

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP – 30 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Title of report	<b>ICT SERVICE UPDATE</b>
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Purpose of report	To update the Policy Development Group on progress against the medium term plan outlined in the Council's current ICT strategy.
Council Priorities	Value for Money
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	As indicated in report.
Link to relevant CAT	None.
Risk Management	The Corporate Risk Register includes ensuring the Council has effective IT Systems and Procedures..
Equalities Impact Screening	None.
Human Rights	None.
Transformational Government	None.
Comments of Head of Paid Service	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Section 151 Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Comments of Monitoring Officer	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees	Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

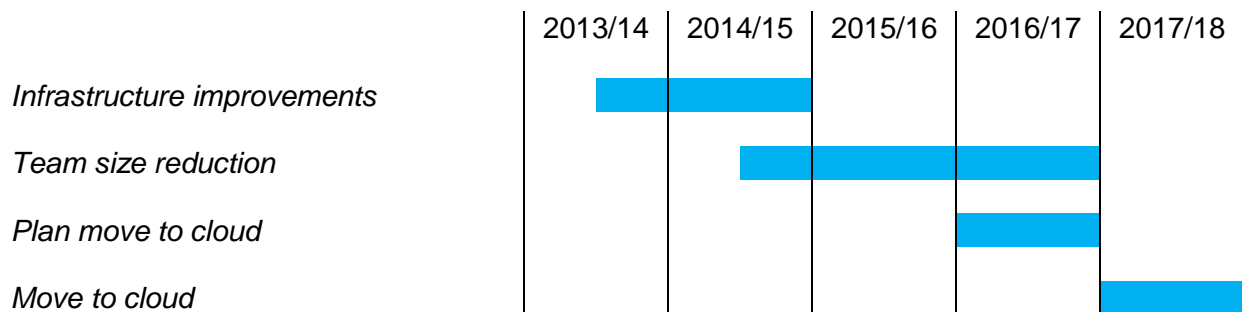
Background papers	ICT Strategy v1.01 Feb 2014
Recommendations	<b>THAT THE COMMITTEE NOTES PROGRESS AGAINST THE PLAN OUTLINED IN THE COUNCIL'S ICT STRATEGY</b>

## 1.0 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Council's current ICT strategy was approved by CLT in March 2014 and covers the period 2014-15 to 2017-18.
- 1.2 The strategy includes a medium term plan designed to bring the Council's ICT provision in line with standards and technologies deployed within the mainstream of the ICT industry, putting it somewhere ahead of the majority of Councils and public sector organisations that have typically tended to be somewhat behind private sector organisations in the adoption of new technologies.
- 1.3 This report summarises the progress against the medium term plan that has been made since the strategy was approved.

## 2.0 MEDIUM TERM PLAN

- 2.1 The chart below shows the planned broad focus for improvement until 2017/18:



- 2.2 The key points of the plan were as follows:

- The initial focus would be on implementing a number of technical and process improvements identified in a review of the ICT service which had been undertaken by the new ICT Team Manager in October 2013, starting immediately and using existing resources.
- The team size would then be reduced progressively as resource demand reduces, using the vacancy review process to avoid the cost and upheaval of redundancy (i.e. the intention was to reduce the team size by not backfilling roles as people leave).
- Contracts for the supply of ICT equipment and services would be renewed to co-terminate in 2017/18 to coincide with the expected end of economic life of current investments.
- Any large scale move to the cloud delivery model would be planned in 2016/17. There has been some debate in the industry around the security of cloud systems, although concerns have been addressed through various certification programmes and current Central

Government guidelines recommend the use of cloud systems. However, time needs to be allowed for CLT to properly understand and consider any risks.

### **3.0 PROGRESS TO DATE**

#### Team Size and Structure

- 3.1 Three members of the ICT team left the Council in September 2014 which presented the opportunity to expedite changes to the size and structure of the ICT team. Following a review of the ICT service a revised structure was put in place on 1 March 2015, with the team now better matched to the needs of the Council and cost savings of £30,000 made in the ICT 2015-16 budget.
- 3.2 New roles have a greater focus on business skills reflecting the need to closely align the work of the ICT team with operational requirements of front line services. The more technical aspects of the team's work are now being delivered through service contracts with key suppliers.
- 3.3 Recruiting in to the two new vacant roles has been challenging, but the roles have now been filled. Agency staff have been used to provide cover during the transitional period.

#### Improvements to ICT Technical Infrastructure

- 3.4 Work to replace the Council's servers, data storage, backup and disaster recovery infrastructure started in 2013-14 and completed 2014-15. Benefits of these upgrades include:
  - Increased reliability – less down time due to server outages
  - Improved performance – systems run quicker
  - Increased capacity – able to support more users without buying additional equipment
  - Reduced costs – due to lower third party support costs and time saving within the ICT team
  - Improved security – compliant with the latest Cabinet Office and industry requirements
  - Flexible – high degree of standardisation and virtual configuration means that infrastructure can be redeployed in accordance with changing demand
  - Reduced recovery times – both for routine recovery of data from backups and in a disaster scenario
  - Reduced carbon footprint – less than half the power consumption of the old equipment
  - Cloud ready – the majority of Council systems are now running on server and storage infrastructure that could be provisioned externally and accessed via the Internet, providing a sound foundation for the next wave of cost and service improvements
- 3.5 Work to upgrade 254 desktop computers from Windows XP to Windows 7 was completed in 2014-15, with 119 users benefitting from a more performant and lower cost virtual desktop environment (the so-called "thin PCs"). These changes were needed to ensure compliance with current security requirements and provide a platform that is compatible with currently available software.
- 3.6 Although the virtual desktop environment has delivered performance and cost benefits, there were some early issues with stability. The centralised nature of the system means that some issues can affect all users simultaneously. Improved support arrangements have been put in place with a specialist external provider in order to further stabilise the environment.

- 3.7 The next phase of infrastructure work is being progressed in 2015-16 and involves upgrading the Council's email system, intranet and network & telecoms systems. The critical nature of this infrastructure and the age of the existing equipment dictate a cautious approach to this work, which will be completed in four stages.
- 3.8 The first phase, which involves upgrading the Council's Internet connections is in progress, with staff already benefitting from dramatically improved Internet access speeds. In order to complete this phase, a backup line is currently being installed. The new line has ten times the capacity of the current line and has been specified to allow it to be increased in capacity ten times again. This will allow the line to support telephone calls and increased used of cloud services (i.e. ICT services accessed via the Internet).
- 3.9 Members will be able to take advantage of the upgraded Internet connection via an improved WiFi network which has been procured for the Council Chambers and rooms on the first floor of Stenson House.
- 3.10 The second phase will involve moving users' email accounts to Microsoft cloud servers, subject to a review of the Council's data security arrangements and final approval by CLT. Testing is at an advanced stage and it is anticipated that the roll out will commence in October 2014. As well as reducing costs, improving performance and enhancing security, this will allow officers and members of the Council easier remote access to their email, using personal devices if they choose to do so. This move is very much in line with central government strategy as (promoted by the Cabinet Office) and addresses specific concerns raised by users in the recent staff survey.
- 3.11 The third and fourth phases will involve replacing the Council's aging data network and telephone systems. Preparation for this has proved challenging due to the age of the existing equipment. Procurement is currently in progress and the work is planned for completion during Q4 2015-16.

#### Other Developments

- 3.12 Key contracts have been consolidated, renegotiated and termination dates aligned to allow cost-effective migration to cloud systems in 2017-18 should this prove to be economically advantageous and approved by CLT.
- 3.13 During 2014-15, the ICT Service supported the introduction of three key new business systems for Housing, Waste and Customer Services, as well as major improvements to a number of other systems such as IDOX Uniform, which has was updated to the latest versions. The ICT Team also provided technical and project support for the ICE Programme.
- 3.14 ICT user numbers increased by 13% and the number of supported devices by 34% during 2014-15, largely accounted for by the increased use of tablet computers.
- 3.15 An unexpected escalation in (global) cyber-security threat levels has necessitated increased focus on the Council's ICT security systems. Some improvements have already been made, funded through in year savings and further improvements are planned for 2016-17 subject to budgetary approval.

## **4.0 OUTCOMES**

- 4.1 Contract renegotiations, changes to the team and deployment of updated infrastructure allowed the ICT budget to be reduced by 7.5% (£70,000) for 2015-16, with further reductions expected for 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- 4.2 At the same time that costs have been reduced, user numbers have increased (see 3.15 above) leading to a reduction of the cost of ICT per user of 18% between 2013-14 and 2014-15, and three major new systems have been introduced.
- 4.3 User satisfaction, as measured by the ICT annual user survey, improved in all areas between 2013-14 and 2014-15. However, it is clear from the staff survey that this has fallen in 2015-16 because much of the improvement work has been done has been transparent to users and it is not until the 2015-16 programme of work completes that users will realise the performance and stability benefits of the new infrastructure that has been put in place. An action plan to address specific immediate areas of concerns has been created and Team Managers are receiving regular progress reports.

## **5.0 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 Team changes are some 18 months ahead of the plan agreed with CLT in March 2014.
- 5.2 The scope of the required ICT infrastructure improvements has proved somewhat greater than anticipated in March 2014 and team changes have delayed their implementation. However, good progress has been made and it is anticipated that all the planned work will complete by the end of 2015-16.
- 5.3 The focus in 2016-17 will be on consolidation following a period of rapid team and systems change. A key objective of 2016-17 will be to ensure that the service benefits of the changes are fully realised.
- 5.4 In parallel with this, detailed planning for migrating services to the cloud will be completed in 2016-17 for implementation in 2017-18.
- 5.5 By the end of 2015-16 the Council's ICT service will have transitioned from being several years behind that of other councils to being up to date. By the end of 2017-18, the Council's ICT service will be aligned with the mainstream of the ICT industry, including the private sector, putting it some years ahead of other councils.