## CORPORATE ICT STRATEGY

**Report By:**   DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1.      To seek comments on the proposed Corporate ICT Strategy.

### Financial Implications

2.      These are expected to meet from existing budgets.

### Background

3.      The proposed ICT Strategy sets out the key issues for the future provision of an effective ICT service for the authority.   It is important to note that the ICT Strategy is essentially a technical document.  A copy of the Corporate ICT Strategy has been sent separately to Members and is available to Members of the Public on request.

4.      This is the first time a detailed strategy document has been developed to set out the plans for future years on how the service must develop and adapt to meet the business needs of the organisation. Herefordshire Council and its partners are facing a growing demand for and investment in new ICT solutions to both enable and improve the delivery of services.

5.      Much improvement has been achieved over the past 2-3 years through securing capital funding for major infrastructure programmes; a key example is the Community Network Upgrade Programme which is delivering a modern network infrastructure without which further improvements could not be made.

6.      There is significant work remains to be done.  Much of the current hardware / server infrastructure that is in use across the Authority is no longer covered by the manufacturers' warranty and requires consolidation and replacement. This has mostly come about as a consequence of the complex funding model used for ICT Services which operates as a trading account with the rest of the organisation. ICT projects have been commissioned by individual Directorates and the resultant technical infrastructure has been optimised for individual project requirements rather than as a sustainable, longer-term solution for the Council as a whole. The multiplicity of servers, operating systems, database software and applications make the existing technical environment costly, difficult to maintain and difficult to resource due to the wide variety of skills needed.

7.      The Council's current and future service requirements dictate that a flexible working solution should be in place as soon as possible. Again the technical infrastructure needs substantial work to achieve this objective. In particular it will be necessary to standardise the desktop computing environment so that hot-desking / home – working models can be introduced. Many of the older IT software applications in use

are also not suitable for flexible working models and will restrict the ability to implement flexible working for some staff if they are not replaced.

8.  The proposed ICT Strategy is a key building block which enables delivery of many of the business needs of the Herefordshire Connects programme. The delivery and resourcing of the ICT Strategy will need to be closely co-ordinated and aligned with Herefordshire Connects to ensure that its component parts are available when they are needed.

9.  The growing importance of disaster recovery in managing the corporate risk and recent inspection and audit recommendations whilst recognising the considerable progress made over the past two years, both mean that progress still needs to be made, only adding to the pressures on the existing infrastructure.

10. Changes in legislation and government policy are adding to the challenge of providing secure, efficient public services electronically.

11. The strategy does not make reference to the continuing work with schools.  The Scrutiny review of ICT is likely to propose specific recommendations about the relationship.  The Council continues to discuss specific requirements with schools.

12. Cabinet considered the draft document at its meeting on 14th December.  It noted comments already received from Corporate Management Board in relation to the need for a introduction to set the document in context to reflect its relationship to the medium term financial strategy and to update points of detail.   It therefore commended the strategy for further consultation before being confirmed by Cabinet.

13. On the 22nd December the Strategic Monitoring Committee met to consider the recommendations arising out of the ICT review.  These are attached as appendix 1. It will be important for the strategy to take account of the recommendations which are Implemented.

14. The proposed ICT Strategy is based on a technical infrastructure that employs two data centres for resilience and back-up requirements. Recent developments with the Council's Accommodation Strategy indicate that medium-term availability of the new data centre in Plough Lane may be a challenge. The consequences of this have not yet been assessed or incorporated into the proposed ICT Strategy.

15. ICT Services is heavily dependent for its funding by charging for its services which are delivered as part of commissioned projects managed by the Corporate Programmes department. In the event that Council policy on project management determines in the future that project management services would not form part of the scope of functions performed by the Council, ICT Services ability to offer an effective service to the organisation may be adversely affected if this funding mechanism ceases to exist.

16. Significant risk exists both in operational, financial and reputational terms in the event that the Council does not invest in key ICT projects to provide a suitable and sustainable infrastructure for service delivery and disaster recovery.

17. The proposed ICT Strategy has not yet been issued for consultation either within ICT Services or across the Council. As and when this consultation takes place, changes to the strategy are anticipated to be necessary.

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Jane Jones, Director of Corporate and Customer Services on 01432 260042

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT any comments received by Members be taken into account as part of the consultation on the strategy before it returns to Cabinet.**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None identified

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