus advantages of an in-person event: networking, audience for a keynote	Added staff time to organise two events.
We can segment the audiences a little: targeting DPOs and practitioners at the DPPC, and opening up the vision speech event to a broader stakeholder group	
As an ICO event, the vision speech event will also have an audience we curate, and a format we are happy with (eg Q&A, additional ICO speakers if we want it)	

Format recommendation:

Our recommendation is that option d, a **digital** DPPC and **in person** Information Commissioner vision speech event, provides the best opportunity to engage a broad number and range of stakeholders in our work. It balances the practical advice we offer through the DPPC with the bigger picture work that we want to communicate to stakeholders after the listening exercise. And it removes the challenges a hybrid event brings.

Cost recovery:

In 2020 we worked towards a cost recovery model. Tickets were priced at ▮▮▮▮ per delegate, which alongside charging for marketplace stands, would have covered our costs (the event was cancelled due to the pandemic).

We would anticipate a similar ticket price in 2022 for an in person event.

A hybrid event would increase the costs, due to the additional technology required, and the delegate prices would need to reflect this.

In 2021 we did not charge delegates attendance because at the time it was an unusual to do so for an online event. In the post-event feedback survey, we asked delegates if they would be happy to pay for a similar event and 57% of respondents answered yes.

Would you be willing to pay a small fee to attend a similar event in the future?

Yes (472)	███████████████████ 57%
No (363)	██████████████ 44%

Based on last year's costs, and on 57% of the numbers of attendees as last year, tickets would need to be priced at around ▮▮▮ per delegate (estimate as we do not have quotes for the digital platform yet). If we had an early sense that demand for tickets was greater that 57% of last year's numbers (which seems likely), then we could reduce that ticket price.

Note that vision speech event is separate, and we would see the ICO funding this cost.

Timing:

A digital event requires less planning and lead time. The digital + vision speech option is achievable as the venue requirements for the speech event are reduced (smaller venue, no need for breakout rooms for workshops, etc, we can also consider London).

Organising an in person DPPC June / July would be challenging, especially given the lack of venue availability in Manchester in this period.

Our proposal therefore is to host an in person vision speech event – where the Information Commissioner can deliver his vision for the future of the ICO followed by a digital DPPC both events to be held in July. The vision speech could be linked to the launch of the new ICO plan (and publication of the Annual Report) in the first week of July, followed by the DPPC after the Commissioner returns from annual leave in mid-July. This approach would enable our communications for the new ICO plan to be packaged up with the vision speech for greater impact.

Alternatively, we can do both the vision speech and the DPPC in mid-July upon the Commissioner's return from annual leave. This would still entail some communications around the launch of the ICO plan (in early July) which could then be reinforced around the vision speech.

If the preference is for an in person DPPC, we may want to consider pushing the DPPC only back to September we could still hold the vision speech in June / July in line with the annual report launch.

Next steps: ET decision, followed by communication to potential delegates

Resource implications: The ICO would need to commit to the cost of the platform / venue and recuperating this money would depend on demand for tickets.

The in person DPPC typically requires around 75 ICO volunteers (including those running workshops), and is a significant piece of work for the comms team, in the long term planning, the run up to the event.

A digital event would require considerably less resource. There would still be a significant comms commitment to organising and hosting the event, but we would estimate the only staff time outside of comms would be on the planning and running of workshops / speeches / panels.

Alignment with values:

Ambitious – this is an ambitious approach, looking to turn the challenge of not being able to host an 800 person event to our advantage.

Collaboration – the event will require significant internal collaboration. A delegate-driven agenda would further this collaboration.

Service Focused – the event is focused on providing our DP practitioner audience with practical and useful advice and guidance. Allowing delegates to shape the agenda would further emphasise this.

Link to the Information Rights Strategic Plan: The conference is a central part of our strategic goal of improving standards of information rights practice through clear, inspiring and targeted engagement and influence. There can also be links to our aims of staying relevant, keeping abreast of evolving technology and enforcing the law, depending on the shape of the final agenda.

Impact on Risks and Opportunity Register: tbc

Equality, diversity and inclusion considerations:

Several complaints were received in 2021 that our panel and list of both ICO and external speakers were not very diverse. We need to take this into consideration early in the planning stage for the DPPC2022, including consultation with the EDI forum.

Publication considerations:

This report can be published internally and externally, though we should consider redactions around commercially sensitive quotes.