

IT Strategy 2014-2017

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This strategy details how we can apply and develop Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support the delivery of the Corporate Performance Plan, our Transformation agenda and service improvement by enabling change and driving forward efficiencies..
- 1.2. This strategy is a statement of our aims and objectives which will be used as the framework within which we can operate and is to form the basis for making future decisions. It also sets the scene for future joint working and collaboration with partner organisations through links to the Kent wide Public Services ICT Strategy.
- 1.3. The extremely rapid pace of change and development of ICT means we have to be constantly identifying opportunities for further improvements. As with any strategy this document will be kept under review and updated to reflect internal and external drivers for change over the next 3 years.
- 1.4. This ICT Strategy aims to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Performance Plan 2012/15 and the seven Key Priorities that stem from it:
 - Continued delivery of priority services and a financially viable Council
 - A clean, smart, well maintained and sustainable Borough
 - Healthy living opportunities and community well-being

- Children and young people who are safe, involved and able to access positive activities
- Low levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime
- A continuing supply of homes, including affordable housing to buy and rent, and prevention of homelessness
- Sustainable regeneration of Tonbridge town centre and economic development in communities across the Borough

2. Service Modernisation

- 2.1. Although many areas of the Council are now supported by a back office IT system, the business processes and method of service delivery have remained largely the same.
- 2.2. Over the last five years the main-streaming of new technologies such as mobile computing, cloud services, and the commoditisation of IT hardware have made new service delivery models possible.
- 2.3. This has the potential to bring benefits to many areas of the organisation including both the front and back office.
- 2.4. While "digitising" services for improved customer service we should also be looking at our underlying business processes and identifying where technology can help with improving efficiency and / or reducing cost.
- 2.5. By challenging the existing processes and considering new options we can also identify where rationalisation of processes can occur or where further use of technologies such as document management could be of benefit.
- 2.6. Business processes in many of our service areas can work in a number of different directions. It's important that these interactions are challenged in terms of their actual value judged against the impact on efficiency and resources used.. Directions to consider are;
 - interactions between staff (inside-inside)
 - interactions from customers or suppliers with staff (outside-in)
 - interactions from staff with customers or suppliers (inside-out)
- 2.7. Document management and workflow automation are large areas of potential benefit. Previously we thought of "manual processes" as those which did not use a computer. **With the introduction of personal computers and backoffice systems we have created a new type of "manual process" - a job which is done *on* a computer instead of a job that could be done *by* a computer.**

- 2.8. Management of information is a key enabler of business improvement and good data governance. Consideration must be given to our data handling and retention policies to ensure we comply with relevant legislation (such as the Data Protection Act) and are able to concentrate our efforts on the most relevant and up to date information available.
- 2.9. Many areas of our business are dependant upon knowledge. Consistent and timely application of this knowledge is critical to good customer service and also for our efficiency. Technology can help to unlock this knowledge and make it more widely available, reducing the dependency on a small number of individuals and the bottle necks that result in demand outstripping resources.
- 2.10. Using technology in the area of knowledge management can help to empower staff. Ensuring that staff have the appropriate "digital skills" will also help develop our workforce to embrace the changes and suggest further areas for enhancement. Assessment of the workforce's current digital competency should be undertaken and training programmes developed to ensure staff are equipped to deal with changes in the workplace.
- 2.11. We must not underestimate the level of change that is required to deliver true service modernisation. There is a risk that the time taken to change working practices will negate any savings achieved, or that the project delivered will not meet all of the requirements. [Agile project management](#) techniques should be used to ensure that programme delivery is timely and iterative in reaching the desired function.

We must also challenge notions such as "where are our staff based?", "what devices do they use?", and "what are our expectations of their level of engagement with technology?" Service modernisation is a partnership between the organisation, customer and staff. The role of the workforce is critical and will require support and encouragement in the following ways:

- rapid decision making
 - transparency
 - clear vision
 - training
 - trust
- 2.12. Greater use of mobile and flexible working should be encouraged where it can bring service delivery improvement. Technology should be used to release staff from being tied to a single location in order to carry out their duties.
 - 2.13. Shared Services remains an efficient vehicle for driving down the cost of some individual services whilst maintaining or improving the service delivery. These will continue to be explored, implemented and supported where applicable.

- 2.14. The IT Infrastructure is a critical enabler for service modernisation, and as such should have the functionality and capacity required to support the business and transformational projects. Consideration on the most appropriate infrastructure delivery method (on-premise, partnership, hybrid cloud, or cloud) must be taken and regularly reviewed. When procuring solutions, existing frameworks and partnerships (such as the [UK Govstore](#) or Kent Managed Marketplace) should be considered in order to obtain best value.

3. Communications

- 3.1. The methods by which we communicate with our customers and staff is changing and we should be matching our availability to the expectations of those that contact us.
- 3.2. Telephone and email contact has now been joined by website, mobile app, instant messaging and social media as popular channels.
- 3.3. With this increase in contact choice we need a method of converging those access channels into a single contact stream, giving equitable priority to all methods. This will help prevent channel hopping where multiple channels are used until a desired answer is received, thereby duplicating the number of enquiries received.
- 3.4. For our staff we require flexibility and new ways of managing a distributed workforce who have embraced mobile and flexible working.
- 3.5. "Follow me" numbers can be used so that staff are contactable irrespective of location via one telephone number.
- 3.6. Use of "presence" technology can also be used so staff availability can be identified at a single glance.
- 3.7. These small productivity enhancements can help the organisation operate more efficiently by taking the guesswork out of people's location and availability status.

4. Website

- 4.1. A large part of our transformation and channel shift agenda concerns using the corporate website as the main interaction channel with the Council. People's habits and expectations are changing and we can take advantage of that by having a *web first* vision.
- 4.2. Expansion of the **my account** and **my nearest** sections of the website will provide more tailored content to visitors helping to avoid contact through other

access channels. Security and identity validation is an important area to introduce so that we can offer the widest range of services with the assurance that this is being done in the most secure way and in keeping with our obligations to the data protection act.

- 4.3. The website is an evolving entity and the design and content should change to reflect what we are trying to deliver with this channel. In order to encourage more interaction and to make the website the fastest method of finding relevant information we should consider ways that the design can influence ease of use. Beyond the design, the content of the website is also important. Customers want relevant and up to date information. We should consider ways that we can de-clutter and remove irrelevant information.
- 4.4. Content reviews should be undertaken to identify areas where we have too little or too much information available. The language used in content should also be clear, concise, and easy to understand. Use of jargon and acronyms can be tempting but often have very little understanding outside of the office environment.
- 4.5. Thinking **web first** in everything we do in designing future service delivery should underpin our approach

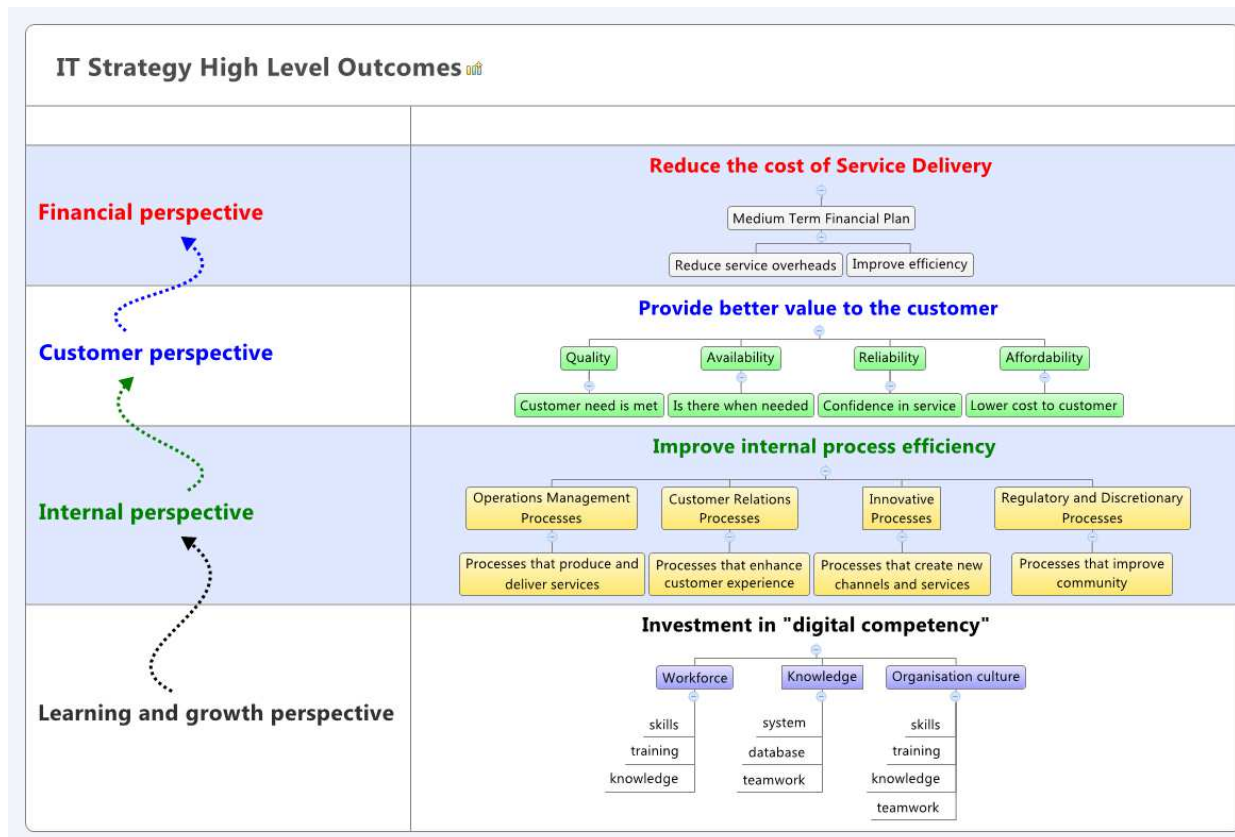
5. Self Service

- 5.1. Self service covers all areas where a customer can receive the delivery of a service without the assistance of a Council Officer. Areas that currently enable self service are;
 - website
 - telephone system (card payments, switchboard)
 - kiosks (payment)
- 5.2. Future areas for consideration include;
 - partner organisations delivering services on behalf of the council
 - smart machines
- 5.3. The physical and virtual worlds are colliding and the internet is providing opportunity and expectations that we will need to take advantage of.
- 5.4. The "Internet of Everything" is bringing together people (social networking), things (smart devices), places (smart locations) and information (websites).
- 5.5. This is enabling the re-invention of industries on three main levels;
 - Business process (improving services, processes, customer experience)
 - Business model (how we deliver services and interact with the customer)

- Business moment (the need to operate with an unprecedented business velocity and agility)
- 5.6. With the internet providing the connection between these areas we should consider what appropriate self service systems can be deployed.
 - 5.7. Embedding the *digital by default* ethos into everything we do is critical for us to provide the service that is expected of us. Considering how this applies to new and existing services will help prioritise our work streams, highlight areas for improvement and identify gaps.
 - 5.8. Supporting the publication of **Open Data** will also help us deliver services to the citizen by providing new methods of accessing information, improving transparency, and reducing the time required to respond to customer enquiries (such as Freedom of Information requests).

6. Outcomes

- 6.1. Taking into consideration the topics described above, the following diagram provides a high level overview from several perspectives and shows how the various elements of the strategy are interlinked. By investing in "digital competency" (people, skills and systems) we can improve internal process efficiency. This in turn will provide better value to the customer and reduce the cost of service delivery.
- 6.2. The following diagram describes the outcomes from a number of different perspectives and how each component of the strategy contributes to them. Working from the bottom row upwards shows how each element contributes to the layer above. This helps us visualise why the various strands of the strategy are important and how they interact with each other.



6.3. A number of key deliverable outcomes will be sought during the life of the strategy and will be reported in annual strategy reviews.

- Establish new IT Infrastructure which challenges existing methods of delivery and evaluates new methods (such as shared services, cloud computing, and commoditised hardware)
- Enable projects to be delivered quicker and with more resilience to change by adopting Agile project methods.
- Provide assistance with the formation and enforcement of a Data Governance policy which includes relevant data retention guides.
- Staff who are guided and supported in the acquisition and use of digital skills through a comprehensive assessment and training programme.
- Development of the My Account and My Nearest functionality of the website to provide rich and relevant information to the customer (such as up to date bill and payment information), encouraging use of the website by implementing time saving features (such as pre-populating forms) and making information easier to find.
- Introduction of new self service options for the customer.
- Consolidate contact channels into a single stream through managed use of social media and a new integrated customer contact system.

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- Implement new communications suite (email and telephony system) to support new flexible working practices
- Review and challenge business processes throughout the organisation and implement workflow and document management where appropriate.
- Facilitate new business processes, business models and business moments by the appropriate use of technology.