



ICT Strategy

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1. Introduction

Public service organisations face a challenging time on many fronts including reduced government funding and increasing customer expectations of service delivery to match their ever changing needs. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is vital to the delivery of cost effective, efficient services to the residents of the Borough; whether directly as part of front line services or supporting behind the scenes. Information technology not only contributes to organisational success, but is also a driving force for change and innovation.

The ICT Strategy ('The Strategy') supports and underpins the delivery of the four priorities of the Council Plan. These are:

A co-operative Council delivering high quality, community-driven services
A clean, safe and sustainable Borough
A Borough of opportunity
A healthy and active community

2. What has been achieved so far

The current ICT Strategy was approved in 2008. Since then, ICT has undertaken significant work that has had positive impacts on service delivery and changed how ICT is both delivered for the organisation and perceived as a service.

Significant achievements have included:

- a) The merger of ICT and Customer Services to form a single department, which has enabled customer focused solutions to be developed, utilising technology for the benefit of residents.
- b) Significant efficiencies and cost savings through the reduction of software applications and suppliers.
- c) The replacement of legacy systems which has improved service delivery for both staff, suppliers and the public through greater integration and joined up working.
- d) Improved business continuity to ensure that in the event of disruption to normal working arrangements, the Council can still provide its major services to the public.
- e) Compliance with national security standards, such as the Public Services Network Code of Connection (PSN) which ensure that data is kept securely and that the Council can share information with other public sector bodies such as Central Government.

- f) Significant changes in the way that users are able to use ICT through the development of remote access and agile working facilities, underpinned by the introduction of up to date infrastructure.
- g) Delivery of a significant number of corporate and departmental projects that have enabled services to become more flexible and deliver customer focused outcomes for the residents of the Borough.

3. The Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy provides high level guidance in describing how ICT will continue to support the needs of the Council in delivering its Council Plan and aims to build on some of the themes identified in the previous Strategy.

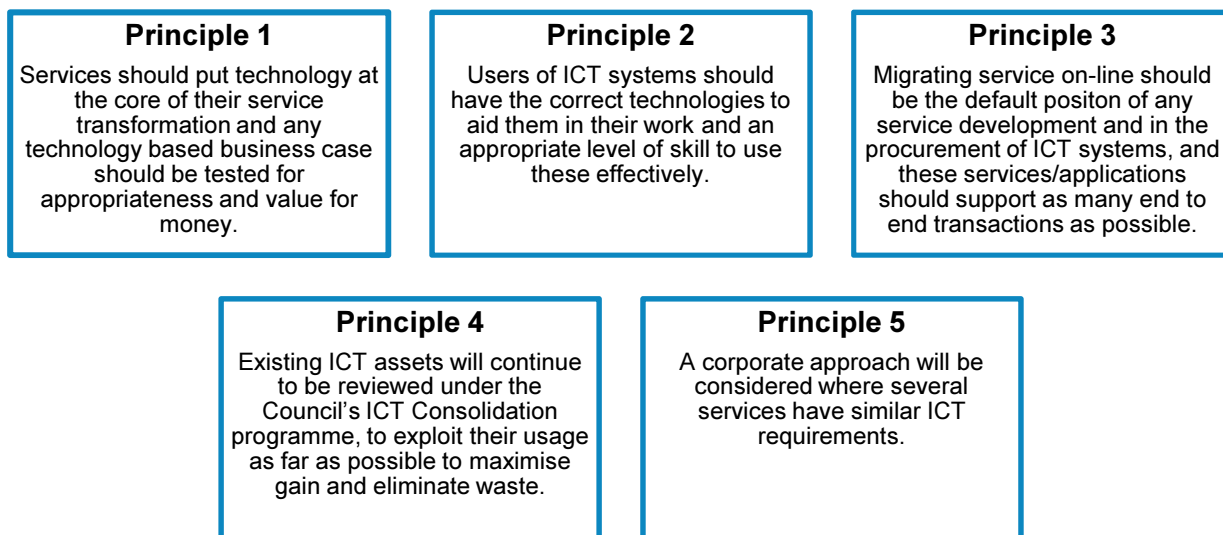
It is therefore a document that will be refined and updated as the Council's needs develop and change in the coming years. The Strategy will not capture every ICT related project which must be undertaken in order to enable the delivery of the ICT service and Council's objectives. Rather, this document will act as a baseline from which the ICT service will manage its efforts over the coming years.

The Strategy is based on nationally recognised best practice guidelines and follows the ITIL Framework for IT Service Management. ICT have already begun including ITIL practices in day to day operations and this is set to continue.

4. Addressing the Challenges Ahead

The Council is facing challenging times with financial pressures being at the forefront of every aspect of its future business. Therefore ICT will aim to maximise the investment in existing technology and assets; reduce the number of assets it has and ensure that technology solutions are affordable and efficient. In all cases, the following Principles will be applied.

The Five Principles



5. Key Themes of the Strategy

The Strategy focuses on four key themes which are designed to work alongside existing corporate policies such as Information Security, Customer Standards and Access and Business Continuity. The Principles detailed in Section 4 will be applied throughout these themes. The themes are deliberately focused on delivering ICT for the business and the customers it serves and are not based on any particular technology initiative.

The four key themes are:

ICT Governance

Demonstrates ownership, visibility and challenge in ICT Projects & Service Plan
Determines priorities to bring about service efficiencies
Oversees the direction of ICT developments ensuring delivery on Council Plan initiatives

Enabling Change

Supporting the Council in developing new and innovative delivery methods for services and infrastructure.
Removing 'information silos' and releasing the value of the data the Council holds.

Flexible Delivery

Review service processes and options for delivery facilitating more flexible and agile methods of working, which meet the needs of residents more effectively,
Removing technical barriers to sharing information; working with community partners and other local government bodies to deliver services in partnership.

Value for Money

Reducing the total cost of ownership for technology and services.
Realising the benefits of business processes improvements that focus on customer need, provide end to end transactions and maximising the use of appropriate available technology.
Ensuring that technology investments have strong, achievable business cases.

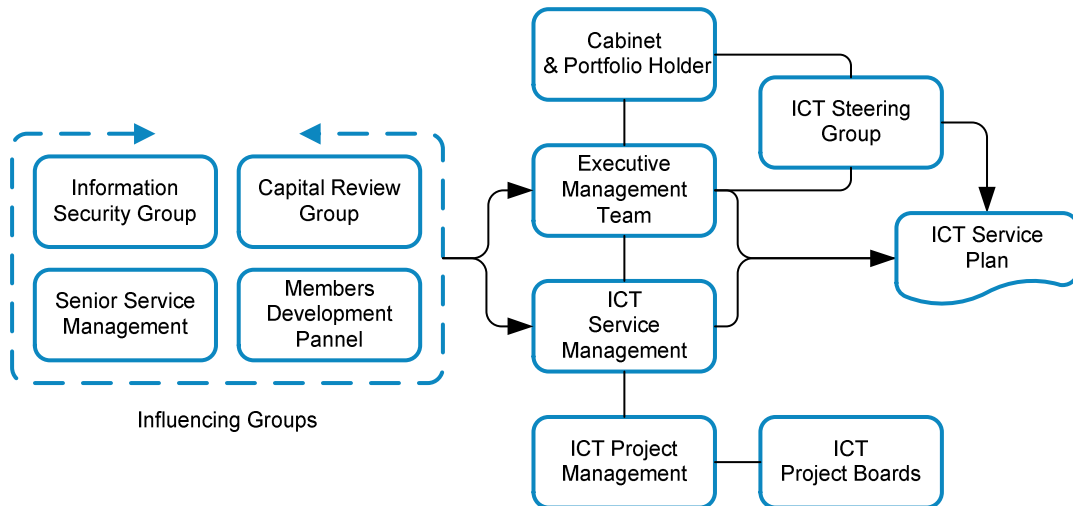
6. The Key Themes

Theme 1: ICT Governance

This theme recognises that the effective management of ICT resources is vital to aid decision making. Effective governance sets the objectives of ICT, challenges the ICT work plan and determines the priority of initiatives to bring about effective service delivery.

How this will be delivered:

The Council's ICT Service Plan is managed by the ICT service, both at an operational and strategic level. The ICT Service Plan, and associated work plans, are the drivers for the service and consequently form part of ongoing performance measurement and progress monitoring of projects at team meetings and individual meetings.



a) **Cabinet & Portfolio Holder**

Cabinet is made up of Elected Members from the majority political party and takes decisions about what the Council should do. Cabinet Members are also Portfolio Holders and each service within the Council is allocated a Portfolio Holder. The Portfolio Holder ensures that the work of the service they are responsible for contributes to the overall aims and direction of Cabinet.

b) **The ICT Steering Group**

The role of the ICT Steering Group is fundamental to obtaining ownership and visibility from strategic leaders in challenging the priorities for ICT Projects and the content of the ICT Service Plan within the context of delivering the Council Plan.

c) **Executive Management Team**

The Council’s Executive Management Team ensures that ICT’s resources are directed to the areas which are of most benefit and importance to service delivery. They are also responsible for authorising business cases for technology developments and work with relevant supporting teams to ensure that benefits are realised.

d) **ICT Service Management**

ICT’s Management team ensures that the authority continues to comply with local, legislative or governmental requirements; that projects are delivered as anticipated and that a robust ICT Service is provided that supports the needs of the business.

e) **The ICT Service Plan**

ICT completes a detailed service plan which outlines the work programme for the coming year. This is compiled from business needs identified across all departments and the ICT Service plan is not finalised until other service areas have completed their individual service plans. The ICT Service Plan is a fluid document which supports and co-ordinates with other areas of the organisation at both a strategic and operational level.

f) ICT Project Boards

Project boards ensure that technology related initiatives are delivered within the scope of the business case and that any deviation from the anticipated outcomes is mitigated and the business case continuously reviewed. The principles of 'Prince 2' project management methodology is embedded in all ICT projects.

The governance arrangements for ICT are designed to work alongside the Council's existing Committees and working groups such as Members Development Panel, Information Security Group, etc. These arrangements are intended to simplify processes, ensure that ICT is responsive to change, that services work collaboratively and that resources are focused on addressing the most important areas of need.

Theme 2: Enabling Change

The Council will need to find new and innovative ways of providing services which strive to match increasing and changing customer demand with decreased resources. Clearly, the promotion of the benefits ICT can bring is not solely in the remit of the ICT Steering Group. Services themselves must take a leading role in ensuring that their ICT applications are fit for purpose and are being used effectively.

ICT has the capability to enable departments to challenge the ways in which services are delivered; to target these more effectively and to look at how technology can provide alternative and potentially more effective delivery methods.

To enable change within the organisation ICT will need to:

- a) Provide strategic and operational guidance to the organisation regarding available solutions;
- b) Bridge the gap between the technical and business needs;
- c) Provide effective ICT Project Management;
- d) Be responsive and receptive to business needs;
- e) Assist service areas in identifying solutions and developing effective business cases; and
- f) Work with community partners and third sector organisations to achieve common goals and aspirations.

How this will be delivered:

a) Business Relationship Management

ICT Staff will meet regularly with individual services to discuss ICT developments, ideas and progress. This will enable the ICT team to match technical delivery to operational need and support departments in open, plain english, business focused discussions.

b) Effective Project Management

Due to the highly technical nature of ICT projects, ICT has a specialist project management function that works with and supports the project owner throughout the life of a project. This function ensures that new initiatives are delivered on time, on budget, and in line with the business case. Effective project management is essential in ensuring that ICT continues to learn from previous projects which can then influence future initiatives and ensures that resources are directed appropriately and efficiently. ICT project staff will continue to develop their skills to enable them to respond to new demands.

c) ***Improved Supplier Representation***

The Council has a considerable portfolio of software and solutions at its disposal. ICT will aim to improve how it works with suppliers to ensure that the Council maximises the value of systems currently in place and challenge suppliers to offer more innovative and flexible contract models that better suit the Council's shifting needs.

d) ***Empowering Users***

ICT Staff will support service areas so that the workforce has the confidence and competence to respond to new demands using technology. Users will be encouraged to self-help and greater participation in technology will be encouraged through the introduction of open discussion forums, focusing on particular requirements.

Similarly, ICT Staff will support the Council's Elected Members to gain the skills they need to access information and communicate effectively using technology.

e) ***Rapid Service Development***

ICT Staff will support services in rapidly trialing technology driven solutions on a limited scale that allow new ideas to be tested prior to creating a full business case. The ideas may not represent the final solution, but will test the principles and feasibility of a proposal, utilising re-usable technology that avoids excessive up-front expenditure.

f) ***The Customer Journey Programme***

The Customer Journey programme aims to improve customer satisfaction in service provision by developing choice in the ways Council services can be accessed. This is part of a wider integrated approach which will see web services increasing, enabling more online, end to end transactions and greater integration with back office systems. As the Council faces unprecedented change, this programme will become increasingly important as ICT's Project Managers look to work with service areas to offer innovative ways of increasing service efficiency and developing strong business cases for change.

Theme 3: Enabling Flexible Service Delivery

The future model of face to face service delivery for the Council is likely to be provided through shared physical spaces with partner organisations, designed for end-to-end service delivery regardless of service provider.

In order to achieve this delivery model the ICT Team will need to:

- a) Support the design of services which facilitates service delivery from any location;
- b) Ensure that staff have access to the correct technology (hardware and software) to maximise opportunities for agile working;
- c) Provide Elected Members with appropriate tools that both support and add value to their roles within their communities;
- d) Look at how technology can be used to encourage collaboration across multiple locations; and
- e) Ensure the capability of the Council's core ICT infrastructure is not dependent upon centralised physical locations.

How this will be delivered:

a) ***Distribution of ICT Infrastructure***

ICT Staff will work with the Council's Facilities Management team to rebalance the locations of the Council's infrastructure across the Borough. This will ensure that the Council has the flexibility to access technology services wherever they are required.

ICT Staff will also look to alternative delivery methods such as shared or cloud based services wherever suitable solutions exist that would be both economically and operationally beneficial to the Council and its residents in the long term.

b) ***Increase mobile technology for service delivery***

ICT Staff will work with other Council services to identify areas where new mobile technology can be introduced to ease the burden of service delivery and maximise efficiency to support areas such as field workers and operational services. ICT will also work with services to identify any barriers to effective agile working and where appropriate, corporately identify solutions that allow these barriers to be overcome.

c) ***Conversion of Documents to Electronic Format***

ICT Staff will work with the Council's services to develop a long term strategy for the handling of information; the conversion of current and historical data into an electronic format to support agile practices and the adoption of records management processes.

d) ***Develop technologies to improve communication and aid working together***

ICT Staff will work with service areas to introduce new technologies that enable and simplify staff working together and sharing consistent information and avoiding duplication. ICT will also work to ensure that existing systems are being used to their best potential and that the Council maximises its existing investment in software and infrastructure.

Theme 4: Value for Money

Significant inroads have been made in reducing the cost of providing technology whilst not decreasing the overall level of service offered to users through the ICT Consolidation programme. ICT continues to ensure that it obtains value for money in any procurement it undertakes and in its day to day operations. However additional benefits can also be realised through the work ICT can do in supporting departments to ensure their business processes deliver direct benefits to customers through the use of appropriate available technology.

In order to achieve this ICT will need to:

- a) Maximise the investment made in existing infrastructure and software;
- b) Consolidate applications where possible and look to open-source alternatives where available;
- c) Work with suppliers and partners to identify new opportunities and minimise costs;
- d) Ensure strong financial controls and service management is in place;
- e) Ensure that investments in new ICT infrastructure and applications deliver best value; and
- f) Ensure that 'invest to save' opportunities are recognised and acted upon.

How this will be delivered:

a) ***Application Consolidation***

ICT Staff will revisit opportunities identified during its ICT Consolidation programme, with increased emphasis on the financial implications of maintaining infrastructure and software, which duplicates functionality or is no longer fit for the Council's needs. ICT will also work to identify potential software sharing opportunities where common solutions add value to the work of the Council and enhance the customer experience.

b) ***Embracing Open-Source Alternatives***

ICT Staff will actively seek out 'open source' alternatives to commercial applications, which are of benefit to the authority, reduce cost and meet a business need. ICT will however ensure that wherever open source systems are used, the indirect costs of making a such a solution work do not outweigh the costs involved in deploying a commercial alternative.

c) ***Enhanced monitoring of software***

ICT Staff will enhance its current software management processes to monitor usage of applications across the authority and ensure that commercially licensed software is deployed in the most appropriate places.

d) *Delivery Alternatives*

ICT Staff will continue to look at alternatives to traditional purchasing and installation methods, such as Software/Infrastructure as a Service, where there is a quantifiable long term benefit to the authority and such services conform with the Council's security requirements.

e) *Exploitation of existing assets and development of new solutions*

ICT Staff will encourage and support services in redesigning their delivery methods to embrace technology, both new and existing, as a way of reducing their financial costs. Whilst this particular initiative may result in difficult decisions regarding the resourcing of services, wherever possible, ICT will support the redesign of delivery methods to ensure that quality services continue to be offered to the residents of the Borough.

f) *Staff Development*

The Council continues to invest in ensuring that ICT staff have the tools and training they require to do their jobs effectively. The ICT Team utilises the Skills for the Information Age (SFIA) framework to measure performance and identify skills gaps.

7. Links to Other Strategies and Policies

The Strategy is a key document which supports or is influenced by the following:

- Council Plan
- ICT Service Plan
- Procurement Strategy
- Members ICT Protocol
- Information Security Policies
- Asset Management Strategy
- Capital Strategy
- Carbon Management Plan
- Co-Operative Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Customer Standards & Access Strategy

- Data Protection Policy
- Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Strategy

Internally, the ICT Team have a number of key technical procedures and policies, such as the ICT Desktop Strategy, which are directly influenced by the overarching ICT Strategy but are not specifically contained as a part of this document. These policies and procedures are frequently reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements of the authority and include the latest technological advancements. Such reviews are conducting in line with the overall principals and themes of this Strategy.

8. Glossary of Terms

Agile Working Facilities Facilities that allow staff to deliver services directly to a customer or carry out their normal duties from any location, but with the same level of service as would be experienced in a traditional Council building.

Back Office Systems Systems that are not directly accessible by customers or suppliers but support the Council's services and contribute towards or generate an outcome for said customers or suppliers.

Business Continuity A defined set of preparatory activities intended to ensure that the Council's critical business functions will continue to operate in a serious incident or disaster that might otherwise have disrupted them.

Cloud Based Services Software or systems which are available to Council staff or customers, but are not run from computers that are physically owned or operated by the Council.

Consolidation Programme The ICT programme which has looked at the functionality of individual applications and assessing where there are areas of duplication and opportunities for systems to be retired.

End to End Transactions Customer focused transactions that are initiated electronically and then processed without the need for manual intervention in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Infrastructure Physical items of computer hardware, including servers, personal computers, storage and networking devices that underpin the delivery of ICT.

ITIL Framework The Information Technology Infrastructure Library Framework is a set of practices for IT service management that focuses on aligning IT services with the needs of business.

Legacy Systems An old method, technology or application that is part of a previous or

outdated computer system.

Open Source

An item of software provided under a free license that can be re-distributed, used or developed by anyone without incurring the costs associated with traditional commercial solutions.

Remote Access

A service which allows staff and suppliers to gain access to internal Council software and systems from a remote location, as if they were in their normal place of work.

Shared Software Services

Software applications that are unique to the business of the Council, but are shared with other neighbouring authorities to deliver a particular service.

Skills for the Information Age

The Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) Framework is the world's most popular way of describing and measuring the skills and knowledge of information technology professionals.