

Darlington Borough Council

# ICT Strategy

2014 - 2016



# Introduction

The three year timescale for this latest ICT Strategy sits within a very uncertain period for local government. Increasing financial pressures will continue to have a major influence on the Council's plans for service delivery and aspirations for the Borough and these pressures will no doubt exceed the three year lifetime of this strategy.

Year on year budget reductions are becoming the norm. However, within such gloom lie opportunities, particularly in terms of the possibilities that ICT solutions can bring.

All Council services rely on ICT systems in some form. This will range from front-office, mobile and web-based applications, to the less obvious areas where technology underpins and plays a supporting role for front-line service delivery.

Effective targeting of ICT can be the critical factor or catalyst for service improvements and reductions in the time and cost of delivery.

Therefore, it is precisely in such challenging times when our use of ICT needs to be more effective than it has ever been before. ICT is not an overhead or cost burden, but an enabling asset for service transformation and efficient and effective on-going service delivery. None of the Council's wide range of services is without ICT and all services can make more use of existing ICT assets as well gaining additional benefits by carefully targeting any new ICT investments.

This ICT Strategy encompasses the strategic architecture, governance and ICT service development requirements of the Council and this builds on the existing Systems and Information Strategy.

Combined, these form the overall ICT requirements of the Council in supporting the Council's Corporate Plan – One Darlington Perfectly Placed.

# Achievements So Far

Of the nineteen project strands identified in the previous strategy sixteen (84%) were completed by the end of the current strategy term and two projects are continuing to run (Desktop Roll-Out and Network Implementation). The one remaining project was ceased (Business Continuity Management Certification). In addition, other strategic projects which were not originally identified in the previous strategy have been completed in the same period.

This success not only provides a foundation for on-going service delivery and strategic ICT projects to come, but also gives a high degree of confidence in the ability of the Council to deliver its ICT programme as envisaged, whilst recognising the pressures this places on the ICT Service itself. This confidence is further supported when considering the large number of service specific projects which have also been completed during this time.

The previous strategy outlined a vision for a typical end-user and the majority of this vision is now in place, with some remaining elements being delivered as part of the on-going desktop roll-out and planned single sign-on projects.

The aim for a typical ICT user is to be able to securely access their desktop and telephony services from different locations within the Council and via mobile and home-based technologies, with wireless access where appropriate. A standard and secure method of authentication to systems will be in place and a centralised approach to data storage and backup will ensure that the same information is available regardless of the point of access. Wherever the user accesses ICT, the facilities will be the same and have all good practice governance elements built in.



# Challenges Ahead and Principles to be Applied

There are many challenges facing the Council, with financial pressures being foremost and affecting all aspects of its business. Therefore, affordability, efficiency, target investments and maximising the use of existing assets are all factors which will be uppermost when considering technology related initiatives:

**Principle 1 Services should put technology at the core of their service transformation and appropriateness and value for money should be tests for any technology related business case.**

The continued financial pressures also give rise to uncertainty about the future, in terms of the scope, share and delivery of Council services. This increases the likelihood of service commissioning and shares services, together with out-sourcing and in-sourcing of services as economies dictate. For those involved in the design, procurement and commissioning or delivery of future services, it is clear that they need to be suitably competent in their use of ICT systems to maintain an appropriate efficiency and effectiveness to their work, both alone and in collaboration with others.

**Principle 2 Those using ICT systems should have the correct technologies to aid them in their work and an appropriate level of skill to use these effectively.**

The Council's Customer Strategy acknowledges the benefits technology can bring in terms of both improving service delivery and reducing cost. Channel shift to more cost effective methods is a key aim of this strategy and is seen as a viable route to the continued delivery of a wide range of Council services against a backdrop of on-going reductions in resources. Moving forward, this continues to be a major programme for the Council.



**Principle 3 Migrating services on-line should be the default position of any procedural/service development or review, or procurement of ICT systems, and an end-to-end approach should be adopted.**

To give an oversight of all ICT projects and ensure the correct targeting of finite resources, the development of the Systems and Information Strategy has given clarity to the Council's information system requirements and highlighted the differences in approach and priorities across the Council in terms of existing and future ICT systems. This process has also facilitated the development of an ICT Workplan which identifies projects, resources and timescales for delivery.

**Principle 4 Existing ICT assets should be reviewed, rationalised and exploited as far as possible to maximise gain and eliminate waste.**

Another output from this work has been the identification of common corporate themed projects for inclusion in the ICT Workplan e.g. mobile working. These represent development areas that have been identified by several services and therefore have a corporate priority and in some cases the potential to be Council-wide systems.

**Principle 5 A corporate approach should be considered where several services have similar ICT requirements.**

The success of the architecture programme is that it provides a resilient and secure platform on which to do business and in-line with the end-user vision above, this extends out to the desktop and mobile world beyond, thus building availability and flexibility into the overall approach. Married together with the service based projects, this allows the underlying technology to become the enabler for business.

**Principle 6 Information technology should be the enabler of business and not an obstacle. It should be resilient and secure.**




# The Five Strategic ICT Priorities 2014 -2016

This latest version of the Council's ICT Strategy continues the themes laid down previously, but with the detail behind each theme reflecting current requirements and trends. The six principles defined earlier will be applied throughout these themes.

## ICT Service Development

Over the period of the previous strategy the ICT service itself has matured significantly in terms of the development of individuals and the service.

Investment in project management and service management frameworks, together with structure and discipline associated with working to international standards has paid dividends and will continue to be applied as part of the delivery of the ICT Service Improvement Plan which encompasses and co-ordinates all such service development activities.



## The Five Strategic ICT Priorities 2014 -2016

## ICT Governance

The role and remit of the System and Information Governance Group has been reviewed and there is increased ownership, visibility and challenge of ICT projects and the ICT Workplan. Delivery of the Workplan is underway and a renewed process of monitoring and managing exceptions is part of the remit of the Governance Group.

By overseeing both the Systems and Information Strategy and the ICT Workplan, the System and Information Governance Group has visibility of all ICT related projects and the ability to support or challenge projects and associated spend, as well as the overall direction of ICT developments in general.

An equivalent process is in place at Stockton Council, therefore the overall commitment against the shared ICT resource is transparent and managed as one co-ordinated process. Again, exceptions and resourcing conflicts across both Councils are managed by ICT Services and the two Council's respective ICT strategic groups. In addition, Darlington's Audit Committee provide an additional element of scrutiny and awareness in relation to the ICT Strategy and associated programme of activities.

## ICT Strategic Architecture

Many of the major elements of the architecture programme have been completed successfully, with others still to come on-line. Often these very complex and joint projects for both Stockton and Darlington go unseen as they relate to "behind the scenes" architecture, but it is these significant and complex interrelated systems that keep the Council(s) operating and its information safe and compliant with Government standards.

The threat of obsolescence in information technology also brings with it challenges in terms of on-going refresh programmes, but often these give rise to opportunities both in terms of new features and additional savings.

## Business Development

Clearly the promotion of the benefits of ICT is not solely remit of the System and Information Governance Group. Following the themes and principles of this strategy, services themselves must take a leading role in ensuring that their ICT systems are fit for purpose and being used effectively. Governance Group members, service based ICT representatives and ICT Services can all assist and support this process.

The development of the Systems and Information Strategy has given focus to what is important to the Council and what is required in terms of ICT systems and technologies within services. These include:

- Mobile Working Solutions
- People Services ICT Systems
- Single Point of Contact
- Channel Management

Combined, these corporate priorities along with service based developments and strategic ICT architecture plans form the overall ICT Workplan

## ICT Competent Workforce

Our workforce must be developed so that they have the confidence and competence to respond to new demands, to challenge existing ways of working and to develop new solutions to problems with the technology available to them. As the Council's resource base and staffing numbers reduce, we must ensure that users of ICT systems are able to maximise these investments through their effective use. Similarly, our Elected Members also need the skills to access information and communicate effectively.

The desktop roll-out project is giving IT users access to a number of new training materials and methods. However, to maintain awareness, keep skills fresh and remain efficient, ICT users need time within the work environment to acquire new skills or update existing ones. This may be on standard office software or specific applications used within their service. Similarly, ICT users need to make their own efforts to understand and explore the features of new systems and not merely transfer old methods into a new world.



# How will we achieve these Priorities?

Delivering these priorities is a joint responsibility of Council services and ICT Services, with contributions from partner agencies and suppliers. The System and Information Governance Group governs the overall programme of delivery and approves any changes to the ICT Workplan.

## ICT Service Development

All ICT service improvement activities are identified in the ICT Service Improvement Programme and this is managed & monitored by the ICT Management Team, supported by the ICT Process Excellence & Planning Officer. This Service Improvement Group meets monthly and reviews the progress and priorities of this extensive and continual programme which is resourced through a combination of business as usual activities and planned projects within ICT.

The latest version of the ICT Service Improvement Programme can be found at <http://xip/ourservices/ict/ictsip>

## ICT Governance

The Council's ICT Workplan is managed by the ICT service, both at an operational and strategic level. The Workplan and supporting detailed project & resource plans are what drives the daily project activities of the ICT service and consequently form part of on-going project monitoring, team meetings and staff 1:1s, as well as the customer engagement with the services concerned. Monthly progress reports are presented to the System and Information Governance Group, which highlight project progress, movements, additions and exceptions. In addition, progress updates on the delivery of the ICT Strategy are given to Audit Committee on a six monthly basis and an overview of progress in relation to the Efficiency and Resources Portfolio (which includes ICT) is regularly presented to full Council.

The latest version of the Workplan can be found at <http://xip/ourservices/ict/ictworkplan>

## ICT Strategic Architecture

The ICT Strategic Architecture programme is managed by ICT Services and consists of new strategic technology projects which have come about for a number of reasons, including; service requirements, industry new technologies, performance enhancements and technology obsolescence & refresh. Often, these developments are undertaken in conjunction with Stockton Council as this reflects the converged ICT infrastructure and on-going partnership between the two Councils.

Although there are a variety of sources of resources to fund such projects, often these involve reworking existing revenue expenditure to re-target funds or through leveraging efficiencies.

Presentation and discussion on new strategic technologies, together with project funding takes place at the System and Information Governance Group, with wider communications and campaigns being made across the Council as appropriate.

An outline plan which shows the projects for the coming year can be found at <http://xip/ourservices/ict/ictsunburst>





## Business Development

The business development needs in relation to information and the supporting technologies has been identified as part of the development of the Systems and Information Strategy. These have informed this ICT Strategy and have also given rise to the Council's ICT Workplan. Although the Workplan is being monitored in its own right, the individual members of the System and Information Governance Group have a role to play back in their respective Service Groups to champion their information and system requirements and aligning these to the six guiding Principles defined in this ICT Strategy.

Identifying business development needs in such a co-ordinated manner allows opportunities for shared working with Stockton Council to be identified early in the decision making process.

The current Systems and Information Strategy can be found at <http://xip/ourservices/ict/dbcsis>

## ICT Competent Workforce

The development of competent ICT skills can be through various means. For example, a number of support methods are being delivered as part of the existing desktop refresh project, ranging from on-line self-help, to classroom delivery of training. Similarly, when services implement a new application or major release, a decision is taken on the best approach to training based on existing skills, changes in functionality and service delivery. Such training requirements will be subject to their own delivery programme at that point in time and monitored by the service concerned.

In addition, there is also a need to identify opportunities to further exploit the investment in technologies, particularly those desktop based. Service based "gurus" could be developed to provide a "go to" person for assistance with the more complex features of MS Office products for example.

As well as the above, the ICT service also has its own comprehensive training programme which captures the changes and developments in both technical and application landscapes as well as recognised ICT service delivery and best practice methodologies.



