

**AUDIT COMMITTEE
27 SEPTEMBER 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. During this six-month reporting period, the ICT service successfully achieved a full 3-year external recertification in both Information Security Management and Quality Management Systems. The service also achieved its annual recertification to the PSN (Public Services Network). In addition, of the eleven ICT control inspections undertaken by the Council's Internal Audit team over the last six months, ten have been classified as "green" on a red/amber/green rating, with only one being amber, which related to ensuring supplier records were kept up to date for equipment disposals, which has now been addressed.
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) MS Teams voice is now deployed to the whole authority and has replaced the Cisco telephony system. This now consolidates our collaboration platforms making it easier for officers and their teams to communicate and work together.
 - (b) MS Defender is our new endpoint laptop replacement security system and compliments other security systems we have in place across the Council. It comes with improved facilities to manage and isolate risks.
 - (c) ICT have procured and managed a Microsoft licensing migration to the E5 model, Microsoft's flagship product. This license model provides us with a greater overall security posture and earlier future access to additional services and features.
 - (d) ICT renewed the contract which allows us to connect to the national Health network (HSCN).
 - (e) ICT continued with a review and rationalisation of telephone lines.

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, an additional Darlington specific project has been completed since the last progress report to this committee and this was an upgrade to the Land Charges system to maintain compliance and security. Some other Darlington projects currently underway include:
 - a) Supporting the procurement and implementation of a new ticketing and point of sale system for the Darlington Railway and Heritage Quarter.
 - b) Undertaking an internal development to migrate the Cemetery & Crematorium team to a modern web-based system that will improve processes with customers and funeral directors.
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. Functional as well as structural teams are also deployed, and these are used for project and group work.
14. Xentrall ICT also continue to support the Council's Blended Working programme.

Outcome of Consultation

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