IT Strategy 2009 - 2012
Contribution to Council priorities

The economic challenge
IT will play a major part in helping the council and local public sector partners meet the current economic challenge.

We will continue to reducing the cost of IT, by exploring sourcing and technology options. The right mix of shared services, product choice, outsourcing and in-house provision and contract management will maximise the chosen balance of service level and cost. Technologies such as virtual servers and desktops, cloud computing and thin-client desktops will drive down unit costs. Standardisation will avoid duplication and manage support costs.

IT will also have a key role to play in transforming the organisation, reducing travel, business process, transaction and office accommodation costs through the use of workflow, electronic forms, standard workstations and mobile technologies.

Council priorities and values
IT is an underpinning enabler supporting all of the council's objectives. But we can expect it to make a direct contribution in the following LAA priorities and council values:

Growth and Economic Prosperity
With partners and developers, we will seek to ensure within the New Communities project that developments are provided with the digital infrastructure that will attract people and businesses, promoting both growth and regeneration. The best way to do this is to make sure that the network connections are in place to give users the choice of high speed service provision from the full range of service providers.

Environmental sustainability
Environmental considerations are part of the decision making process for all our strategic and procurement decisions. "Virtual" computer servers reduce space, power consumption and materials by sharing common components. Existing equipment is used and re-used before being disposed of. Disposal is in accordance with the Environment Agency's directive for waste electronic equipment. Low energy consumption is a procurement requirement for all new equipment, power minimising standby configurations wherever possible, and servers in racks have their lights switched off.

As well as the impact of the equipment itself, IT has a major contribution to make by providing conferencing tools to allow people to meet without travelling. This already includes "Meet Me" audio conferencing, soon to be augmented with on-screen applications and information sharing. Video conferencing is an option for the future. We are using computer modelling to map shortest routes for staff who have to be on the road, and mobile

technologies will allow inspection and assessment tasks to be done one after the other without the need to return to base between visits.

Equality, inclusion and stronger communities
IT is making council services and the democratic process available to a wider audience through the Internet and contact centre, and offers communication media for citizens to engage with the council on service and democratic issues at times and in places convenient to them.

We are promoting digital inclusion through the provision of Internet access in libraries and other community access points.

Collaboration and social networking technologies offer new ways to engage with communities in local, service and democratic debates.

Excellence
Joined up and convenient service delivery over the Internet and from the contact centre have made a significant improvement to service quality in recent years. There is plenty of scope for improvement by offering more services in this way, further joining up services within the council and with partners, and better supporting face-to-face contact.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software allows us to take a holistic view of citizens and their telephone transaction history with the council, and this can be extended to other types of contact and more services.

Connection to the Government Secure Extranet (GSX) gives us opportunities to extend this joined up approach to government departments and other public sector organisations.

Value for money
We have a mix of IT service provision including in-house, outsourced and shared services, in order to achieve the best value for money, and we will continue to pursue this approach. New opportunities from further shared services and cloud computing are likely to be an increasing part of this mix.

Our application strategy is reducing duplication and getting greater value from our standard tool kit.

We will continue to review technology options, and open source will be a focus once the current Enterprise Agreement we have for Microsoft expires in two years time.