# SCRUTINY PANEL

## 12 February 2015

# REVIEW OF ICT SERVICES

## Report of the Director of Resources

| STRATEGIC AIM: | **All** |
|---|---|

## 1.    PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

**1.1**    To update the panel on the plan for the review of ICT services, along with the development of an IT Strategy and how this links with other corporate strategies.

## 2.    RECOMMENDATIONS

**2.1    That the panel considers the contents of this report and provides feedback to the Portfolio Holder and Director for Resources.**

## 3.    CURRENT ICT SERVICES

**3.1**    At present, ICT Services consists of two teams;
- IT Infrastructure – this team is responsible for the network infrastructure, connectivity, hardware etc
- Performance and Application Support – this team is responsible for collecting and reporting on corporate performance data along with systems administration for corporate systems such as Agresso, Raise, Street Naming and Numbering etc.

**3.2**    The total annual budget for all ICT Services is £1.4m, of which £560k relates to staff costs making this the third largest team within the Resources Directorate.

**3.3**    The Head of Service and Infrastructure Manager both left the Authority in late 2014, and interim management arrangements have been in place since to allow maximum flexibility in terms of the future of the service. This, along with increased spend on infrastructure this year has led to pressure on the service budget with a total overspend of £92k forecast at quarter 3.  Options for the future delivery of the service are currently being considered and are explained further in section 5 of this report.

**3.4**    Each year the Council is required to demonstrate to the Cabinet Office that is complies with Public Services Network (PSN) Code of Connection.

As part of the submission to the Cabinet Office the Council are required to undertake extensive validation testing.  The testing carried out in late 2014, along with the general assessment by the Interim Head of IT revealed a number of areas of the Council's IT Infrastructure where improvement is required. These are summarised below:

- Core network management particularly firewall configuration, web filtering;
- Active Directory is reaching the end of its useful life making the process of managing users and applying security controls more difficult and time consuming than it should be;
- More segregation of the network is required, particularly around secure and non-secure emails.  This is to meet the PSN requirements in respect of GCSx emails but also to configure the network in such a way that enables a different approach to the provision of hardware/equipment to users for example access to emails on personal devices, and a shift towards role based technology.
- Data storage requires better configuration and management to prevent pressure on the capacity that is available; and
- A need to improve the access control method for remote workers/elected members to reduce complexity and aid user access.

**3.5** Some of these issues, such as the firewall configuration and segregation of emails required resolution before the submission to the Cabinet Office is finalised.  The rest of the issues are areas to be addressed through the development of the IT Strategy and review of the service.

**3.6** A priority in the short term is to equip the Strategic Management Team with 'tablets', to enable the functionality to be fully trialled.  Tablet devices are significantly smaller and lighter than the current laptops, making them more portable.  The trial will assess whether productivity/effectiveness is improved.

## 4. A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

**4.1** The Council is in a strong financial position but the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is challenging. The Council's prudent financial management over the years means that it has a level of reserves where it can plan for a reduction in expenditure in a controlled manner without resorting to some of the emergency measures proposed by other authorities.  However, the need for savings remains and plans need to be developed for addressing the budget deficit in the later years of the MTFP.

**4.2** Almost all services delivered by the County Council are reliant on ICT systems in some way.  This means that the service is uniquely placed to act as an enabler of change within the organisation.  An effective strategy and service should support council services to deliver efficiencies in processes, to drive savings and service improvement across the Council.

**4.3**   The rate of change in technology is rapid and growth in the up take of mobile devices, social media and the roll out of superfast broadband across the County presents significant opportunities for the Council.  The way we engage with our customers, and the ways in which customers want to do business with us is changing.  The vision for ICT therefore has to reflect this and support the Council's aspiration to drive channel shift and enable customers to interact with us more easily through self-service, the website etc.

**4.4**   A clear approach to continuous improvement of ICT is essential and must be underpinned by a principle that the use of ICT must add value to the customer whether that be a service within the Council, a citizen, a local business or a partner organisation.   The strategy must, as a minimum:

- Deliver multi-channel customer service, enabling customers to play an active role in the Council's activities, accessing services and information where, when and how they want.
- Enable flexibility and adaptability across the organisation and its resources
- Ensure robust management information and systems through the ongoing development of policy and governance.
- Facilitate better sharing of technology and therefore information, with partners
- Make a significant contribution towards a paper light way of working
- Further enable agile working thereby increasing the potential opportunity to further reduce the amount of office accommodation required
- Enable greater integration of public services for example health and social care single national patient number, joint working with the Police.

**4.5**   To address the issues highlighted in section 3 of this report and deliver a successful strategy, it is clear that investment will be required.  However, it is important that investment in the implementation of new technology and systems prove their value by delivering financial savings and/or enabling business and service transformation.  Investment must solve real business problems, with clear business case methodology applied to secure return on investment.  As the Strategy develops, further assessment will be undertaken of how much of the strategy can be delivered using existing resources/budgets.  It is likely that any additional investment would be requested via a bid to the Invest to Save reserve.

**4.6**   It is vital that the IT Strategy is client led when it comes to the provision of departmental/service specific systems.  A crucial part of developing the strategy will therefore be to engage with departments across the Authority to understand their objectives the future vision for their services and to identify technology that will allow them to achieve their outcomes.  The Interim Head of IT commenced this exercise but more detailed work is required.

**4.7** The IT Strategy has strong links to other corporate strategies and projects that are currently underway. For example the People First review highlighted the opportunity for the development of an Information and Advice Service, initially driven by the requirements of the Care Act but also to support the implementation of services such as the Community Agents. The draft budget for 2015/16 includes £100k for the development of a new corporate website that delivers such a service and significantly improves the functionality of the Council's website. If the additional funding is approved, a project group will be established to manage the project and ensure it delivers on expected outcomes.

## 5. SERVICE REVIEW

**5.1** As referred to in paragraph 3.3, options for the future delivery of the services are currently being explored. These can be summarised as:

- Retain an in house service and seek to rationalise the way systems are managed to deliver a reduction in the cost base through investment in systems and technology
- Retain an in house service as above but modernise working practices and increase the number of managed services thereby reducing the size of the team required
- Outsource the service – there is a question mark over whether the service would be attractive to an outsourcer due to the size of the organisation.
- Shared service/partnership with another organisation – either to join an existing service or collaborate to form a new partnership

**5.2** Timeline

February/March –Scoping exercise to establish what partnerships and shared services exist and what interest there may be from other organisations to collaborate plus a detailed review of the other options at 5.1.
End April – identification of a preferred option. A decision will also be required on the management arrangements during any transitional period, dependent on the preferred option.

## 6. MEMBERS IT

**6.1** The following equipment is offered to Members when they are elected to the Council:
- Dell Laptop or PC
- Remote Access Token
- BlackBerry handheld device

**6.2** Members currently access the Council systems remotely in the same way as staff and are subject to the same access control. It is, however, acknowledged that elected members have different requirements to officers and do not require such extensive access. On this basis, an exercise will be undertaken to establish how the arrangements for Members can be simplified.

**6.3** One option is to allow use of personal devices to access services such as emails, under a bring your own device (BYOD) policy. This would require some changes to the network configuration but would increase the options available to elected members.

**6.4** Many authorities are now offering their elected members the option of operating paperless i.e. all meeting agendas and reports are issued electronically – no paper copies are distributed. This has recently become possible because the legal requirement to issue hard copy papers for democratic meetings has been removed. There are systems available to facilitate this way of working and the Corporate Support Team are doing some research on this.

**6.5** Feedback from the panel is sought specifically on this aspect of the service, particularly in light of there being a new Council following the local elections in May 2015.

## 7. RISK MANAGEMENT

| RISK | IMPACT | COMMENTS |
|------|--------|----------|
| **Time** | **Low** | The timetable set out in this report is achievable |
| **Viability** | **Low** | No issues identified |
| **Finance** | **Medium** | The outcome of the budget approval process will confirm whether funding is available for the development of the website. The full costs of delivering the strategy will become properly understood as the strategy develops. |
| **Profile** | **Medium** | There is likely to be public interest if more options for communicating and engaging with the council are made available. |
| **Equality and Diversity** | **Low** | An EIA questionnaire has been completed and no issues were identified. This will be revisited as the IT Strategy and Service Review progresses. |

**Background Papers**
None

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# A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.