

ICT STRATEGY UPDATE

Head of Service:	Andrew McGuire, Head of IT
Report Author	Andrew McGuire
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – IT Strategy Update Appendix 2 – Revised Roadmap Timeline Appendix 3 – Reference Diagrams

Summary

This report provides a summary of the changes to the ICT Strategy agreed by this committee in September 2023. Noted in the update are areas where work has been completed, where work is still in progress and where adjustments to the Strategy have been made.

The original ICT Strategy anticipated that the document would be subject to annual review as the nature of IT services is ever changing.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the changes to the ICT strategy outlined in appendix 1.
- (2) Agree up to £45,000 of funding from the Corporate Projects Reserve to provide the refresh of the corporate website.
- (3) Note the progress that has been made so far on the ICT roadmap, allowing for the understandable delays that came about as a result of personnel changes in ICT leadership.
- (4) Note that whilst the agreed budget for the ICT Programme of work is still largely on track that there are inflationary and other external pressures that are resulting in cost increases.

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- 1.1 The ICT Strategy has been fully reviewed in 2024 with advice and notes provided on the progress to date. As anticipated the ICT landscape is ever evolving but the common goal to streamline the services that EEBC officers use is at the heart of this strategy.
- 1.2 This in turn drives the rationale and the thinking for how we provide our services to the residents who are the ultimate end users of the functions we provide.
- 1.3 The review of the strategy has taken place in the context of a change of central government and the most recent plans regarding devolution that will likely affect Surrey as a whole. When compared to our neighbouring authorities EEBC is closely aligned in terms of fundamental systems used and this includes Microsoft 365 (M365) at the core of our compute solution.

2 Background

- 2.1 The ICT Strategy and Roadmap prepared by the previous Head of ICT was approved by S&R in September 2023. Unfortunately, the unforeseen passing of the HOS shortly afterwards has led to delays in actioning some crucial areas of the roadmap. The resumption of the original plan for yearly reviews of the strategy gives the opportunity to adjust the strategy over the planned five-year span.
- 2.2 Good progress in some areas has been made with a new HOS appointed in March 2024. Attached to this report as Appendix 1 is the ICT Strategy Update laid out in a side-by-side format. This details the original ICT strategy element on the left-hand side with the current update on the right.
- 2.3 Overall, the direction of travel remains largely un-altered which is testament to the work that previous head of service put into creating the ICT plan for the envisaged five years. However, in the 16 Months that have passed since the strategy was approved there have been changes to the overall global ICT landscape.
- 2.4 The ICT Strategy when developed did not anticipate the rise of artificial intelligence and as an organisation we are still taking a long view at how we can use it to develop and deliver our services. For the time being its use will be restricted until we can develop policies and procedures to ensure that we safely and securely use the benefits it might bring. There are also significant copywrite implications in the use of AI that are still in the process of being understood and mitigations created for.
- 2.5 The council is developing a five-year plan and a key element of that will be understanding the cyber security landscape. This work will lead to increased protection from cyber threats by augmenting further staff and member training with hardware and software solutions to protect the network.

3 Risk Assessment

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Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 Procurement of IT goods and services will follow the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

3.1.2 The strategy and its update has not been scored against the EQIA screening tool, but by its nature the strategy is agnostic in its application to its users and the residents that receive its services as a result.

3.1.3 Any project, or implementation work driven by the strategy would automatically require a PID to be completed and this would also demand that an equality assessment be undertaken and documented if found to be required.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None for the purposes of this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 As was originally envisaged the ICT Strategy and Roadmap in their updated form continue to lay out the plan from the existing infrastructure to the new target model with a strong focus on services consumed and supported by providers in the cloud, be this EEBC storage on Microsoft 365 (M365) or that provided by suppliers with agreed service level agreements in place.

3.5.2 Staff resource continues to be an issue with the implementation of the strategy in both the ICT and the organisation as a whole. As previously noted, competing priorities continue to have the potential to affect delivery of the plan.

3.5.3 Also noted, the increased funding for Cyber Security is starting to be utilised as described in the ICT Strategy Update (Appendix 1) this continues to be an area where future threats are difficult to fully anticipate.

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3.5.4 Geopolitical instability and a change in central government will likely affect the cost assumptions made in both the Draft (March 2023) and the approved Strategy (September 2023). These will affect the whole organisation as well as the ICT services that we consume in order to provide services to our residents and customers.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The ICT Strategy was fully funded in terms of Capital and Revenue spend but ongoing inflationary pressures remain, and ICT costs continue to rise. To allow for this, the ICT revenue budget for 2025/26 includes a £53,000 inflationary contingency which will be applied to individual software budgets as necessary, in consultation with the S151 Officer.
- 4.2 The planned comms room in 70 East Street will be funded as part of the budget for the build, and any additional hardware costs will likely come from the ICT Budget.
- 4.3 Whilst the migration to a new platform was envisaged for the four primary websites that EEBC uses the redesign of the main website had insufficient budget allowed for the full design that is required to give residents and users a modern accessible site to interactions with the council. Although not fully costed at this time, it is likely that up to another £45,000 will be required to 'refresh' all sites with a more modern look and feel. These costs will be contained within existing ICT budgets where possible, but funding of up to £45,000 is requested from the Corporate Projects reserve for where this is not possible.
- 4.4 The uncommitted balance of the Corporate Projects reserve at the time of writing is £1.66m. Earmarking up to £45,000 for the website refresh will reduce this available balance to £1.61m. Council has agreed to retain a minimum uncommitted balance of at least £1m in this reserve. In addition, there would be an estimated £2,025 per annum reduction in treasury management income, assuming investment returns of 4.5%, which will need to be factored into the Council's future treasury forecasts.
- 4.5 The change in legislation that represents the individual's right to disconnect from work drives the plan to revise the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) detailed in the strategy and a return to the 'corporate' model of issuing devices that are solely managed and owned by EEBC.
- 4.6 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Council faces continued financial pressures, and ICT should be used as a driver for greater productivity and efficiency to recover costs.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

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6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council - Improve access to services through technology.
- Smart & Connected – Increase digital connectivity for all.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

- Captured in the original report to S&R in September 2023

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

- None for the purposes of this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:**

- None for the purposes of this report.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Strategy and Resources Committee – 21 September 2023 – Agenda Item 4 (IT Strategy)

Other papers:

- Detailed as appendices at the top of this report.