IT Strategy

‘Maximise the use of Technology to provide Customer choice, improve access and make Services better and easier to use’

The main objectives of this Strategy are to:

- Reduce risk by providing principles to guide and ease decision-making
- Ensure proper allocation of resource
- Develop and maintain skills across the organization
- Document decisions about strategic choices and standards
- Provide leadership and a framework to achieve objectives
- Manage change and provide direction and focus

Target Audience

This Strategy Document has been produced for a target audience comprising:

- The Council’s Elected Members
- The Senior Management Team
- Service Managers
- The ICT Team
- Employees
- The Council’s partners
- The Council’s suppliers
- Customers

The strategy to achieve that vision is:

- To strive towards a ‘paperless office’ environment, where work can be shared and stored electronically

- To use ICT to improve our processes, identifying where activities can be carried out electronically and implementing these with rigor

- To eliminate any duplication of work by streamlining electronic processes and paper based systems until these can be made electronic

- To provide all employees with easy access to a computer. Where employees are office based, they should be able to access a computer for all of their working time, for employees working remotely or not office based, there will be a computer for their use available at their base site.

- To integrate systems where-ever possible to streamline processes and to make such services both internal and external as seamless as possible.

- To use ICT to seek efficiencies, reduce costs and improve services

High Level Principles

The following key principles will form the basis of the Strategy:

1. Driven by the needs and benefit of the Customer.

In this context, the term customer includes citizens and internal council services. The strategy recognises the importance of customers and that any ICT decision should be based on an assessment of their requirements rather than the technology itself. In support of this principle when making ICT decisions the relevant actions are to:

- Define the customer
- Establish the customer needs
- Determine the customer benefits
- Maximise the use of electronic access channels
- Use Management Information to ensure aims are satisfied
- Seek ideal solutions, recognising that these may ultimately be constrained by technology and/or integration limitations
- Acquire products that meet anticipated future needs
- Use consultation techniques that provide evidence of customer needs

2. Solutions will be fit-for-purpose and exploit available procurement options

In making decisions about procuring ICT systems, a clear understanding of what is required needs to be established at the start. This will be the measure against which the proposed solution is evaluated to ensure it is fit for the defined purpose. As part of the decision making process, acquisitions must be supported by a Business Case. Selection of systems will be dependent on immediate and longer term internal and external needs, part of the business case being to determine future demands. As a consequence, a proposed purchase may not necessarily be the lowest cost option but most 'economically advantageous' for the defined purpose. This principle will be achieved by the following actions:

- All procurement processes will be Business Case led which will include consideration of the following factors:
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  a) The assessment and evaluation of the various procurement options which may be available

    - Partnership
    - Selected supplier
    - Frameworks
    - Formal tender

b) The determination of 'whole-life' costs (5 /10 year projections)

Initial costs
- Hardware
- Software
- Implementation
  - Project management
  - Data conversion
  - Interfaces
  - Training
  - Staffing

Ongoing costs
- Hardware maintenance & renewal
- Software maintenance
- Consumables
- Staffing

Realisation benefits
- Projection of efficiency savings
  - Cashable
  - Non-cashable

c) How the Council's existing strengths in terms of size, knowledge and ongoing relationships with suppliers can best be utilised

d) The evaluation of formally specified requirements against pre-determined criteria supported by researching the market

- The above process will ensure a match with required functionality, clear identification of costs both capital and revenue, and savings. In addition to which there may be added benefits arising from functionality such as:

  - Integration
  - Web services
  - Remote access
  - Future needs
  - Ease of use
  - Additional benefits

- Using the introductory checklist for the procurement of ICT systems.

3. Maximisation of System Functionality

The introduction of any new system or technology will challenge the ways in which work is carried out currently. It is essential that the core functionality of third-party products be explored prior to any local customisation. This of itself may require some business process re-engineering in terms of the way that work flows and is processed. In general terms it will be more effective to change existing processes to match new systems than to endeavour to graft existing processes onto new systems.

In particular to drive efficiency, then as far as possible, manual systems should be replaced with electronic processes and manual recording keeping or support systems be eliminated.

It has to be acknowledged that this can be difficult, as changing existing processes means redefining roles, changing duties and challenging information flows. However when third-party products are purchased, their functionality is usually the product of user reviews and refinements to the system over a number of years and therefore well tested in terms of work flow efficiency.

After a system has been installed, there will be opportunities to continually review processes, ensuring that the functionality of any system is used to its maximum potential. New software releases may make changes to systems and these must be integrated into work processes to ensure the benefits are realised.

To achieve this principle the following actions are required:

- System owners actively engage with user groups, attending meetings as frequently as possible and implementing best practice
- At the start of any implementation all existing key processes to be mapped in order to identify where changes will be required
- When implementing a new system, the process of mapping can be used to challenge existing assumptions about workflow etc.
- There will be a presumption against making bespoke adjustments to third-party systems, and against developing standalone solutions internally
- Ensure that any bespoke customisation of a system is formally justified within the Business Case

4. **Formal periodic reviews of major applications**

The Council's historical arrangements for the acquisition of application systems together with the need to respond to the e-Government led to capacity issues during 2003/06. In an effort to streamline and effectively pre-plan and manage future renewal programmes so there are no periods of high demands a phased approach is essential. This approach will assist in ensuring that the resources available from within ICT are managed effectively to match demand, by eliminating (as far as possible) peaks and troughs in workload. The forward planning of this work will enable programme management to be more effective, better planning of budgets and a more structured decision-making process.

Formal reviews should take the format of a business case as detailed above. Where the review is at first renewal, a full business case is not necessary. However at second renewal or within 10 years of a rolling contract, this case needs to be made following all the principles of this strategy and a formal decision made on the outcome. For some of the contracts in place, the work on the business case will be carried out solely within ICT. However to review some of the systems with wider, or more significant corporate impact, the process of establishing a project team to develop the business case will be appropriate.

In support of this Principle the actions are to:

- Ensure that systems which do not have fixed term contracts are subject to formal review every 5 – 7 years
- Ensure that systems which have fixed term contracts are formally reviewed before the 2nd renewal
- Ensure that in any event, systems will not run for more than 10 years without formal review
- Reviews to be carried out in sufficient time before renewal is due in order to plan the most advantageous procurement method.
- Ensure that a schedule of major applications is maintained which will feed the review process
- Where possible smooth out renewal peaks
- Include all relevant parties in building up the business case and ensuring that the principles of this strategy are met when recommending a decision

5. Consultation and agreement prior to procurement

When making a procurement decision with regard to ICT, it is important that all affected stakeholders are involved. For some of these acquisitions, they may be confined to one service area, but stakeholders such as ICT will need to be consulted on any decision. Other systems impact on users in more than one Department, where these systems are under review, it is important that the consultation process also includes all users.

The use of ICT is a key driver of how work is carried out in terms of resources, processes and information. In this respect, where more than one department uses a specific system, they need to be consulted on any changes/replacements or renewals. Their views and needs must be taken into account when making a decision to procure a solution.

In support of this principle the actions are:

- Appropriately consult with relevant stakeholders prior to acquisition of solutions either new or at renewal
- Document corporate systems and standards and the rationale for the adoption of these
- Recognise that those consulted, who will be users of the system, have a responsibility to input into the decision making process
- Once determined and where applicable, ensure a Council wide adoption and adherence to implementing any new system/changes in accordance with the principles above regarding maximising functionality

6. Ensure Integrity and Security

There will always be a balance to be drawn between maintaining the integrity and security of the ICT infrastructure, and ensuring that systems are accessible and easy-

to-use. In this respect, access to systems is limited to access through a permission structure of user-ids and time-limited passwords determined by the System Owner. These restrictions can be viewed as frustrating for users and System Owners, however any relaxation of security processes may bring with it risks in terms of unauthorised access, introduction of viruses and system corruption.

This principle recognises the potential for conflict and in terms of the ICT strategy any decision must balance the differing needs and following risk assessment principles.

In support of this principle the actions are:

- Maintain electronic information in accordance with legislation, recognised security standards and Council Policy (e.g. The Retention Policy)
- Ensure that access to systems will only be available to authenticated and authorised users. This will be managed by System Owners in accordance with the Council's standards and protocols
- Maintain an ICT Security Policy which will detail current procedure

7. Commitment to Training

To ensure that all the principles above are met, it is essential that employees are trained. To achieve this following training will be provided:

- Systems implementation
- Project management
- Business process re-engineering
- Use and management of business applications
- Security awareness
- Use of Microsoft Office products
- Keyboard skills

This will be through a combination of internal training/coaching and external provision. It is the responsibility of the employee and the line manager in accordance with the Council's Training and Development Policy to ensure that needs are identified and met.

Although ICT will assist in delivering training where appropriate, they cannot take responsibility for ensuring this principle is met. That rests with line managers, System Owners and individuals.

In support of this principle the actions are:

- Ensure that employees have the core basic ICT related skills and knowledge, either at appointment or through training
- Maintain skill levels and 'succession plan' where individuals have specific systems or technical knowledge
- Employees to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own training

and development, to identify their training needs and to attend training events provided to address these

- Employees need also to be encouraged to use functionality within all systems, and where they have knowledge gaps to take steps to address these.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table provides an overview of the strategic, developmental and operational roles for each identified stakeholder

Roles & Responsibilities	Member	SMT	ICT	System Owner	System User	Supplier	Partner	Citizen
Strategic								
Agree/review strategy	❋	❋						
Ensure compliance		❋						
Promotion, commitment & leadership	❋	❋						
Identification of ICT related service needs		❋						
Allocation and prioritising resources	❋	❋						
Feedback customer experience and expectation	❋							❋
Compliance with contract/agreement			❋	❋		❋	❋	
Harmonise with corporate objectives	❋	❋	❋	❋		❋	❋	
Ensure appropriate integration			❋	❋		❋	❋	
Conduct periodic system reviews		❋	❋	❋				
Ensure budgetary control	❋	❋	❋	❋				
Ensure data integrity			❋	❋				
Plan future infrastructure needs			❋					
Introduce appropriate security standards and continually assess risk			❋					
Developmental								
Develop processes to unlock maximum potential of the system				❋				
Lead functionality			❋	❋	❋			

Roles & Responsibilities	Member	SMT	ICT	System Owner	System User	Supplier	Partner	Citizen
enhancement								
Ensure harmonisation with Integrated and associated systems			❋	❋				

Roles & Responsibilities	Member	SMT	ICT	System Owner	System User	Supplier	Partner	Citizen
Advise line managers of available functionality and where BPR may assist			❋	❋				
Ensure training provided		❋	❋	❋				
Identify faults and improvements					❋			
Active involvement in User Groups			❋	❋				
Engage in BPR			❋	❋				
Develop the infrastructure			❋					
Develop appropriate system integration			❋					
Operational								
Lead and support the introduction of systems			❋					
Maintain the infrastructure			❋					
Have core ICT competence	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	
Get properly trained	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	
Use and exploit systems				❋				
Control system access			❋	❋	❋			
Authorise software loads, dial-ins and fixes			❋	❋				
Supplier and ICT liaison			❋	❋				
Ensure data integrity			❋	❋	❋			
Ensure documentation and procedure notes are current			❋	❋				
Have due regard to system access and security of data	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	❋	
Observe data sharing protocols				❋			❋	

The System Owner shall endeavor to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to provide cover for the Roles & Responsibilities defined within the above table. It is recognised that the customer will in some situations be providing information directly, especially as more web-enabled self-service is developed. Effective processing of this information is dependent on this being correct. There will also be opportunities for the customers to give feedback, it will be important to seek this to enable the better development of systems.