

IT Strategy 2009 - 2012
Application Strategy and Portfolio Management
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Introduction

An application can be defined as a piece of software that has been created to help a user to perform a particular task. Applications may be directly installed onto a device, such as a PC or mobile phone, or accessed using a web browser.

The importance of an application may range from a piece of desktop software that enables a task to be completed more efficiently and/or to a higher standard, e.g. using Visio to draw diagrams as rather than Word, to business systems, which hold data and facilitate business processes that are essential to service delivery, e.g. Swift.

Consequently, the impact of a problem may range from inconvenience or reduction of previously gained efficiency savings to catastrophic data loss or the inability to deliver critical services.

Application use

How applications are used within Cambridgeshire County Council can be categorised into 3 groups

1. Universal
2. Shared
3. Service Specific

Universal Applications are those available on all PCs as part of the standard build, and are used by the majority of CCC employees. E.g. Outlook

The term **Shared Application** is used throughout this document to describe a piece of software that has been selected to support a particular task/role, and should be used by all Services and individuals who carry out this function. E.g. MS Project, is intended for use by Project Managers

Service Specific Applications are pieces of software that are used to support a task or role that is only carried out by an individual team or Service and does not have relevance to the wider authority. E.g. The pieces of software used by Highways and Access to design road markings and monitor road traffic signals.

Although applications in this group are usually utilised by fewer people than Shared or Universal Applications, they are not necessarily of less importance, and may still be business critical.

Summary of Application Strategy Objectives

- o Provide standard processes and offer sufficient advice/support to the business, to enable informed decisions to be made, and ensure that all applications are selected, procured/developed and managed in a consistent manner across the authority.
- o Develop a standard Application Portfolio to encourage sharing of applications and data, reduce the overall number of applications, minimise the number of applications that duplicate functionality or depend on technologies approaching extended support, to improve the return on our investment in IT.
- o Introduce System Ownership roles and an Application Register, to improve ownership of systems, encourage consideration of business systems in BCP, improve visibility and scheduling of major IT projects, and highlight the importance of planning across a product's entire lifecycle, ensuring sufficient budget is available prior to implementation, and scheduling of regular reviews to help to ensure IT risk is managed and mitigated appropriately across the organisation. .

Selection, procurement and standardisation

With such a high level of dependence on IT systems, it is essential that applications are appropriately selected and managed, to ensure that they are fit for purpose, provide best value for money, and protect the Council's information assets, while facilitating information flow and partnership working.

Making the most of what we have

In order to maximise the benefits gained from our investment made in IT, it is essential that we make the most out of what we already have in place by:

- Improving visibility of the Council's Application Portfolio and preferred products, to encourage standardisation and enable a more efficient approach to be taken to selection, procurement, licensing, maintenance, and support
- Increasing awareness of the value of new/existing applications, systems services and technologies through awareness sessions, such as the recent "We've got it, use it" campaign run by the IT Service, regular articles, case studies and competitions in Countywide and Office Newsletters, and specific/targeted information included in Daily Briefing
- Continue deliver IT training to new users and those with identified development needs
- Avoid investment in Service Specific Applications/local systems when a more generic solution could potentially be utilised/shared across the authority, or a suitable preferred application exists within the current Application Portfolio

Application Portfolio Management

With changing requirements, customer expectations, advancements in technologies, from time to time there be a need to add new applications, and retire others from the Application Portfolio.

To ensure consistency in how products are selected and decisions are made, requests will be evaluated against a set of Application Strategy Principles, using standard processes as described below.

New versions

When new versions of applications are released, the IT Service will evaluate the potential value added by the latest improvements, features and functionality, against business need, and the cost/effort required to deploy the new version (e.g. licence & implementation charges as well as user education/training & additional support costs etc).

A decision will then be made as to whether the new version is suitable for deployment, and if so, when and how it would be rolled out to users.

Request for change/new applications

Requests, including those where solutions are to be developed, hosted and/or supported by a 3rd party, that meet any one of the criteria below, must be submitted into the Application Review process.

- Requires a new hardware or software platform
- Uses a new application that has not been previously tested/approved for use
- Requires new skills to support or develop
- Is accessed by the public or partners
- Requires the installation of applications, components, add-ons etc on CCC equipment
- Generates new or additional traffic across the network

The ***Application Review*** process can be initiated from an online form, available on CamWeb, and is used to

- Start and manage the conversation between the IT Service, and any Service embarking on an IT project or procurement exercise, to ensure that appropriate advice and support can be given
- Ensure that a consistent approach is taken to product selection, procurement/development, implementation and management across the authority, and that how, when, and why decisions are made, have been recorded
- Increase visibility of all projects, to reduce conflict/duplication between applications being considered for different parts of the authority and improve scheduling of IT work.
- Identify any links/dependencies between systems, to ensure any proposed integration work will not create any unacceptable chains or trust or dependency, which could impact on the security, integrity or availability of data/systems
- Support the ambitions of the IT Strategy, by using a standard set of principles to review requests against.

Application strategy principles

- **Existing systems**
 - Use of existing systems should be promoted over procurement/development of a new application, even where a slight change in process, or compromise on functionality is required.
- **Suitability**
 - Applications will be evaluated against current, future and shared requirements alongside those of an individual service
 - Use of off the shelf and standard products will be promoted over bespoke development
 - Online services and licence free software should only be used when appropriate and in line with advice.
- **Technical compliance**
 - Products purchased should be consistent with existing investment, must not depend on outdated or obsolete technologies, and adhere to all relevant technical, network and security standards, including accessibility guidelines.
- **3rd party hosted and internally developed solutions**
 - 3rd party hosted/supported systems and internally developed solutions are subject to the same review process and must adhere to the strategy principles.
- **Project management**
 - All requests for new systems, or major changes to existing systems must be managed with appropriate project governance
- **Support, refresh and end of life**
 - Prior to launch, the project manager and sponsor must ensure that sufficient budget is available for the whole product lifecycle.
 - All applications must have suitable support provisions in place, including training and user documentation
- **System ownership and re-evaluation**
 - Although solutions may be the most appropriate when selected and implemented, advancements and changes in technology, user expectation and requirements mean that this means that suitability needs to be regularly reviewed.
 - All applications must be registered with a named system owner and planned review date.

Full Application Strategy Principles, and exception handling process

<http://camweb/cd/cst/IT/itstrat/itstrategyrefresh/default/relateddocuments>

Governance mechanisms for application portfolio management

Governance of our use of applications is achieved by:

- Developing and maintaining internal IT standards, which support and enable technology change within a known framework.
- Working within and supporting the council's programme and project management framework.
- Maintaining a robust application review process, that helps guide and constrain IT change within the organisation to accepted principles.

Availability & business continuity planning

With such a high level of dependency on the use of IT systems, and the data held within them, system unavailability in many cases would directly impact on the quality, or even possibility, of service delivery.

Consequently, in addition to ensuring that the solution selected and implemented is fit for purpose (utility), it must also be fit for use (warranty), through appropriate management and supported arrangements.

To support this, in the 2009-2013 Application Strategy, system ownership roles and responsibilities, and an Application Register are being introduced.

The ***Application Register*** will hold a definitive list of all significant applications, and be used to

- o Hold key information about each application, such as purpose, location, supplier, support arrangements etc
- o Create a roadmap for review, upgrade and decommissioning
- o Identify links between systems and technologies that may impact on availability or lifespan
- o Understand and document patterns of business activity to enable service breaks to be scheduled at the most appropriate time for each application
- o Improve scheduling of major IT projects

A System Owner and Sponsor will also be identified for each application.

The **System Sponsor** will be the person with responsibility for service delivery, and therefore must take ultimate responsibility for decisions and risk mitigation relating to associated IT systems. E.g. Ensuring that appropriate support/disaster recovery packages are in place, and that systems are considered in business continuity planning.

The **System Owner** role however is to be allocated to an officer at a more operational level, who is familiar with the every-day activities required to deliver services, and will become the main point of contact with the IT Service.

[Full role and responsibilities of the System Owner and Sponsor.](#)

Application rationalisation and legacy systems

Introduction of the new application review process, application strategy principles, application register and roles of the system owner and sponsor, aim to improve how applications are selected, procured, implemented and managed throughout their entire lifecycle, moving forward from 2009.

However, the 2009-2013 strategy acknowledges there are a significant number of applications installed on Council PCs, that are out of date, dependent on technologies in extended support or which duplicate functionality. Consequently to bring the current application set in line with the Application Strategy Principles and ambitions, it is essential that action be taken to:

- o Reduce the overall number of applications
- o Rationalise the number of versions of applications in use
- o Where multiple applications fulfil a similar function, encourage use of the “preferred application”
- o Identify a System Owner and Sponsor for each significant application, and update the Application Register, to ensure appropriate support is in place etc.
- o Where applications depend on technologies approaching end of mainstream support, work with the System Owner/Sponsor to create a plan for replacement/modernisation