

COUNTY COUNCIL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) STRATEGY 2009 - 2012

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **15 December 2009**

From: **Corporate Director: Customer Service and Transformation**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **This report proposes the IT Strategy for the Council for 2009 – 2012, including the rationale behind it**

Recommendation: **Cabinet is asked to consider and endorse the County Council IT Strategy 2009-2012.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The IT Strategy is produced in a three year cycle, and looks forward to the coming three years and beyond. Broadly speaking it sets out where we are with IT, where the organisation wants to be in three years time, and how we plan to use IT to help us get there. The full strategy comprises three parts: Summary and Overview, Technology Strategy, and Supporting documents. This paper provides a summarised overview of the whole.
- 1.2** The full summary and overview of the IT strategy has been circulated to Cabinet members separately as part of an information pack and further copies are available on request. The full strategy is available on request.
- 1.3** The key features of the point we have reached through the implementation of previous IT strategies are as follows:
- A reliable and robust core infrastructure, based on tried and tested components, achieving excellent performance during service hours.
 - Investments in major business systems: for example Capita One (Integrated Children's System), SWIFT (Adult Social Care), and Insight (Highways Information Management System).
 - Flexible working, supported by remote and mobile access.
 - A county-wide fixed and mobile network connecting ourselves and partners which is a blend of private (CCN, NHS network) and public (Internet, cellular telephone and G3) networks, soon to be extended to the whole of the public sector through the Government Secure Extranet.
 - The Internet is moving into a new phase, offering increasing numbers of transactions as well as information. Citizens are becoming used to reliable 24-hour banking and shopping, and there is a huge increase in the use of "social networking" sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- 1.4** There will be a number of known and inescapable drivers over the coming three years which have shaped the strategy:
- Budget constraints and cuts.
 - The duty to maintain the integrity and security of the information we hold about citizens, while at the same time sharing where it will improve service and safeguard individuals.
 - The resilience of IT systems will be essential to the maintenance of service as our reliance on IT continues to increase.
 - National agendas, such as Performance Indicators, Personalisation of health and social care services, Electronic Social Care Record and Integrated Children's System and the "Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government" initiative.
 - Renewal of the Cambridgeshire Community Network (CCN) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) service contracts.

2 MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Where we want to be

Based on feedback from stakeholders, the following is a summary of the characteristics of the type of organisation we expect to be:

- A flexible workforce, both in the places and times we work.
- Inspection and assessment tasks done on the spot.
- Less office accommodation.
- Less environmental impact: travel, power consumption, and waste.
- Access by officers and members to managed information to improve and speed-up decision making.
- Protection of the integrity and security of information.
- Agile collaboration by sometimes transient teams.
- Tools for staff and members to do the job, available when they're most needed.
- Simpler, cheaper, faster business processes, linking partners systems where necessary.
- Managed choice of service delivery channels which both match users' preferences and reduce transactional costs.
- Communication using a variety of channels according to purpose.

2.2 IT Principles

We have formulated the following principles to guide our IT decision making.

- We will drive down cost through the use of IT. Both by reducing IT costs, and by using IT to reduce the process costs to other parts of the organisation.
- We will use established, reliable technologies for core universal systems and infrastructure rather than leading or bleeding edge.
- In some cases there will be a limited choice of suppliers and we will be obliged to accept more risk in our use of applications. In these cases, we will use additional measures to mitigate the risks.
- We will match service availability to business requirements, recognising that it will not be possible within available resources to provide 24/7 service for everything.
- We will seek to use "off the shelf" rather than bespoke applications, in standard configuration rather than customised, and shared within the council and with partners.
- We will use a standard toolkit of software wherever possible, minimising the number of applications in use, and meeting new requirements from an existing system rather than buying a new one.
- We will minimise the environmental impact of IT services.
- We will continue to consider the most cost effective service provision for each component of the IT service, maintaining a strong client function to drive out value for money.

- We will enable information sharing between our systems in support of information management policies, while maintaining safeguards to preserve information assurance for personal data.

2.3 How IT will help the County Council meet its objectives

Based on these principles, this is how officers plan to use IT:

Standard low cost workstation

Telephone and computer terminals at all offices which can be used by any user, and are low-cost to buy and maintain. We will explore virtualisation, thin client (web browser based) and Open Source software options (where programmes are freely shared between developers).

Remote and mobile access to council systems

Access from any Internet connected browser, and mobile devices to carry out inspection and assessment tasks on the spot. We will make more of our applications available remotely, and incorporate mobile devices for fieldwork.

Controlled access and security

All developments will maintain high levels of systems and data security, and management of system access rights.

Workflow, forms and collaboration

Exploit tools to streamline, automate and reduce the costs of our processes. Workflow will automate and manage processes, electronic forms will allow applications and request to be made on-line, and collaboration tools will make task groups more efficient, and improve consultation.

Rationalised applications

Officers will implement an Application Strategy to reduce the number and make better use of the applications we have, to promote efficiency and reduce duplication. We will ensure compliance through governance mechanisms for standard products and the Application Strategy.

Proven universal applications

Officers will continue to use proven technology for core universal services, such as email and office automation, in the interests of cost and reliability. We will explore maturing alternatives such as Open Source software.

Wired and wireless networks

The services will rely on a high-capacity and low-cost data network service, securely linked to our partners, delivered by the Cambridgeshire Public Service Network (CPSN) which will replace Cambridgeshire Community Network (CCN).

Web and Contact Centre

Officers will support the delivery of services from the web and contact centre to improve service and reduce transaction costs. This will involve system integration and process automation, for our own system and with partners.

Mixed Service Provision

We will continue to source computer resources and services in the most cost-effective way depending on the requirement. This will draw from: internal provision, outsourcing, cloud (internet-sourced) computing and shared services.

3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

IT has an enabling role in many areas of significant impact and change.

3.1 Resources and Performance

- Automating standardising and streamlining processes and systems can generate cost savings; in some cases up-front investment may be needed to realise these.
- The cost and savings implications of each stage of the strategy will be the subject of separate business cases, examined under the Council's investment and Programme Governance mechanisms before being progressed.
- Flexible and mobile working can reduce the councils need for office space.
- There may be implications for staff terms and conditions if more flexible working is introduced.

3.2 Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

- There are options for shared services with partners to reduce costs.
- Further integration with partners systems will improve service delivery through Cambridgeshire Direct, and by integrated partnership teams.

3.3 Climate Change

- The strategy offers opportunities for significant reductions in car travel, through flexible working and the use of conferencing technology.

3.4 Access and Inclusion

- While IT offers opportunities to extend council services more widely, through use of the Internet and social networking, we must be mindful of those who will not or cannot use technology.

3.5 Engagement and Consultation

- Social networking technologies offer significant new opportunities for community engagement and public consultation.

Source Documents	Location
None	