

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
29 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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:
 - (a) ICT Governance and Service Development
 - (b) ICT Strategic Architecture
 - (c) Council Service Development and Transformation
3. This report summarises progress on the main activities within each of these priorities.

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

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.
Council Plan	The ICT strategy supports the business of the Council in delivering the Council Plan
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 the ICT Strategy are described below. The strategy itself is to be reviewed.

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 Group Director of Operations) 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, updates on major ICT projects are also given to the Group Director of Operations and to the meetings of the Xentrall Executive Board on which she sits.
8. In terms of ICT service development and related to the two ISO certifications ICT hold for Information Security and Quality Management Systems, 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

9. Progress has been made on a large number of significant architecture projects during the last six months, many of which take place behind the scenes. Notable projects have included:
 - (a) Further upgrades to the Council's security and protection systems, including the system which applies security patches to all servers.
 - (b) Completed a review and procurement to upgrade our existing virtual servers and storage resulting in increased capacity and storage, taking us to 2024/25.
 - (c) Planning improvements to our disaster recovery site at Stockton based upon the freeing up of some servers from the upgrade at the main Darlington site (as above).
 - (d) Reviewed and renewed contracts for our on-site backup platform and also deployed a cloud-to-cloud off-site backup solution.
 - (e) Procured and installed new UPS batteries at the main Darlington data centre which removes the risk of "brown-outs" and supports the starting of the generator in "black-outs".
 - (f) Completed the upgrade of wireless infrastructure at remote sites which had been initially delayed due to the pandemic and difficulties with site access.

- (g) Continued developments surrounding the migration and deployment of the Microsoft Office 365 suite of systems and associated platform across the Council. Currently this is focussing on the file management aspects of Teams.

Council Service Development and Transformation

10. 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.
11. As well as some of the central ICT architecture projects listed above, a further nine service specific projects have been completed since the last progress report to this committee. These have included various system upgrades, plus:
 - (a) Streetscene Replacement Refuse Equipment Request Management – An in-house development to support the fulfilment of requests from residents for refuse & recycling equipment. The solution has been developed in such a way that other services could be brought on board by DBC services with little input from ICT Services.
 - (b) Customer Services Telephony Review - A replacement of the telephony system used by both Darlington & Stockton Customer Services and the ICT Service Desk, resulting in an improved suite of customer engagement and intelligent automation solutions which makes it easier to manage and progress calls from members of the public.
 - (c) Qmatic Appointment Module Implementation - Additional module to the existing Qmatic system to allow members of the public to book appointments with the Council and receive text/email reminders and support contactless queue ticketing.
12. As part of the Microsoft Office 365 roll-out and the features this brings, ICT have 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. The migration of user files and folders to OneDrive is now complete and Microsoft Teams sites have been trialled with the Web, Systems and Information Governance teams and are now being rolled out to Democratic and Transport teams.
13. Xentrall ICT are continuing to support the Council during the pandemic as services continue to work in an office/home hybrid situation and assistance will be given to any recovery planning and activities which take place.

Outcome of Consultation

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