

Subject:	ICT Strategy 2008 - 2012		
Date of Meeting:	20th November 2008		
Report of:	Interim Director of Finance and Resources		
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Key Decision	CAB4315		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the initial Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) strategy which sets out the council's approach to the delivery of technical and information services 2008 – 2012. This strategy supersedes the 2006 'Review of ICT Strategy – The Transformation Agenda'.
- 1.2 The Strategy outlines the role of ICT in enabling the authority to deliver on its key objectives such as delivering Value for Money and supporting the council in providing services directly to the citizens of Brighton & Hove.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Strategy is to provide the framework for a more detailed development plan. Further detailed analysis and planning supporting the principles outlined in the strategy will be undertaken for review by March 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet approve the initial ICT strategy 2008-2012 attached as Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet acknowledge the scrutiny of the strategy by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 21st October 2008 and note the responses to the points raised.
- 2.3 That the Cabinet note that the initial strategy will be updated further including a development plan by March 2009, for reporting to the Cabinet thereafter.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Since 2002 the councils ICT strategy has largely been driven from the central government ICT strategy, notably the Best Value Performance Indicator for e-Government.
- 3.2 Since this time much has changed and much has been achieved. Examples include the implementation of a new Financial Information System, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and significant expansion of the technology infrastructure necessary to meet the continual development of council services.
- 3.3 The initial ICT Strategy 2008 – 2012 recognises the achievements that have already been realised through previous investment. However, it addresses the requirement to build upon these foundations to support the delivery of modern services to citizens.
- 3.4 The initial Strategy highlights the need for ICT to continually support improved service delivery whilst reducing costs and maximising the investment in ICT. It sets out the principles within which our vision will be achieved and the way in which the ICT division will support the Corporate Plan. However, the Strategy recognises that ICT is a corporate responsibility and not simply a technology issue. Partnership working and business collaboration is vital to providing officers, Councillors and partners with the tools they need to deliver effective services.
- 3.5 Everything ICT does must support the Councils priorities for improvement. The context within which these priorities sit is complex. The ICT Strategy will need to balance change activities, service delivery and service excellence against capacity and funding constraints.
- 3.6 Major themes outlined in this strategy include:
 - How ICT can support improving Citizen Access
 - Supporting the transformation of services
 - Business Improvement
 - Technical Strategy
 - Capacity and Resources
- 3.7 It should be noted that the strategy is work-in-progress. It is recognized that more needs to be done to tie this initial strategy to the Council's business needs, including governance, prioritisation and a costed development programme.
- 3.8 However, before carrying out this detailed work and planning the views of the Cabinet are being sought to ensure the direction of travel suggested in the strategy is broadly right.

3.9 The strategy will be updated by the new Assistant Director for ICT (who takes up his appointment in mid-November) by the end of March 2009, and reported to the Cabinet thereafter.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation has taken place with Directors, other senior council officers, the Cabinet Member F&R & Central Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. Further consultation will occur between now and March 2009 as the strategy is developed further.

4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered the draft initial ICT Strategy at its meeting on 21st October 2008.

4.3 An extract from the draft minutes of the meeting is reproduced below:

“The Interim Director and the Head of ICT replied to a number of queries:

- There have been moves to integrate ICT between services and this was being led by business/service needs.
- In future there would be more flexibility in home-working and work patterns.
- The council is moving towards on-line services, residents who were not IT-capable would be taken in account – so there will still be a variety of access options and information disseminated in other formats.
- Some IT systems are not compatible with partners, particularly with health partners, but we are starting to bridge the gaps.
- Data sharing and legal situation, was a continuing issue.”

4.4 Three major themes raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission are worth mentioning further:

- The tendency for ICT projects to go over budget and overtime. This is recognised as ICT projects can be complex. The early involvement of the ICT service by the business end of the Council can mitigate some of the risks. For example, some good engagement between a service project sponsor and the ICT service has contributed to corporate Geographical Information Systems being delivered on budget on time with maintenance costs being reduced. This provides potential for service improvement, better decision-making and value for money. Equally, the new planning portal did encounter some difficult technical issues (many of which were outside the control of the Council). Nevertheless the Council is the first to have implemented the solution.
- A concern about access to information and services by people who do not have access to ICT. This is recognised as a key issue – the intention is to

keep a range of access channels available suitably adapted to individuals special needs but also to actively encourage those with access to ICT to use that as the main channel of access to the Council.

- The compatibility of systems across partners. This is indeed a significant and complex issue. Some progress is being made with, for example, Government Connect – a technology for secure data transfer between government departments and other public sector bodies. However, much more will need to be done over the period of the strategy and beyond.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications:

The councils Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the financial plans over a 3 year period. The Financial Planning section of the ICT Strategy indicates that where funding has not already been identified a Business Case will be provided to identify the capital and revenue implications of each scheme/action, including associated benefits and savings.

Nigel Manvell

October 2008

5.2 Legal Implications:

There are no significant legal implications arising from the strategy itself. Any contracts or procurement activities arising from the implementation of the strategy need to be considered separately for compliance with European and domestic legislation as well as the Council's standing orders.

Paul Colbran

October 2008

5.3 Equalities Implications:

The ICT Strategy supports the council's commitment to promote equality via the use of technology and information systems. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be conducted as part of the process of updating this strategy by the end of March 2009. The resulting action plan will demonstrate how we can continue to ensure that effective, appropriate and fair services are delivered on the council's behalf.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The initial ICT Strategy refers to a number of initiatives (such as mobile & flexible working, consolidated infrastructure, thin client computing) supporting the wider corporate commitment to sustainability and the reduction of carbon emissions

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

None

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

A number of risks are implicitly identified throughout the ICT Strategy. Each scheme/action identified within the strategy will be subject to appropriate risk assessment. Previous risk assessments carried out against ICT service provision have been included in the Corporate Risk Register. A review of those risks will be carried out against the revised strategy.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

ICT underpins many of the council's operations. The strategy recommends that consultations continue with all departments of the council as an ICT strategy needs to be responsive and flexible to the council's needs.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. ICT Strategy 2008 - 2012

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

1. None

