

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
28 OCTOBER 2020**

ITEM NO.

ICT STRATEGY – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The Chief Officer's Board (COB) is required to report six monthly to the Audit Committee on progress in relation to the implementation of the ICT Strategy.

Summary

2. The current ICT Strategy focusses on three strategic priorities:
 - ICT Governance and Service Development
 - ICT Strategic Architecture
 - Council Service Development and Transformation
3. This report summarises progress on the main activities within each of these priorities. The report also makes special mention of the ICT activities undertaken in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that progress on the implementation of the ICT Strategy be noted.

Reasons

5. The recommendation is supported to provide the Audit Committee with evidence to reflect on progress in delivery of the Council's ICT Strategy.

**Ian Miles
Assistant Director – Xentrall Shared Services**

Background Papers

Darlington ICT Strategy 2017

Ian Miles – Extension 157012

S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no specific crime and disorder impact.
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well being impact.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	Some of the initiatives contained within ICT Strategy will help contribute towards the carbon reduction commitments.
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	Financial implications will be considered in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. This report does not affect the policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The ICT strategy supports the business of the Council in delivering ODPP
Efficiency	There will be efficiency savings generated as a result of implementing the ICT Strategy. The introduction of new technology is key to providing efficiency savings within Council services.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

6. Progress on the themes of this revised ICT Strategy are described below.

ICT Governance and ICT Service Development

7. The Systems and Information Governance Group (which is the Chief Officers Board of Assistant Directors but chaired by the Managing Director for this purpose) undertakes an ICT Strategy monitoring role as well as overseeing and approving the ICT Work Plan, which covers all service based and corporate ICT projects. As well as this forum, regular updates on major ICT projects are also given to the Managing Director and the Xentrall Executive Board on which he sits.
8. Since the last update to Members last November, ICT Services have continued to pass PCI DSS quarterly tests. These are the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards. ICT service continue to be certified to use PSN (the Government's Public Services Network). ICT have been externally audited by BSI and successfully re-certified to both ISO 27001:2013 Information Security Management System and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System standards. Earlier this year ICT were also audited and re-certified to be part of the Government's Public Services Network (PSN). This allows Council services to communicate and transfer information to and from Government departments securely.
9. Since the last update to Members, ICT Services have also achieved full assurance for an internal audit on Software Controls.
10. In terms of ICT service development and related to the two ISO certifications ICT hold, all ICT service improvement activities are identified in the ICT Service Improvement Programme and this continues to be managed and monitored by the ICT Management Team, supported by the ICT Security & Process Excellence Officer. This group 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 majority of these activities relate to internal ICT procedures and standards which ultimately deliver improvements to the services ICT users receive.

ICT Strategic Architecture

11. Progress has been made on a number of architecture projects during the last year, many of which take place behind the scenes. As well as the Covid-19 pandemic, we must not forget the cyber incident which struck Redcar & Cleveland Council in February. Xentrall ICT provided on-site support at Redcar immediately following the incident and we used what information we had about the attack to confirm our own defence systems and methods. Notable architecture projects have included:
 - (a) The completion of the roll-out of the new wide-area voice and data network, providing increased speeds and lower latency, especially at remote sites.
 - (b) Upgrades to the Council's firewall and perimeter defence infrastructure to maintain high levels of security and protection.

- (c) Upgrading all file servers to Windows 2019, giving improved file access response to users as well as other behind-the-scenes infrastructure management benefits.
- (d) Improvements to the PC remote connectivity and security systems allowing continued secure access to Council systems and improved performance for home workers.
- (e) The procurement and implementation of a new contact centre telephony system.
- (f) A detailed review of the Council's ICT backup methodology.
- (g) Continuing with the developments surrounding the migration and deployment of the Microsoft Office 365 suite of systems and associated platform across the Council.
- (h) Completing the vast majority of a replacement programme for ageing Windows 7 desktops, with new Windows 10 devices being installed.

Council Service Development and Transformation

- 12. The service-based Information & Systems Strategies inform the ICT Work Plan and this drives customer projects within the ICT service. As well as the management and monitoring of individual projects, the overall ICT Work Plan is monitored on a monthly cycle at the Systems and Information Governance Group (as described in paragraph 7 above). These ICT projects underpin many of the Council's business change activities.
- 13. As well as some of the central ICT architecture projects listed above, a further twenty service specific projects have been completed since the last progress report to this committee.
- 14. As part of the Microsoft Office 365 roll-out and the features this brings, ICT have also been working with the Council's Information Governance Manager to review existing record management practices and the identification of improved methods through the exploitation of features within Office 365.

COVID-19 Response

- 15. As reported in the Xentrall Annual Report to Cabinet in July, ICT has been fundamental in the Council's ability to respond to the global pandemic. The ICT service has been very busy since March, mobilising both Darlington and Stockton Councils and this at the same time as protecting and mobilising our own services and staff and running all the vital day-to-day services that the Councils rely on, but often go unseen. Like the rest of Xentrall, ICT did this while self-isolating and social distancing like everyone else.
- 16. A snapshot of these ICT activities and achievements since March is shown below:
 - Rapidly rolling out 140 laptops across Darlington and Stockton and 400 Jabber iPhone installs, taking us to over 2,500 people using softphones instead of physical handsets

- Implementing Microsoft Teams to the whole workforce across both Councils to enable better collaborative and remote working
- Intensive behind the scenes work on the network, firewall, antivirus, remote connectivity infrastructure that supports a massive increase in remote workers, from originally around just over 100/day to now thousands
- Mobilising our Service Desk and associated systems to being home-based and assigning additional staff to help manage the upsurge in calls, with ICT staff pulling together and taking on roles they haven't previously experienced
- Scouring suppliers for ICT kit, including elusive laptops and headsets (the pasta and toilet roll of the ICT world at that time)!
- Delivering innovative IT solutions to enable both Darlington & Stockton Support Hubs to become a reality
- Remaining calm and level-headed throughout and ensuring the wrong decisions weren't taken due to pressures and urgency and a measured approach and the longer-term view prevailed, thus keeping the Council's systems and data safe
- Delivering innovative solutions to keep some large older service applications running and available in a remote working environment
- Providing a stream of user information and self-help guides to support home working
- Keeping all the normal systems and services running that you'd expect on a daily basis from ICT, including upgrades, COVID-19 hot-fixes to systems and year-end processing
- Continuing to deliver Council-wide changes behind the scenes to improve the remote working experience whilst mitigating the risk associated with applying this to a fully remote workforce

17. Since the UK restrictions came into place Xentrall ICT have continued to provide a full range of services and underpin the vital functions of the Councils, whilst in addition, stepping up and providing additional services specifically in response to the pandemic situation. None of what we have achieved collectively could have been done without the dedication of all the teams across Xentrall and the years of investment in our systems, processes and most importantly the professionalism and skill of our staff. So much effort and additional hours have been put in and we continue to do so to ensure everything runs as seamlessly as possible.

18. As well as supporting the original emergency planning aspects of the pandemic, Xentrall ICT are also integral in any recovery planning and activities taking place. ICT Services will continue to also help both Councils retain the benefits that have been gained through mass home working and to help exploit the technology enabled opportunities and innovation that have also arisen across services.

Outcome of Consultation

19. There has been no formal consultation in the preparation of this report.