RYEDALE
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

PART A:	**MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**
REPORT TO:	**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**
DATE:	**26 SEPTEMBER 2013**
REPORT OF THE:	**HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT,STREETSCENE,FACILITIES,ICT PHIL LONG**
TITLE OF REPORT:	**IT STRATEGY**
WARDS AFFECTED:	**ALL**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0   PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1   To outline plans for the IT strategy and investment of the Council over the next 5 years and provide a summary of estimated costs.

2.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   It is recommended that Members:
   (i)   note the report and its contents; and
   (ii)   endorse a report to the next meeting of this committee with details of the capital spend requirements for IT for recommendation to Council.

3.0   REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1   (i)   To plan IT budget provision inline with operational requirements.

       (ii)   To outline the strategy for the maintenance and development of the current IT environment.

       (iii)   To enable the delivery of future operational requirements of the Council.

4.0   SIGNIFICANT RISKS

4.1   Operational issues may result as the risk of system failure increases should hardware and applications not be replaced within recommended timescales.

4.2   Failure to develop the IT infrastructure may result in the Council being unable to meet increasingly strict data and network security requirements leaving the Council vulnerable to future legislative changes and potential prosecution

4.3   The progress achieved from past infrastructure investments will be undermined

should consideration not be given to long term IT budget provision.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

5.1   The report follows the Council resolution on Members IT from Council on 7 March 2013.

"a report will presented to the policy and resources committee on the 26 September 2013 detailing the future IT strategy and investment of the Council"

5.2   The financial, operational and environmental benefits of continuing to invest in modern and efficient IT infrastructure supports corporate aim 5 (to transform Ryedale District Council).

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

Current Position

6.1   The Council IT environment is typical to that of many local authority networks, with the use of core infrastructure, applications and systems common to the majority of Councils within the North Yorkshire region and beyond. This commonality provides the Council with the assurance of investing in secure, reliable systems whilst enabling the opportunity for knowledge and resource sharing between Councils. Annex A to this report details the key IT Systems and Infrastructure of the Council.

6.2   The current position has been achieved as a result of proactive investment in technologies to enable the efficient use and streamlining of systems, ensuring that the Council is well placed for delivering services to internal and external customers. Annex B provides a summary of the recent capital investment in IT at the Council. The relatively modern core infrastructure and recent upgrades to core systems provides a secure, reliable platform to meet the current challenges faced by the Council.

6.3   The IT team work closely with third party suppliers and system administrators across the organisation to support and develop key corporate systems. Regular upgrades to systems deliver new functionality and maintain performance to support efficient use of systems. The integration of systems and the sharing of data between service areas play a key role in streamlining and automating processes. Developing the Electronic Document Management (EDM), Environmental Health and Legal systems have delivered platforms to meet the current and future operational requirements of system users whilst substantially reducing printing requirements in these service areas.

6.4   More recent technology upgrades now provide the functionality to develop applications, providing convenient access to a wider range of data whilst meeting increasingly complex security and compliancy challenges, as the Council looks to rationalise further the number of systems, applications and suppliers used across the organisation. EDM, GIS (map based technologies) and recent advances in hardware support the increasing requirements for mobile working and the ability to access data 24 hours a day.

6.5   Developments in partnership working are proving to be increasingly beneficial for the Council. The commonality of systems provides access to specialist resources across an increasing number of service areas. Partnership working enables the development

of in-house skills through subsequent knowledge transfer processes and provides support and resilience to service areas during key operational periods and events. This potentially enables the opportunity for the Council to provide support to other public bodies in areas where in-house skills and knowledge have been sufficiently developed, providing potential income streams for the Council.

Comparing the IT service across the North Yorkshire Region

6.6   In August 2012 North Yorkshire County Council and Hambleton District Council commissioned Castlerigg Consulting to explore current IT strategies, infrastructure and service provision of the County Council, selected district councils and a number of other public sector organisations operating in North Yorkshire as part of a wider consultation process.

6.7   Using the data received from each of the 9 organisations during the consultation process, Castlerigg were able to establish a snapshot of the current position of IT service provision for each organisation and in turn a comparison within the North Yorkshire region. Though each organisation had its own priorities and specific challenges, the feedback from the study was able to demonstrate that, at the time the consultation was undertaken, IT service provision at Ryedale District Council was in a significantly stronger position than at the majority of other organisations. This is despite the budgetary challenges facing the Council and the comparatively small IT team within the organisation.

6.8   Although only a snapshot, the study provided valuable feedback to the Council both as a comparison to other organisations in the North Yorkshire region and as an indication of IT service provision locally. The outcome of which provided added assurance that:

- The current strategy for the investment in IT infrastructure and related systems will continue to provide a secure and reliable platform for delivering services.
- The current IT service levels within the Council meet the requirements of all users.
- IT as a service is well placed to meet the current operational challenges of the Council.

The Vision for the IT Service

6.9   The Vision for IT is for the service to:

Act as an enabler for the authority, providing unified, cost effective, technical and sustainable solutions supporting the Councils strategic direction

- ICT is a facilitator and will continue to:
- support cost savings through self service, integrated systems and a customer first focused approach.
- support the strategic direction of the Council and key objectives of the Corporate strategy.
- enable a reduced footprint (actual and environmental) across the organisation.
- assist the Council in responding to challenges presented by central government and other public bodies.
- identify and manage risk.

The Aims for IT at the Council

6.10   The IT service aims to:

- Enable front line services through having the IT tools and systems to enable quality service delivery and achievement of Corporate objectives.
- Enable staff to maximise the use of systems in order to minimise the cost of services and be efficient.
- Support service staff in collecting information once and managing it effectively through the channel shift agenda, whilst ensuring a variety of communication methods meets with customer's expectation.
- Provide advice and assistance to services during the implementation of new systems and maintenance/upgrade of their applications.
- Provide a response to all user support requests on relevant IT systems and applications between 8am and 6pm within 3 hrs.
- Provide staff and members with the ability to access back office functions remotely, whether at home or other place of work through secure network connections.
- Support Members as they direct local democracy and service delivery. As a minimum, technology will be used to enhance communication and to provide supporting information through electronic channels.
- To maintain a core platform using standardised software through our thin client environment for all users to communicate easily and share their expertise.
- Promote shared and effective use of technology and information to encourage cost savings, enhanced information sharing and reliable services to the public.

Future Strategy 2013/14 - 2015/16

6.11   The use of IT underpins every aspect of service delivery in a modern Council to some extent and the dependency on IT has increased substantially over recent years as a result. IT systems have transformed the operational landscape of the Council and consequently highlighted the necessity for future planning alongside the management and development of the current operational environment.

6.12   However there is significant uncertainty regarding the organisational changes the authority will need to make regarding future service provision. The Council has been provided with an indicative RSG for 2014/15 and 2015/16. The figures show major cuts in RSG, with particular uncertainty regarding further reductions to the 2015/16 year's figures and future finance in the following years. As a result the Council is under significant financial pressure and the future shape of the Council is unclear

6.13   The future IT strategy reflects a pragmatic approach to this uncertainty. Core IT infrastructure is reasonably modern, secure and reliable in the short term and as such strategic investment over the next two years seeks to consolidate and maintain current applications and infrastructure.
- The current strategy for developing better use of IT will continue over the next 2 years, as we approach a major refresh of the infrastructure in 2015.
- Previous investments in 2005 and 2010 delivered new technologies to support the streamlining of the organisation and new ways of working through more efficient use of IT. This process will continue whilst maintaining the core infrastructure needed to support the operational requirements of the business.

6.14   The most recent investment in IT in 2010 provided the platform to support much of the organisational change undertaken during the last 2-3 years. The projects undertaken during this period demonstrated the potential impact of making better use of IT and the efficiency savings that can be achieved as a result. The benefits of which are still being realised across the organisation, though the technology that underpins the service delivery is already subject to the forward planning process for hardware and application renewals, such is the life cycle of the IT infrastructure and

the rapid advances in technology. As a result it would be prudent for the council to plan ahead, to ensure resources are allocated for meeting the next phase of infrastructure renewals in order to support future service delivery requirements and maintain a robust, secure and reliable IT environment.

6.15 A re-developed corporate web site and intranet, due to go online later in 2013/14, will open up further avenues for development as the Council moves to a self-managed platform, providing the opportunity to develop new functionality for both internal and external customers. The outcome of which should deliver significant savings to the Council as a result of reduced support and maintenance costs. This is one of many initiatives being undertaken using internal resources to address a specific operational requirement. The reliance on third parties from both the private and public sector will continue to play a major role in IT service provision but increasingly the Council is looking at new ways of providing specific technical solutions using very low cost or free technologies, in keeping with similar projects across the wider public sector.

6.16 Ryedale has a long history of collaborative working with a broad cross-section of third parties in both the public and private sector. Most recently this potential has been successfully demonstrated with Scarborough Council, with a series of projects being undertaken utilising joint resources, working across a number of systems and service areas. Collaborative working is likely to be at the forefront of future IT decision making, in order to meet the escalating budget pressures across the public sector and the increasing demands on corporate systems.

7.0   IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:
   a)   Financial
        Estimated costs are summarised for each future area of investment (Annex C) but at this time there is no budgetary provision in place.

   b)   Legal
        It is essential for the Council to fully comply with current and future security and compliance obligations. A breach of these duties exposes the Council to significant risk.

   c)   Other (Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Crime & Disorder)
        There are no equalities implications associated with this strategy.

Phil Long – Head of Environment

Author: Tim Sedman, IT Infrastructure Manager
Telephone No: 01653 600666 ext: 378
E-Mail Address: tim.sedman@ryedale.gov.uk

Background Papers:
None