



Harlow Council

ICT Strategy 2014-2016



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Harlow Council is under severe financial pressure to make economies and reduce its cost base at a time when there is a significant increase in the demand for services. If it is to meet statutory obligations, achieve its key priorities and meet resident expectations around services it will have to work in innovative, cost-effective and radically different ways.
- 1.1.2 This document lays out our strategy to make ICT, its use within the authority and the ICT Service, enablers for the transformational change this requires.
- 1.1.3 The strategy is based upon four main objectives – that:
- ICT is regarded as a strategic vehicle, closely aligned to corporate objectives with adequate direction, management and resources
 - ICT is used to change ways we work -- improving our efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of services we provide
 - The council makes the best use of, and gains the maximum business benefit from its ICT investment
 - The Council has a robust, reliable and resilient infrastructure for the delivery of ICT services
- 1.1.4 Flowing from this, we believe that we will be able to make significant savings and provide better, more accessible services notably by:
- A simultaneous lowering of the demand for face to face services and a consequent reduction in the cost per transaction by offering an expanded range of services digitally
 - Reducing the need for manual intervention/double entry by higher levels of automation and direct integration with back office services – saving space and speeding up access to documents via Electronic Document Management
 - Helping our staff and elected members to be more productive by extending facilities for remote and mobile working -- at the same time offering potential space savings via the use of 'hot desking'
 - Rationalising our applications and the servers they run on

1.2 ICT as a strategic vehicle

- 1.2.1 We will establish effective corporate governance arrangements to ensure that ICT developments are aligned with corporate objectives, prioritised, co-ordinated across the authority and adequately resourced before they start. This will be backed up by appropriate project controls and a Programme/Project Management resource to support implementation.
- 1.2.2 The ICT Service will ensure that its strategic and operational alignment with the council as a whole is strongly maintained. It will foster a proactive 'can do' culture, develop and enhance its business change capacity and ensure that adequate resources/skills are available to meet business requirements.
- 1.2.3 The ICT Service will continue to improve its service management and performance – with transparency over the services it provides, standards for service delivery and performance against those standards.

1.3 Changing the way we work

- 1.3.1 The council already has a basic, though dated, infrastructure in place to provide some support for flexible, smart and mobile working. The ICT Service will enhance this to provide a robust, resilient and stable platform for new ways of working.
- 1.3.2 The Council will seek to significantly improve customer service and shift demand to lower cost channels for service delivery. Measures include integration of our Customer Relationship Management software with a broader range of back-office systems and enhancement of our web site by extending its self-service capability extending integration with back-office systems and making it mobile device friendly.

1.4 Making the best use of ICT

- 1.4.1 We will seek to obtain maximum benefit from systems via the implementation of a variety of measures to improve:
- Procurement, implementation and exploitation of systems
 - Systems integration
 - Rationalisation of systems and data
- 1.4.2 We will focus on the procurement or enhancement of key applications to ensure that limited resources are directed towards the strategic needs of the council.

1.5 Protecting the data

- 1.5.1 We will continue to take measures to protect our systems and data by:
- Ensuring the security, integrity and availability of data.
 - Providing safe and secure connectivity.
 - Providing effective back-up and Disaster Recovery solutions and contributing to the council's Business Continuity arrangements

1.6 Infrastructure

- 1.6.1 We will continue to rationalise and consolidate our network/communications infrastructure, at the same time upgrading or replacing dated/end of life hardware and software. This includes replacement of our elderly tape back-up system with newer, more reliable technology.
- 1.6.2 We will Corporately review our dated telephone system with a view to replacing it with a more modern one.
- 1.6.3 Although the Cloud offers the promise of flexibility and cost savings, the market is still evolving and maturing. We will take advantage of appropriate opportunities as and when they arise.

1.7 Service Delivery Models

- 1.7.1 We will formally review other modes of ICT Service Delivery – exploring at the same time opportunities for informal collaboration, skills pooling and other sharing arrangements with other public sector bodies.

2 SCOPE

- 1.1.1 This document lays out the ICT strategy for Harlow Council for the period 2014-2016.
- 1.1.2 Its scope encompasses two distinct, though closely related themes:
- ICT, its use within the Council, and its importance in enabling the Council to adapt to meet the challenges of an increasingly difficult environment
 - The central ICT Service, and the key role it has to play in providing the technology platform on which much of this depends
- 1.1.3 The Strategy identifies:
- The business imperatives which the ICT strategy needs to address
 - The current status of ICT, its utilisation and governance along with that of the ICT Service within the council
 - The organisational and management issues which will impact upon the council's ability to deliver and reap the benefits of this strategy
 - The core elements of the strategy to enable the Council to meet its needs over the next three years – the structures, applications, systems, architectures, resources and services needed to support the Council's future direction
 - The investment profile needed to implement the strategy
- 1.1.1 This document is accompanied by a Strategic Plan, which specifies in detail the work needed to implement the strategy, along with anticipated costs and timescales for each component. Flowing from this is an outline programme for delivery, showing where relevant the dependencies between its different elements. (The Strategic Plan is still very much a draft which will be subject to review by the new ICT Strategic Board – see section 5.1.2)

2.1 Business Drivers

- 2.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2014 -2017 sets out its key priorities -- underpinned by the two core principles of *Community Leadership* and *Value for Money*. :-
- More and better Housing
 - Regeneration and a thriving economy
 - Wellbeing and Social Inclusion
 - A Clean and Green Environment.
 - Successful children and young people
- 2.1.2 However, the Council is under severe financial pressure to make economies and reduce its cost base. Central Government grant, which funds nearly half (46%) of the Council's services, has reduced by nearly 50% from 2011 to 2014/15. Current forecasts indicate a further reduction by 16% in 2015/16 and 10% in 2016/17. The Council has to save £5.3m over the next four years. In 2015/16 it will need to save £1.3m.
- 2.1.3 Responding to this challenge, the Council has implemented a number of measures to reduce costs, and has undertaken a budget consultation exercise with residents during 2014.
- 2.1.4 All this has taken place against a background in which there has been a significant increase in the demand for Council services.

2.2 An Agenda for Change

- 2.2.1 If it is to adequately meet its statutory obligations, achieve its key priorities and meet resident expectations around the quality and accessibility of services within financial constraints, the council will have to work in innovative, cost-effective and radically different ways.
- 2.2.2 Sector evidence from other councils suggests that appropriately governed, adequately financed, and “smart”, ICT can be a key enabler in achieving many of these changes – meeting along the way the larger national objective for the delivery of services which are ‘digital by default’.

3 WHERE WE ARE NOW

3.1 Organisation

- 3.1.1 ICT within the council is organised on a semi-centralised basis.
- 3.1.2 There is a core ICT service, with some ICT related functions embedded within service areas. Management and development of the council's web site takes place within Customer Services, Housing has a business support unit responsible for Housing systems and elsewhere there are system administrators/super-users responsible for other departmental systems.
- 3.1.3 Such an arrangement is not unusual, and can work well. However, because of other structural and resource issues, it is not currently working as well as it otherwise could.

3.2 Governance

- 3.2.1 Corporate governance of ICT and its utilisation within the authority does not at present exist. This is a major weakness and an obstacle to change. As a consequence, ICT lacks Corporate:
- Direction
 - Co-ordination and prioritisation
 - Oversight and management
- 3.2.2 Linked to this is a general absence across the authority of effective Corporate ICT Programme/Project control mechanisms as well as the skills/resource needed to implement them.

3.3 The ICT Service

- 3.3.1 The central ICT service has primary responsibility for:
- Providing, managing and maintaining the secure network and services on which council applications run – including the telephone system
 - Corporate desktop productivity applications
 - Provision of help-desk and other support for the above
 - Specialist technical support for corporate/service applications
 - Provision of information, advice and guidance on ICT matters to other departments
 - ICT arrangements in respect of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity
- 3.3.2 A new structure has been implemented to enable better service delivery. However, there are still doubts about its resilience, particularly in the area of specialist skills. Difficulty in recruitment, increased demands from the business, outstanding projects and significant infrastructural maintenance needs combined with the additional demands of Public Sector Network registration have severely skewed workload, stretched resources and impaired performance across the wider organisation.
- 3.3.3 Resourcing issues during 2013 and 2014 coupled with the absence of strong governance arrangements have significantly contributed towards service users perceptions being poor -- including views that the service is

- Predominantly technically focussed at the expense of business needs
- Reactive rather than proactive in its culture
- Failing to engage or consult with other service departments – individually or corporately
- Failing to respond in a timely fashion, or to provide adequate support for the business needs of other services
- Has an opaque and internally determined set of priorities in the absence of those determined corporately
- Lacking clarity concerning the services it provides and the standards by which its performance might be evaluated
- Lacking resilience, especially in the area of specialist technical skills as well as the adequacy of resources/skills available to undertake sustained project work
- Restrictive as a result of the measures put in place to achieve PSN accreditation, actively impeding effective, flexible use of technology to do the job

3.4 ICT and its use within the council

- 3.4.1 There are significant areas where the council can be more effective in its use of ICT.
- 3.4.2 Most importantly, there is yet to be corporate recognition that ICT is not simply an operational tool, but a major agent for improvement and transformational change -- and needs to engage with it accordingly.
- 3.4.3 Potential benefits from channel shift and efficient customer service are not being fully realised because:
- The Council has not systematically exploited the potential of its web site:
 - There is very little integration between the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and back-office systems
- 3.4.4 Potential benefits from mobile, flexible and ‘smart’ working are not being realised.
- 3.4.5 Core functions such as Electronic Document Management are undertaken using different systems in different departments
- 3.4.6 Corporately the Council is not exploiting the capability of some systems to their fullest advantage
- 3.4.7 We are working with systems, or versions of systems that are dated and no longer provide the functionality necessary for effective, modern ways of working.
- 3.4.8 Despite current difficulties, largely brought about through the lack of resourcing, the ICT service has put in place the building blocks for an infrastructure platform which is able to support more effective ways of working. It has:
- Provided elected members and senior managers with iPads
 - Is about to roll out laptops to service departments
 - Updated the desktop operating system to Windows 7
 - Substantially virtualised its server estate (reducing the number of servers needed) and
 - Implemented a Citrix-based thin client solution (reducing the management overhead on applications, facilitating remote/smart working and extending the life of desktop equipment)

- Secured its communications and data via encryption, Remote Device Management and other measures -- achieving Public Service Network (PSN) accreditation,

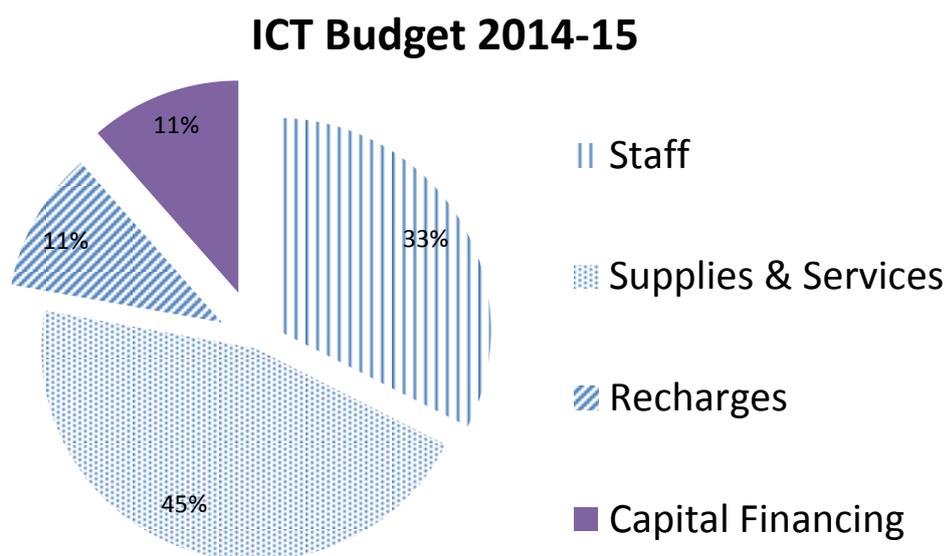
3.4.9 However, major components of this infrastructure are now in need of refreshment/renewal:

- Data storage capability is nearing capacity
- The ability to effectively back-up data and systems is becoming increasingly constrained/compromised by the technology currently in use
- Significant elements of the software needed to run, monitor and manage this infrastructure now need renewal or updating
- The council's telephone system is now at the end of its supported life.

3.4.10 There is no long-term programme for refreshing or replacing equipment

3.5 Investment

3.5.1 The ICT Service Budget for 2014-15 anticipates gross expenditure of £1.28m. This includes both the direct costs of the ICT Service itself, and the cost of hardware, software, services, licences and maintenance used corporately and in individual service areas. This is broken down as shown below.



3.5.2 45% of the budget is given over to Supplies and Services – of which 84%, or £490,000 is accounted for by software licences/maintenance.

3.5.3 Simple metrics for Harlow's ICT expenditure are as follows:

Metric	2014-15
Spend per user	£2,844
Spend per head of population	£15.80
Number of (central) ICT staff	11
% of total net revenue expenditure on ICT	8.96

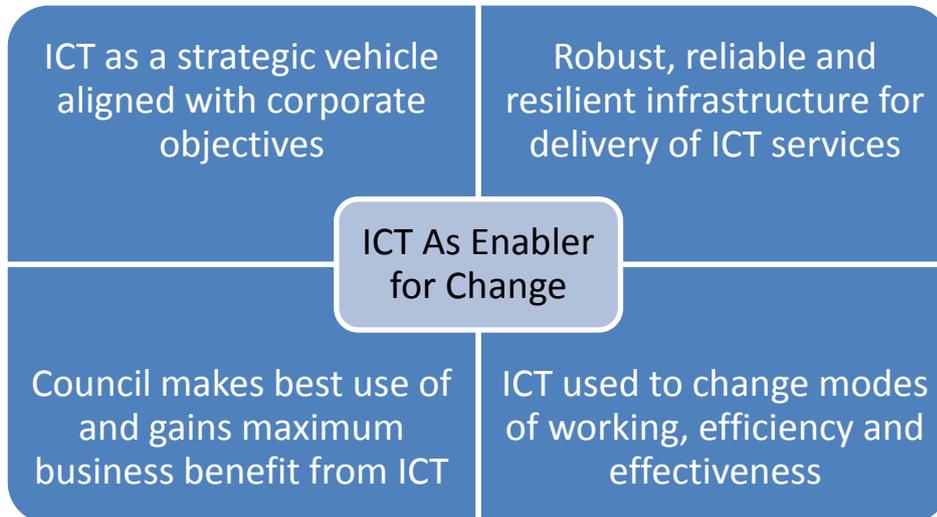
3.5.4 Whilst direct comparison with other authorities is fraught with difficulties, there is evidence from SocITM benchmarking data to suggest that, on these measures:¹

- Harlow is broadly in line with comparable local authorities
- Its staffing could be 1-2 posts below par

¹ The difficulty with direct comparison is twofold. Because Harlow do not subscribe to the SocITM benchmarking service, the data has not been 'normalised' for comparison purposes. At the same time, relatively few organisations directly comparable with Harlow are now part of the benchmarking scheme. Observations made in the text are based upon data from 21 Shire Districts over the period 2006/7-2012/13. Any comparisons made should be treated as indicative only.

4 THE STRATEGY

4.1.1 The key elements of the refreshed ICT strategy for Harlow are summarised in the diagram below.



4.1.2 The primary objective is that ICT is an effective enabler for change both within the council and in the services that it provides.

4.1.3 This can be achieved by ensuring that:

- ICT is regarded as a strategic vehicle, closely aligned to corporate objectives with adequate direction, management and resources
- ICT is used to change ways we work -- improving our efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of services we provide
- The council makes the best use of, and gains the maximum business benefit from its ICT investment
- The Council has a robust, reliable and resilient infrastructure for the delivery of ICT services

4.1.4 Flowing from this, we believe that we will be able to make significant savings and provide better, more accessible services notably by:

- A simultaneous lowering of the demand for face to face services and a consequent reduction in the cost per transaction by offering an expanded range of services digitally
- Reducing the need for manual intervention/double entry by higher levels of automation and direct integration with back office services – saving space and speeding up access to documents via Electronic Document Management
- Helping our staff and elected members to be more productive by extending facilities for remote and mobile working -- at the same time offering potential space savings via the use of 'hot desking'
- Rationalising our applications and the servers they run on

4.1.5 In what follows, the strategy sets out how these goals can be achieved.

5 ICT AS A STRATEGIC VEHICLE

5.1 Governance

- 5.1.1 We shall put in place robust governance arrangements for ICT within the Council.
- 5.1.2 We will establish a new ICT Strategic Board, comprising the Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service. The Board's primary purpose will be to:
- Provide strategic direction for ICT in the light of the council's broader objectives. Where a larger programme of transformation/change is established it will ensure that the two are fully integrated
 - Review and update the council's ICT strategy
 - Review and prioritise the programme of work flowing from the strategy
 - Approve/commission major projects for inclusion in the strategic work programme (subject to funding) -- ensuring that the project approval process includes consideration of the inclusion of appropriate resource to ensure successful implementation
 - Oversee, monitor and manage the successful implementation of the work programme
 - Consider the prioritisation of the programme or required work and projects against the resourcing available to deliver it.
- 5.1.3 We will also establish an ICT Operational Board. . It will be chaired by the Head of Finance supported by the Senior ICT Manager, with senior representatives from each of the five main services. This group shall be responsible for:
- Contributing to the review and updating of the Council's ICT strategy
 - Approving/commissioning minor projects for inclusion in the ICT Service's work programme (subject to funding) -- ensuring that the project approval process includes consideration of the needs of the strategic work programme and the inclusion of appropriate resource to ensure successful implementation
 - Overseeing the performance of the ICT Service against KPIs and other relevant measures
 - Dealing with other operational issues as they arise
- 5.1.4 To assist the work of the Boards, appropriate project controls will be introduced. A Programme and Project Co-ordination /Management resource will be also be assigned to support project implementation.

5.2 ICT Service: Alignment with business needs

- 5.2.1 The ICT Service will ensure that its strategic and operational alignment with individual services and the council as a whole is strongly maintained and managed through the ICT Strategic Board.
- 5.2.2 To achieve this, the ICT Service will:
- Work within the corporate planning process
 - Participate in the work of, and be accountable for its performance to both the IT Strategic Board and the ICT Operational Board
 - Participate in the work of cross-service task/project groups

- Participate in and support the work of project teams across the council where there is an ICT dimension
- Provide regular updates on performance and project development to the ICT Strategic and Operational Boards on at least a quarterly basis.
- Have regular formal meetings with individual Heads of Service concerning key strategic directions of the services as well as operational issues

5.2.3 The service will ensure that there is adequate, appropriately skilled resource available to maintain and develop its engagement in a meaningful and effective fashion within the overall context of the operational service budget and capital allocations.

5.3 ICT Service: Culture, Structure, Skills, Resourcing

5.3.1 The ICT Service will continue its efforts to foster and develop a proactive, customer-focused 'can-do' culture, recognising the role that ICT has as a strategic enabler for the council.

5.3.2 The ICT Service will review its structure to ensure that:

- It has an appropriate balance (and resilience) in generic and specialist skills
- It has sufficient resource to provide the service required

5.3.3 The Service will continue to rationalise the number of programming/development tools used so as to focus and deepen its skills.

5.3.4 Where the Service does not currently have the skills/expertise to undertake specific areas of work, it will procure specialist resource to do so – ensuring that this includes an element of skills transfer where appropriate.

5.3.5 The ICT Service will seek to develop and enhance its business change capacity by:

- Embedding project thinking and effective project controls into its operations.
- Broadening its project management capability by training and assigning additional staff to project management duties.
- The use of temporary/contract staff to backfill or undertake specific additional work associated with the business change programme as necessary and within the available service budget subject to any additional approvals.
- Encouraging the spread of project management skills across the rest of the council.

5.4 ICT Service: Service Management

5.4.1 The ICT Service is committed to improving its service management and performance – with transparency over the services it provides, standards for delivery and performance against those standards. It will seek to achieve this through a variety of measures:

- Production of an ICT Service Catalogue, detailing which services it does and does not provide.
- Production of an enhanced Service Level Agreement.
- Establishing a clear distinction between Business As Usual (BAU) and Project/developmental work in resource management.
- Establishing a challenging set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Reporting on and making itself accountable for performance against those indicators through the ICT Strategic Board.

- Implementing infrastructure changes and the use of modern monitoring and management technology to free up resource and enhance service capability wherever possible.
- Recognising that major initiatives can severely stretch its service capability. Where this is likely to be prolonged, the service will utilise additional, external resources to maintain acceptable service levels whilst ensuring sufficient skills transfer is achieved before external resources withdraw from projects.

6 CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK

6.1 Flexible, smart and mobile working

- 6.1.1 The ICT Service's key objective is to enable relevant council staff and elected members to access and productively work with our systems irrespective of their location.
- 6.1.2 At an operational level, there are clear business benefits to be gained. Used strategically within the context of a larger programme for transforming the way the Council works, the benefits and associated cost savings can be significantly greater.
- 6.1.3 The Council has the basic infrastructure and services in place to support flexible, smart and mobile working with access to corporate systems on a limited scale. iPads have been introduced for senior managers and elected members and a pool of laptops is being developed for use across services where remote and/or flexible working is required.
- 6.1.4 This is the start of wider support for flexible/mobile/smart working. At present, there is a need to enhance the quality, robustness and range of services currently available to support these modes of working. We aim to achieve this in a phased fashion via:
- Upgrades to our infrastructure.
 - Pilots to test the effectiveness and business benefits from these services.
 - Extending access to these services in the light of the pilots – notably to mobile staff in Housing, Community Wellbeing and Regeneration as well as to other specialist staff in Legal Services subject to the business need and service demand.

6.2 Facilitating Shared Services

- 6.2.1 The Council already has limited shared-service arrangements in place and ICT will seek to improve the efficiency of those arrangements by facilitating access to relevant documents and council systems irrespective of where a member of that service is located. By so doing we are laying the groundwork for other potential shared-service arrangements.

6.3 Customer Service and Channel Shift

- 6.3.1 As a council, we recognise that there are significant ways in which we can use ICT to enhance service delivery --and do so at a significantly lower cost.
- 6.3.2 To achieve this:
- The Customer Service Strategy Review Group and the ICT Service will work closely to identify major opportunities
 - Working through the ICT Strategic Board we will investigate, prioritise and, subject to funding, implement appropriate projects identified
- 6.3.3 Major areas for development will be:
- **Integration of the Customer Relationship Management System** with a much wider range of back office systems to provide a more integrated view of the customer, and avoid double-entry of data
 - **Enhancement of our web site** to make it a more attractive and effective vehicle for service delivery. This includes -

- Extending the self-service capability of the site -- notably in respect of Housing, Benefits, Council Tax, Regeneration, Community Wellbeing and Finance activities
- Ensuring that, so far as is possible, there is a high level of integration between the web site and back office systems – automating tasks and avoiding the need for manual intervention
- Making the site mobile-friendly. Around 30% of access to council web sites is now via mobile devices – and the proportion is growing²

² According to SocITM's annual survey of web sites. In the same survey, Harlow's web site was awarded 2 out of a possible 4 stars. SocITM: *"Better Connected 2014"*.

7 MAKING THE BEST USE OF ICT

7.1 Obtaining maximum benefit from systems

7.1.1 The strategy for obtaining the maximum benefit from our investment in systems is based upon the following three principles:

- Procurement, implementation and exploitation.
- Systems Integration.
- Rationalisation of local systems.

7.1.2 **Procurement, implementation and exploitation:** We will resolve issues around the procurement, implementation and exploitation of systems by:

- Systematically reviewing, and wherever possible, re-negotiating existing contracts to reduce costs
- Ensuring there is a greater focus on resources in the project planning, prioritisation and approval process through the ICT Strategy Board.
- Enhancing our Business Change capability.
- Ensuring that appropriate training and expertise is embedded within the service area(s) using the technology
- Developing a program of systems reviews with service managers.

7.1.3 **Systems Integration:** The current low level of systems integration will be addressed by:

- Clearly identifying core systems where high levels of integration will reap significant benefits which outweigh the costs of achieving it.
- Prioritising key systems for integration.
- Procuring and implementing an off the shelf integration solution if available.
- Creating one where none exists using middleware.
- Having the potential for easy integration with other relevant key (existing or planned) systems as a consideration in the procurement of any new system.

7.1.4 **Rationalisation of systems and data:** We will rationalise the number of systems and volume of data within the authority by:

- Reviewing and where possible rationalising the number of ICT applications to a lesser number of core systems removing unnecessary duplication of functions and those that are inefficient.
- Reviewing and replacing solutions developed in-house with standard 'off the shelf' packages.
- Restricting the use of development products, such as Microsoft Access, in favour of 'off the shelf solutions'
- Taking as a fundamental principle the need for a single, trusted source of information – be it document or data.
- Identifying and removing multiple versions of documents on local/shared drives, creating a single, authoritative corporate version.

7.2 Applications

- 7.2.1 The ICT Strategic Board will focus on the procurement or enhancement of key applications to ensure that limited resources are directed towards the strategic needs of the council.
- 7.2.2 Key applications projects identified corporately or by individual services are detailed below.
- 7.2.3 **Corporate Electronic Document Management:** There are a number of Electronic Document Management Systems (EDRMS) in use within the council, and the benefits are well established.
- We will seek to identify a single corporate EDRMS.
 - Extend use of that system to the whole council.
- 7.2.4 **Finance:** Support will be provided to assist in the planned upgrade to the finance system to reap the benefits of enhanced functionality.
- 7.2.5 **Housing:** The housing system will be enhanced in five major ways to improve efficiency and service delivery:
- Providing self-service capability over a range of functions via integration with the council's web site.
 - Providing mobile access to the housing system for relevant staff.
 - Reporting and case management of reactive repairs.
 - Utilising CRM functionality in conjunction with the corporate system
 - Introducing and implementing workflow functionality
- 7.2.6 **Regeneration and Community Wellbeing:** A consistent, integrated suite of software with enhanced functionality will be implemented, replacing older systems, upgrading to UniForm and extending its usage to serve:
- Building Control.
 - Planning.
 - Environmental Health.
 - Licencing.
 - Land Charges.
 - GIS/LCU.
- 7.2.7 By so doing, the Council will be able to take advantage of the mobile working capability of the system. It will also seek to exploit the system to provide an enhanced range of (self) service capability via integration with the council's web site – be it through the system's Public access modules or other means.
- 7.2.8 Wherever possible, electronic workflow capability with these systems will be implemented – assessing the potential for extension of similar capability across the council.
- 7.2.9 Utilisation and enhancement of the EDRMS (Idox) will be subject to the outcome of 7.2.3 above.
- 7.2.10 **GIS/Cartography:** The mapping/GIS capability will be enhanced by upgrading to a newer, web-based system with potential for integration with the council's web site.

8 PROTECTING THE DATA

8.1.1 The Council will continue to take measures to protect its systems and data to ensure that:

- It complies with statutory obligations under the Data Protection and other relevant legislation.
- It is able to maintain the integrity and continuity of its business.
- It holds Public Service Network code of connection certification

8.1.2 This will be achieved by :

- Ensuring the security, integrity and availability of data.
- Providing safe and secure connectivity.
- Providing effective back-up and Disaster Recovery solutions and contributing to the council's Business Continuity arrangements.

8.2 Public Service Network Accreditation and Data Protection

8.2.1 The ICT Service will work with Information Management and Data Protection, providing technical assistance to ensure that the Council's legal requirements are met.

8.2.2 The Service will continue to review and implement ICT policies based on best practice and PSN code of connection standards. Flowing from this, it will:

- Implement a new Information Security Policy, Conditions of Acceptable use for any network users and a Data Breach Policy to ensure compliance with PSN and Data Protection.
- Ensure transmitted information and data conforms to security standards as set out in the PSN code of connection.
- Carry out internal and external penetration testing along with an annual IT Health Check as required by security standards and the PSN code of connection.
- Ensure devices connecting to the Council's network are 'managed' (owned and controlled unless for 3rd party maintenance) and that staff and Councillors have access to these devices.
- Develop, maintain and deliver ICT solutions and procedures that are required for continued PSN code of connection certification.

8.2.3 Whilst some of the measures currently put in place are regarded by some users as unduly restrictive, they will be reviewed by the ICT Strategy Board to:

- ensure that there is a clear understanding of the rationale behind the security features
- consider the options for any additional flexibility without compromising our security obligations.

8.3 Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity

8.3.1 The ICT Service will continue to develop the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan,

- 'virtualising' and rationalising wherever possible, to ensure the service remains open to new technologies, exploring best solutions whether delivered locally or 'in the cloud'
- It will also put in place new scalable back-up solutions to replace existing arrangements that are no longer fit for purpose.

8.3.2 The service will play a key role as a vital foundation to Business Continuity Planning. It will be fully involved and committed to supporting the Council's Business Continuity Plans.

9 INFRASTRUCTURE

9.1 Updating and rationalising our Infrastructure

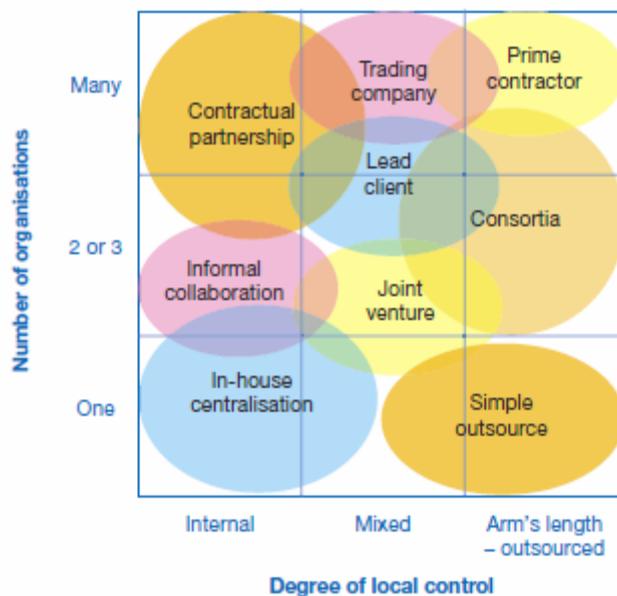
- 9.1.1 The ICT Service will update and rationalise the network/communications infrastructure. In so doing, we aim to ensure that it provides a robust, secure platform for use of ICT within the Council scaled to meet current and future needs. Key elements of this are:
- 9.1.2 **Virtualisation:** ICT will complete the programme of server virtualisation.
- 9.1.3 **Servers and other network hardware:** ICT will continue the rationalisation and decommissioning of older servers on the back of virtualisation. Where appropriate, remaining servers will be upgraded. New servers will be put in place if required, to support new applications and new ways of working.
- 9.1.4 Other network components (such as switches and firewall) will be replaced where their age threatens its stability, security or performance.
- 9.1.5 **SAN:** ICT will install a scalable Storage Area Network (SAN) as part of a tiered data storage solution.
- 9.1.6 **Back-Up:** ICT will replace the dated, slow and near capacity tape back-up arrangements with a more up to date, reliable solution.
- 9.1.7 **Storage:** ICT will enhance storage capability by rationalisation of databases, removal of duplicate data items and migrating data to the SAN.
- 9.1.8 **Software Upgrades:** ICT will upgrade now dated Network Operating System, Exchange and core database software to the latest versions. We will install new software to manage and monitor the network and consider replacement of our anti-virus software.
- 9.1.9 **New Telephone System:** We will Corporately review our dated telephone system with a view to replacing it with a more modern one consistent with the establishment of a unified communications environment capable of supporting new ways of working.

9.2 The Cloud

- 9.2.1 Use of the Cloud holds out the promise of considerable flexibility and cost-savings via a hosted infrastructure and/or hosted services – be they managed or unmanaged.
- 9.2.2 The council has to date made limited use of the Cloud. A notable exception is its Customer Relationship Management System, which is provided as a hosted service, and has been found to be a worthwhile investment.
- 9.2.3 Overall however, the Cloud is still (albeit rapidly) maturing. There are still a relatively small number of applications available as a hosted service which the council can use. Equally, pricing for hosted services and/or infrastructure have yet to stabilise at realistic levels.
- 9.2.4 Given this, we will keep our options open, periodically reviewing the market, taking advantage of appropriate opportunities as they arise.

10 SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS

10.1.1 There are now a number of models for delivery of an ICT Service open to the Council as detailed in the diagram below.³



10.1.2 The options available range from in-house provision, through informal collaboration to complete outsourcing.

10.1.3 Whilst adoption of one or more of these models may hold out the potential for cost-saving and/or improved efficiency, there are also well-recognised financial and other risks associated with some.⁴ Identifying, let alone establishing/procuring appropriate mode(s) of ICT Service Delivery is not straightforward.

10.1.4 Given this, we will undertake a detailed review of the options available, their associated costs, benefits and risks and make recommendations to the Council in the light of that review.

10.1.5 Pending this, we will however explore opportunities for informal collaboration, skills pooling and other sharing arrangements with other public sector bodies.

³ Taken from "Planting the Flag: Strategic Sourcing" SociTM November 2012.

⁴ "Costs of outsourcing: uncovering the real risks" Socitm Insight Briefing No. 28 April 2011

11 ACTIVITIES AND INVESTMENT PLAN