

Developing an IT Strategy

1. Introduction

Members may be aware that the IT Strategy T&F Group was created by the S&R Committee at its meeting on 12 July 2018 and has the objective of reviewing and defining the Council's future direction in terms of the best use of IT to support the delivery of efficient and effective services to citizens.

2. Work undertaken

2.1 A 'visioning session', facilitated by SOCITM, took place at The Mill in Brimscombe Port in August where our current, and possible future, IT service based offer to citizens was discussed. Key points of consensus were that:

- Whatever steps we take should be consistent with our values as a council.
- We would adopt a stepped and managed way forwards – seeking firstly to fix the fundamentals of efficient day to day operation and reducing current levels of risk relating to failure of key IT components.
- We needed to manage information more effectively if we were to be more effective as a council.
- We need to understand the public's aspirations better regarding how they wish to interact with the council and be aware of any constraints that may limit their use of new channels.
- Success will be dependent upon strong leadership and hard choices. Some services may need to be scaled back or delivered differently in order to free up resources for the move to digital service delivery.
- We should seek to improve our on line offer to citizens by improving access, speed and convenience relating to self service delivery
- As far as possible, these services should make use of automation so that there is as little manual involvement as possible when providing standard processes
- A web based portal should enable access to a range of council services, although further consideration on the nature of this remained.
- The council must be aware of and build any new service around protecting access by those less IT enabled. However, it was understood that the Council would seek to encourage people, where appropriate, to use more cost-effective channels for accessing council services.
- The Council should consider ways to use IT to tackle social isolation, for example by encouraging community networking

2.2 T&F Group consideration, the group has since met three times and has drawn on the above in discussing our way forward and working with staff and SOCITM to review our options.

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It was agreed that our best approach should be the delivery of not one, but three linked strategies, making up our overall approach to the design and implementation of computer technology in service design and delivery. These are:

2.2(i) A Digital Strategy

- How we will apply IT in the shaping of our service offer to citizens and the service experience this will deliver
- How we will apply IT in shaping the way we work, making best use to enhance flexible and mobile working, where appropriate

2.2(ii) An Information Strategy

This will support the above by setting out our approach to defining and managing information as a corporate resource; we must be more rigorous in ensuring that our information is accurate, timely, available, in the right format to share between services and is processed in line with legislation and best practice.

2.2(iii) An ICT Strategy

This will address the underlying technology used to collect, store and use data. Ensuring that we are efficient and effective as an organisation, that we can continue to deliver services and that we stay compliant with data privacy legislation, protect citizens and maintain their trust in us as the holder of information about them, etc.

Progress

The above documents are currently being developed with the T&F Group by SOCITM and will be presented to S&R once completed and sign off by the T&F group. A timescale for this is set out in section 4.

3. Taking implementation forward

A key component of future digital provision will be a single portal from which citizens will gain access in a cost-effective, easy and convenient manner to the major services they choose to use.

Progress

A proof of concept has been identified, namely the housing service's repair reporting system, Northgate. A module upgrade in this will allow tenants to order their own repairs on line, track progress and receive a text reminder before the appointment to make sure they are at home for the job to be done. The T&F group have also asked that this is linked to an 'app', so that tenants may be able to access the above from their mobile phone

With the lessons learned from the above, we will be in a better position to know how we can take forward a digital service offer to citizens and the options within this.

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A further key issue identified through the T&F group is the need for a governance structure, i.e. how we will identify the need for change and the prioritising of projects relating to our IT. These will be linked directly to the three aspects of our strategy: identified in 2.2(i) to 2.2(iii), which are currently being developed.

Progress

This structure has been mapped and a proposal for its operation is being developed for T&F group approval.

4. T&F group milestones

The T&F group expects to be able to deliver the following key outputs:

Output	Delivery	To S&R committee
Governance Structure	January	April 2019
ICT Strategy	January	April 2019
Information Strategy	February	April 2019
Digital Strategy	March	April 2019
Proof of concept	Delivery by summer 2019	Update April, July/August

5. Final report to future S&R

A member's information evening is proposed for the 14th March 2019, for all council members to learn of the proposed way forward and an overview of the draft IT, information and digital strategies. This will also represent an opportunity for all members to have a say on the content of the final document.

Comments from members will then be taken and incorporated into a final and more comprehensive report to S&R on the 11th April 2019, summarising our future direction with IT in terms of service delivery, our offer to citizens and setting out the benefits this will provide whilst also addressing any concerns members may have raised previously.

For further information or any questions about this briefing, please contact the authors.