

SUBJECT: ICT STRATEGY 2019-25

DIRECTORATE: HOUSING AND INVESTMENT

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval from Executive for the proposed ICT Strategy for 2019-25.

2. Background

- 2.1. The ICT Team have been working with Foresight Consultants on a proposed ICT Strategy for the period of 2019-25.

- 2.2. This ICT strategy, is based on:

- Council priorities and the likely challenges facing the service over the next three years.
- Supporting Vision 2025 and One Council agenda
- Interviews with key stakeholders
- Reviews of current infrastructure
- Potential future requirements
- Meetings with stakeholders
- Industry developments

3. Objectives of the Strategy

- 3.1. The proposed strategy, building on the previous document, combines essential and aspirational elements, acknowledging the reliance of the Council, as a modern business, on ICT; and also the requirement to develop further and seek to optimise the use of technology to enable new methods of service delivery, and customer expectations in the way they wish to access Council services.

- 3.2. Four key themes have been identified:

- Channel Shift – Customer Services
- New ways of working
- Value for money
- High availability and High Performance

- 3.3. The Strategy is also designed to support the Vision 2025 and One Council Agenda, through new technologies and service support including:

- New and upgraded systems
- Mobile working equipment and processes
- Enhanced web and self-service provision
- Cloud provision of services

- 3.4. The Strategy considers a number of technical solutions which support the overall themes and corporate agenda and looks at the resources available for delivery.
- 3.5. It also acknowledges that the prevailing climate over a number of years has meant that it has been difficult to provide high levels of investment into ICT Services, and that in order to achieve a sustainable service more investment will be required. Furthermore, in order to meet some of the more aspirational aspects of the strategy, it will be necessary to reconsider the deployment of resources in some cases, and to invest on a Business Case based approach to enable New Ways of Working and to modernise ICT to support Service delivery.

4. Essential elements of the ICT Strategy

- 4.1. There are some key elements without which the ICT function could not operate. Aside from the people and skills which are critical for operating the service, some elements of the ICT Infrastructure are required to form a platform for services. These include the data storage, servers, network, telephony and DR capability. These are covered in Section 6 of the strategy. Whilst some investment resources have been committed, these will be reviewed as part of the ongoing budget process, as per the ICT strategy.
- 4.2. In addition, desktop equipment has been provided on a cost-effective basis for many years. In order to modernise services this will mean that more investment will be required in order to optimise the way staff resources are deployed.

5. Aspirational/Line of Business Services

- 5.1. Section 4 of the strategy sets out the strategy for Applications. Some key highlights here are:
 - The applications that the Council is utilising
 - The way they are consumed
 - The mix and spread of applications and how they may be rationalised
 - Underlying platforms
 - Staff skills and training to effectively utilise software
 - Customer requirements for self-service
- 5.2. Many of these elements will require investment and will be considered in more detail over the period of the strategy on a business case based approach.

6. Costs

- 6.1. Whilst it is not possible at present to identify costs that are associated with the strategy, some elements will undoubtedly require a shift in resource deployment and/or a level of investment in order to modernise services; this will need to be weighed against the benefits via ROI modelling or similar decision making matrix.

As the delivery of the strategy develops the skill sets and resources required will become more understood and be reported back at a later date.

7. Strategic Priorities

- 7.1. High performing services – The ICT Strategy is a key element of delivering services across the Authority. Investment in ICT will reap dividends across services and enable enhanced working practices.

8. Organisational Impacts

8.1. Finance

The Council currently has an ICT Reserve along with a revenue budget for project based work. Service areas are currently responsible for the ICT investment required in the service specific ICT applications and the funding of the ICT equipment needs of the service teams (although this is set for review). In addition, the Council has an Invest To Save Reserve which is used to pump prime initiatives, such as the M365 pilot project, that will ultimately deliver service efficiencies. In addition to the general ICT reserve, where any significant investment is made in the infrastructure, the Housing Revenue Account will pay a proportionate contribution towards the costs, c30%, increasing the availability of funds.

- 8.2. The investment plan in support of this ICT strategy identifies a need for a significant investment over the next 3 years in order to design, build and run the corporate ICT architecture and to deploy solutions into departments that take advantage of it. In addition, investment will be required in the service specific ICT applications and for the provision of equipment to officers.
- 8.3. At this point it is not possible to identify whether the costs associated with replacing or updating core infrastructure and operating systems can be fully met from the ICT reserve however, the level of the reserve will need to be kept under continual review to ensure adequate funds are available to support the ICT Strategy. Should the Council require new or upgraded systems or IT services to support projects, the associated costs will need to be included in the business case for the project.
- 8.4. As individual projects and initiatives are developed the source of funding and appropriate approvals will be sought.

8.5. Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications at this time.

8.6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

There are no E&D implications at this time. Indeed, ICT can be used as an enabler to make services more accessible to customers and staff. They will be considered further as part of an projects arising as part of the strategy.

9. Risk Implications

- 9.1. Key risks associated with the strategy are related to resources, both in terms of appropriate skilled staffing and the amount of finance available for delivery.

10. Recommendation

10.1. That Executive adopt the proposed policy.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? One

List of Background Papers: None

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