**AUDIT COMMITTEE
26 APRIL 2023**

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 revised 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 2022

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.
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 three strategic themes of the ICT Strategy is 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 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.   The ICT service is preparing for a full 3-year recertification in both Information Security Management and Quality Management Systems, and the latter will be to the new 27001:2022 standard. The ICT service has completed its annual submission for PSN (Public Services Network) certification and awaits the outcome which is due shortly. In addition, all fourteen control inspections undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team over the last six months have been classified as "green" on a red/amber/green rating.

9.   In terms of ICT service development and related to the two ISO certifications and internal audits, 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

10.   ICT continue to ensure high levels of system availability, reliability, and security through the delivery of major project work. Notable deliverables include:

(a)   Implementation of the Microsoft Azure Landing Zone. Creating a cloud-based architecture for the Council's network. This Zone forms the foundation for services and applications that ICT will deploy over the next few years in support of the Council's overarching digital transformation.

(b)   Working with the National Grid and GCHQ to review and strengthen the resilience of the Councils power and communication infrastructure as part of "Project Yarrow" which relates to national power outages.

(c)   Ensuring Council services are prepared for the 3G mobile telephony network switch off at the end of 2023. The Council has several active 3G connections supporting critical services such as Traffic Management which need to be switched over and tested well in advance of the deadline.

(d)   Supporting the development of Blended Working with the deployment of the new telephony system; Teams Voice, to over 90% ICT users across the Council. Strengthening integration with the Microsoft Office Suite and presence tools to help assist with end-user productivity.

(e) Following a supplier-related network outage last autumn, ICT have undertaken a review and redesign of the Councils resilient network links between the Darlington and Stockton data centres. This with the aim of further strengthening both Council's ability to withstand major network disruption and increasing network resilience. New links have been installed and will be made live during May.

(f) Ensuring Council Services are prepared for Digital Switch over in 2025. A project that will see the UK move away from the old public analogue telephone network. This project involves the identification and transfer of the less obvious telephone lines which relate to building alarms, traffic management systems and emergency lift lines.

(g) Review and renewal of the ICT Asset Disposal contract ensuring data is securely wiped from devices and all disposals adhere to the Waste, Electrical and Electronic regulations (WEEE) directive.

Council Service Development and Transformation

11. 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 (SIGG is described in paragraph 7 above). These ICT projects underpin many of the Council's business change activities. SIGG also reviews the Web Team Workplan and the Systems and Process Team Workplan and thereby has a whole view of ICT-related activities across the Council.

12. As well as some of the central ICT architecture projects listed above, a further eight service specific projects have been completed since the last progress report to this committee. These have included various system upgrades, plus:

(a) Capita ONE Hybrid Connectors - Supported the technical implementation of an online service to improve the ease with which statutory returns to Government are made from the Education Management System.

(b) Treasury Management PSLive Migration - Provided project management & technical support to move the treasury management system to a supplier hosted version of software to ensure it remains a supported asset.

13. As part of the Microsoft Office 365 roll-out and the features this brings, ICT have continued to work with a task group and different services across the Council to migrate their shared data to Teams. Services already migrated are able to work more collaboratively when developing and sharing documents. Services which have been migrated include; Democratic Services, HR and the Systems & Process Team. Work is ongoing to identify and plan the migration of further services.

14. Xentrall ICT have continued to support the Council in piloting and implementing the Blended Working programme, which has involved providing additional ICT equipment in the Town Hall as well as continuing to support the ICT equipment remote in officer's homes. As mentioned above, the migration to Teams Telephony is nearing completion and this simplifies the office suite of products in use across the Council.

Outcome of Consultation

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