



NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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**ICT Strategy 2018 - 2020**

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## Equality Impact Assessment

The Council strives to ensure equality of opportunity for all both as a major employer and as a service provider.

The ICT Strategy 2018-2020 has been equality impact assessed to ensure fairness and consistency for all.

### Version Control Schedule for ICT Strategy 2018-2020

Author (Post Holder Title)	Names removed
Type of Document	Microsoft Word
Version Number	1.0
Document File Name	NBC ICT Strategy v1.0.docx
Issue date	March 2018
Document Held by (name section)	ICT Service
For internal publication only or external also	Internal and External
Document stored on council website	yes
Next Review	May 2019
<b>Approved by</b>	Management Board

Change History	Date	Comments
Version 1.0	March, 2018	Initial release

# 1 Executive Summary

Northampton Borough Council, in common with other Public Sector organisations, has experienced an unprecedented reduction in funding at a time when demand for its services is increasing, and this has required it to become more entrepreneurial and commercially focused as well as make substantial savings. The council has an ambitious Corporate Plan that targets improved outcomes in priority areas and a challenging Efficiency Plan. ICT will play a significant role ensuring that these plans are achieved.

This ICT Strategy sets out the objectives, outcomes, principles and approaches for the ICT service to support the delivery of high-quality services at the lowest possible net cost and enable the attainment of the council's business development priorities, namely:

- Empowering communities
- Economic growth
- Partnership working.

## ***Relationship to other documents***

- ICT Security Policy
- ICT Code of Practice Policy
- ICT Service Resourcing Model
- Service Target Operating Model

This ICT Strategy covers a challenging time for the council. The adoption of this ICT Strategy, together with the required investment in ICT, will enable the council to ensure it is economic, efficient and effective. This will allow the council to secure the best from the resources available and support the development of an agile workforce culture.

## Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	3
2	ICT Strategic Objectives.....	5
3	ICT Strategic Outcomes.....	5
4	ICT Strategic Principles.....	5
4.1	Working together.....	5
4.2	Pick what is right, not what is cheapest.....	6
4.3	Security, resilience and future-proofing.....	6
4.4	Warranty / Support SLAs.....	6
4.5	On Premise versus Cloud services.....	6
4.6	Leveraging existing technology solutions.....	6
4.7	Buy, do not build.....	7
4.8	Learning, improving and sharing.....	7
4.9	Enhanced customer service.....	7
5	ICT Strategic Approach.....	7
5.1	ICT Service Management.....	7
5.2	Communications.....	8
5.3	ICT Architecture.....	8
5.4	Business Applications.....	9
5.5	Business Intelligence and Decision Support.....	9
5.6	Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery.....	10
5.7	Security & Compliance.....	10
5.8	ICT Projects.....	10
5.9	ICT Governance.....	11
5.9.1	Related ICT Policies.....	11
5.10	Risk Management.....	11
5.11	Measurement and reporting.....	11
6	Appendices.....	12
6.1	Application List.....	12
6.2	Project List.....	12

## 2 ICT Strategic Objectives

Northampton Borough Council (NBC) is changing quickly to respond to the business challenges it is facing, and ICT will play an increasingly significant role in enabling that change as it evolves. The implementation of this ICT Strategy will prepare NBC to be flexible and achieve the maximum benefit from Information Technology innovations.

To deliver the council's Corporate Plan (aligned to its Efficiency Plan and in accordance with its Governance action plan), the main business objectives that NBC requires of its ICT function are:

- Delivering integrated, high-performing and resilient systems that enable the council to operate effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis.
- Enabling business change through effective project delivery, thereby allowing the council to develop improved business processes and efficiencies.
- To provide an improved flexible working environment to support the staff and members throughout the council to deliver efficiencies.

## 3 ICT Strategic Outcomes

The outcomes required by the council in relation to its ICT Service are:

- ICT systems that are fit for purpose, secure, accessible, resilient and that perform efficiently.
- ICT systems enabling secure flexible working to deliver efficient services.
- ICT systems enabling partnership working to deliver effective outcomes.
- Integrated ICT systems enabling the council to exploit its data to enhance monitoring, analysis and informed decision making.
- Unified communication platform, maximising the use of mobile technology to support efficient flexible working.
- Change expedited through high-quality advice and fast, flexible, delivery of ICT requirements.
- Minimised ICT costs and achievement of best value.
- High level of customer satisfaction.
- Services will be delivered via channels of choice for the customers demand.
- ICT systems enabling wider integration with other local Authorities which allows support for a Unitary approach.

## 4 ICT Strategic Principles

The following are the strategic principles that govern the council's approach to ICT development, maintenance, and funding.

### 4.1 Working together

Constructive engagement between the ICT Service and its internal and external customers is essential to ensure that business requirements are properly understood, including business continuity requirements. The ICT Service will work closely with internal and external service providers to deliver high-quality end-to-end services to meet its customers' business requirements.

Business services will be expected to ensure their staff are equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to use ICT systems effectively.

## **4.2 Pick what is right, not what is cheapest**

The ICT Service will always aim to deliver the best available technology according to the council's and its customers' needs. While up-front cost may be higher, this approach delivers a more reliable, higher-quality offering to customers that typically outlasts poorer offerings, to deliver better whole-life value for money.

## **4.3 Security, resilience and future-proofing**

To provide the capabilities described in this strategy, there needs to be a robust, resilient and secure foundation upon which the council's technology is built.

To enable an "always on" ICT service there will need to be a change in the council's core ICT provision. The current reliance on locally-hosted services prevents NBC achieving an "always-on" service for its customers and employees. The ICT Service will reduce the reliance on local infrastructure and resources by moving to "Cloud" services where this is practical and cost effective. Locally-hosted applications may be delivered from alternative platforms, such as Software as a Service (SaaS) from the application provider or by a managed off-site Cloud service (IaaS - Infrastructure as a Service) supplier. Reliance on local data storage may be similarly reduced with a move to hosted storage, where availability would be managed by the provider.

Procuring ICT and applications in this manner brings increased flexibility and financial planning by use of "pay as you go" models. The ability easily to vary capacity based on fluctuating demand makes the Cloud model more cost-effective. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis depending on the applications used, the cost, and the needs of the council and its customers.

The increasing requirements on security and compliance with updated data protection law (for example, General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) and other mandatory regulation could be managed through service agreement with providers, whilst the Council retains overall control rather than requiring additional resources from the local ICT team.

## **4.4 Warranty / Support SLAs**

Warranty and support for business-critical systems will be maintained. A risk-based approach will be adopted on a case by case basis for the warranty and support SLAs for other non-critical systems.

## **4.5 On Premise versus Cloud services**

Cloud services will always be considered as an alternative option to on premise hosting. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be dependent upon the needs of the council and its customers, the risk profile and whole-life costs.

## **4.6 Leveraging existing technology solutions**

The council will continue to use Microsoft and VMWare as the foundation for its corporate technology solution. Wherever possible and cost effective, it will seek to build on this in preference to other solutions in order to make the most of its existing products and licences, reduce integration

risk and deliver the highest level of support from its in-house ICT capability – both in terms of skills and software architecture.

#### **4.7 Buy, do not build**

The council will always look for industry-leading software solutions first. Internally developing bespoke solutions is higher risk and creates a future capability requirement that the council may not be able to support with reducing resources.

#### **4.8 Learning, improving and sharing**

The ICT Service will engage with other public-sector organisations about how to do it best, and what opportunities there are to collaborate and use each other's expertise.

#### **4.9 Enhanced customer service**

Customers will be able to access services through the channel of their choice and have a consistent user experience across all channels (known as "Omni-Channel" customer service). Access to on-line services will be available 24x7. Front-line employees will be provided with solutions that provide an accurate, consistent and relevant view of customers, properties and businesses.

### **5 ICT Strategic Approach**

This ICT Strategy sets out the council's approach to the following ICT areas:

- ICT Service Management
- Communications
- Architecture
- Applications
- Business Intelligence
- ICT Projects
- Security and Compliance
- ICT Governance
- Risk Management
- Measurement and reporting

#### **5.1 ICT Service Management**

The ICT Department will adopt and adapt the ITIL framework, which is a source of best practice for ICT service management. This will enable the council to:

- Deliver value for customers and improve customer relationships.
- Integrate the strategy for services with the business strategy and customer needs.
- Measure, monitor and optimise ICT services and service provider performance to reduce costs.
- Manage the ICT investment and budget, risks, knowledge capabilities and resources to deliver services effectively and efficiently.
- Enable the adoption of a standard approach to service management across the council.
- Enable change of the organisational culture to support the achievement of sustained success.
- Manage the ICT Contracts effectively and efficiently.

## 5.2 Communications

Unified communications (UC) refers to the approach of unifying telephony, web conferencing, instant messaging and presence (person's current status: for example, in a meeting, working from home, on a telephone call). It involves transforming desktop computers and telephones to a hybrid communications platform. Unified Communication brings all the available communication methods and processes together, making them accessible to users through a multimedia interface.

Some of the key benefits this will bring include:

- Enhanced access – UC operates across all communication devices (for example, PC/Laptop, smartphones, desktop and IP (Internet Protocol) telephones).
- Unified messaging ensures that all messages and email can be accessed in the chosen format.
- Improved flexibility - the options of using different method of communication means. customers and colleagues can communicate effectively from various locations (including home or remote working). It is also easier to relocate telephone lines to a different location, if required.
- Quicker Disaster Recovery – Cloud-based and externally-hosted UC services can minimise the impact on telephony in the event of an incident or disaster.

## 5.3 ICT Architecture

The ICT Architecture will need to be periodically reviewed. Inevitably, parts will need to be replaced over time and if nothing is done then each year more parts of the infrastructure will reach an unsupportable state, increasing the risk of significant business disruption due to technology failures or degradation of service.

While continuing to sweat ICT assets, the council faces the challenge of supporting legacy applications and servers. It is recognised that this can be a false economy. While replacement technologies are procured and installed the council also runs the risk of incurring additional costs for extended support from the manufacturers.

In light of these risks, the council must forecast the need for change in the application estate and put in place a programme of continuous improvement. The programme will need to be costed and budgeted for up to 2 years in advance of the expected need.

The new programme will deliver applications that are built to the latest architectural standards and therefore will provide highly available, scalable solutions that will be able to be adapted to changes in the business need. The focus will be on providing performance for the best value for money.

In order to leverage the best value for money option, the council will aim to rationalise the number of suppliers of hardware, software and ICT services. Commercial off the shelf products will be used, avoiding the use of bespoke solutions where possible. All solutions will be designed to be accessed from any location on any device with the appropriate level of security.

Buying pre-built systems integration from suppliers is preferable to building complex interfaces. Simplifying the number of suppliers used for technology and line of business applications is a key consideration in keeping costs down and simplifying process integration and information sharing across the council.



All new business systems procured must be browser-based without the need for browser plug-ins. The systems must either use and support web services or allow the use of robotic process automation (RPA). Systems must support Microsoft browsers (current version IE11). Being browser based provides NBC flexibility of delivery either Cloud or in-house.

## **5.4 Business Applications**

Better co-ordination of the acquisition and use of business applications across the council will enable improvement in the level of integration between systems, avoid duplication, and enable more effective prioritisation in planning the use of ICT resources. To deliver this, the council will require:

- Constructive engagement between the ICT Service and its internal and external customers to ensure that business requirements are properly understood. This will enable services to have a clear view of their application strategy and the timetable for the delivery of functionality, and allow the ICT Service to realise the opportunities to integrate systems across business areas to provide efficiencies and a better customer experience.
- All applications to have an identified roadmap that will keep the application on supported versions and not allow the application's performance to deteriorate to a level that is detrimental to business outcomes. Part of this process will be to identify the most appropriate support model for each application to deliver the best value for money. This may include internal, external or hybrid support models.
- A comprehensive forward plan of ICT works reflecting system roadmaps, which is fully funded and approved by the NBC Corporate Board.
- Where appropriate, consolidation of suppliers to improve integration and reduce costs.
- Legacy applications that are not being maintained by the vendors are replaced in alignment with existing/planned operating system platforms. Where feasible and efficient, applications will be shared with partner organisations.

Applications and services will be maintained within 2 major releases of the latest version and must be supported by the manufacturer at all times under their standard support agreements.

The ICT Service will seek to design and implement solutions that include cloud-based services or externally hosted and managed solutions where appropriate and cost effective.

## **5.5 Business Intelligence and Decision Support**

The goal of Business Intelligence (BI) is to provide information as a service to the council to support more effective decision making as well as being able to provide a framework for gathering data together from disparate unconnected lines of business applications.

Developing an effective Business Intelligence solution will:

- Solve the problem of fragmented data which includes multiple departments extracting information and processing it locally creating many "islands" of data across the council.
- Improve data quality and conformity by aligning different business areas within NBC that use similar data, and enhance overall efficiency of data analysis.
- Enable the council to use "Big Data" in all its forms to:
  - Prevent and detect fraud and errors.
  - Enhance customer services.
  - Support early intervention.

- Simplify the provision of services to residents by creating a secure single view of the services our residents use.
- Reduce the number of times the council has to capture the same data about a resident to drive our wide range of transactional systems.
- Enhance forward planning by the use of analytics aiding demand management and decision making.

## **5.6 Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery**

Business continuity planning concerns the processes and procedures that are carried out by the council to ensure that essential business functions continue to operate during and after a disaster. By having a business continuity plan (BCP), NBC has sought to protect mission-critical services. This type of planning will enable the re-establishment of services to a fully functional level as quickly and smoothly as possible. BCPs will be in place covering most or all of NBC's critical business processes and operations.

ICT disaster recovery planning covers the implementation of procedures and facilities for use when essential systems are not available for a period of time long enough to have a significant impact on NBC, including, but not limited to, denial of access to Guildhall, fire, lightning, power failure, hacking, data corruption or loss, change in legislation, unavailability of essential staff, and industrial action.

The ICT Service will develop and maintain appropriate DR plans to support the council's business continuity plans.

## **5.7 Security & Compliance**

Protection of NBC's assets and information is paramount and cannot be compromised if the council wishes to interconnect to other agencies such as DWP or work in shared service arrangements with other councils and organisations.

NBC needs to deliver services to its customers using a number of delivery channels enabling access to its services at their convenience wherever they are located and has and will maintain appropriate policies and procedures to enable compliant, secure, flexible working.

## **5.8 ICT Projects**

There are two types of ICT project at NBC:

- Business-driven, ICT-enabled projects (such as new business applications).
- ICT-driven projects (such as infrastructure upgrades).

The council has adopted a flexible and agile approach to delivering projects and both types of ICT project will need to adhere to this approach to ensure the limited resources are allocated to the prioritised projects.

Projects will be managed and co-ordinated through a central ICT project management function, allowing for the elimination of duplication and improved integration of solutions, through the use of common architecture and sharing of data.

ICT prioritisation and resource allocation to be agreed through the appropriate NBC Corporate Board.

Staff training must be included and budgeted for as part of all ICT-related projects.

## **5.9 ICT Governance**

The ICT Department will become more accountable to its customers through an effective ICT governance process that will oversee the department's business-as-usual performance, review service improvement plans, review current business project milestones, review risks and issues, and review and challenge the project pipeline, prior to investment proposals being submitted to NBC Corporate Board for approval.

These roles will be performed by a new governance group, known as the ICT Governance Board, which will report to NBC Corporate Board. Investment proposals will be routed through the appropriate governance process(es) for approval.

### **5.9.1 Related ICT Policies**

This ICT Strategy should be read in conjunction with the following ICT Policies:

- ICT Security Policy
- ICT Code of Practice Policy

## **5.10 Risk Management**

The ICT Service, as with other Services at the council, is under continual pressure to deliver costs savings year-on-year, at the same time as demand for ICT services and digital transformation continues to rise. Whilst savings must be realised through the transformation of ICT and other initiatives, including improved contracting and vendor management, new opportunities to realise savings through digital transformation present an opportunity to improve service and deliver savings. This places considerable risk into delivering the budget in such a dynamic environment.

The ambition to transform the ICT delivery model, at the same time as developing services and the infrastructure required to deliver new digital services is a challenge and comes with significant levels of risk.

ICT-related risks will be managed in line with the council's Risk Management Policy. ICT-related risks and their mitigating actions will be regularly reviewed and managed by ICT Service Management and the Corporate Improvement Board. If appropriate, significant risks will be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register.

ICT-related risks including those posed by data breach or loss will be managed in accordance with several policies and regulations including GDPR, PSN compliance, extended ICT Data Protection Training and ensuring that the Data Protection Manager is informed.

## **5.11 Measurement and reporting**

The ICT Service will develop clear metrics against which to measure ICT performance. SLAs will be maintained with third-party suppliers and partners. SLAs and OLAs will be implemented between the ICT Service and other council services and users. All ICT Service Contracts will be managed following ITIL principles.

## **6 Appendices**

### **6.1 Application List**

### **6.2 Project List**