WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director Corporate Services

Corporate & Efficient Governance Committee: 20 April 2011
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Subject: Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy

1.   Purpose

1.1   The purpose of this report is to outline and seek agreement for a strategy for the management of the Council's ICT assets – see Appendix 1. The report also details the year one investment required and notes the bids already made and in progress to start delivering the strategy.

2.   Background

2.1   The Council agreed Corporate Asset management strategy in October 2010.

2.2   Corporate Asset Management group followed CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidance advising that Local Authorities should classify assets under six generic categories (asset bases) as follows:

- Property;
- Open Spaces;
- Roads Structures, Lighting and Water Related Infrastructure;
- Housing;
- Vehicle, Fleet and Plant; and
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

2.3   The above assets are key resources that require to be effectively managed and this is critical to ensuring assets are utilised in the most effective and efficient manner and enable the delivery of sustainable ICT services to support and enhance the delivery of front line services to the community.

2.4   The delivery of Corporate Asset Management Strategy in 2010 coincided with the review and updating of Council's 2005 ICT Strategy.

3.   Main Issues

3.1   A review by Internal Audit in 2009 identified the need to update the ICT Strategy and implement interim measures to improve the corporate governance of the ICT service.

3.2   An ICT steering group was established in September 2009 and includes representation from all Council Directorates. The ICT steering group has contributed to review of ICT policy updates, project prioritisation, continuity planning and development of ICT strategy.

3.3 ICT departmental liaison procedures have been reviewed and updated in line with departmental feedback and audit requirements.

3.4 An essential consideration when developing the ICT Strategy was to ensure full and frank feedback was gathered from service departments regarding the current ICT services. The information gathering process was facilitated by an external organisation Society of IT Managers (SOCITM).

3.5 The information gathering exercise involved workshops with key departmental representatives and partners, review of Corporate Plan, Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), departmental service plans, technical workshop with representative ICT staff and individual meetings with Directors, Departmental Heads of Service, representatives from partner organisation and service Managers.

3.6 The aim of developing the ICT strategy is to ensure that the Council's IT assets are fit for purpose over the next 5 years. The information gathering, therefore, also included consideration of key organisational issues such as shared services, departmental centralisation and financial challenges facing the Council.

3.7 In addition, the IT strategy sets out the governance structures required to support integrated planning and decision making in relation to IT asset issues and strategic planning.

3.8 The Corporate Asset Management Strategy identified that Asset Management Plans would be drawn up for each of the 6 areas which make up the Council's asset base. This ICT Strategy defines the context and actions proposed for the ICT asset area.

4.   People Implications

4.1 Effective asset management planning will require cognisance to be taken of the workforce planning implications related to models for the future delivery of core services. Arrangements will require to be sufficiently flexible to meet changing demand across a range of factors including accommodation, technology, location or services, modernisation/shared services etc., whilst at the same time providing sustainable solutions.

4.2 Introduction of technology to support changes in service delivery frequently results in changes to staff roles and responsibilities and can replace roles altogether. It is vital that all projects, therefore, engage with Human Resources at earliest opportunity to manage these staffing changes through the Council's Organisational Change Policy.

5.   Financial Implications

5.1 The strategy will, over the next 5 year period, require capital investment to help support service departments deliver and realise revenue savings through the use of technology.

5.2 Many of the current challenges facing ICT services throughout the Council arise from lack of investment and/or department rather than corporate investment. These challenges include, for example, outdated equipment, duplication of systems and information, disparate and dated infrastructure.

5.3 A number of year one 'spend to save' type propositions and capital bids have been made and are documented within the ICT Strategy. These are needed to ensure that the ICT Strategy can be delivered effectively.

5.4 Once the outcome of 2011-12 capital programme has been finalised in June 2011, a 5-year rolling plan of investment to deliver the remainder of the ICT Strategy will be brought to Committee.

6.   Risk Analysis

6.1 The lack of consistent, sufficiently robust planning in respect of each of the 6 identified asset bases is likely to result in the Council being ill prepared to meet future demands in key service areas and lacking the capacity to respond effectively to changing need. The aim of this strategy and its associated plans is to ensure that these matters are appropriately prioritised from a corporate perspective and that the financial consequences in revenue and capital investment terms can be properly assessed.

6.2 Successful delivery of the ICT Strategy to support the Council's Asset Management Strategy will, however, require to be adequately resourced if the benefits and opportunities identified within the strategy are to be realised. This will require the use of both internal resources from across the Council alongside skilled specialist advisers in key areas.

6.3 Many of the changes that technology can assist service departments with will result in new service delivery models within those services and the majority of the savings will be made within each service department rather than within ICT. It is vital, therefore, to capture the benefits and efficiencies at the outset of each project.

7.   Equalities, Health & Humans Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

7.1 The ICT Strategy is a high level piece of work that is not suitable for meaningful Impact Assessment. However, the strategy is notable by its inclusive aspirations in terms of wider means of accessing services.

7.2 However, the lower level components of the Strategy can be impact assessed in detail when appropriate. This will address the actual impact of the changes driven by the strategy.

7.3 The content of the Strategy does, however, provide opportunities for positive equality impacts. e.g. New roles for staff, more remote and flexible and home working for staff and transformation of service delivery.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 This ICT Strategy provides a framework for the effective management of the Council's ICT Assets. Its aim is to ensure that our assets are managed in a more corporate, coherent and prioritised fashion as a mechanism to support the delivery of key services, ensuring their efficiency effectiveness in meeting the current and future needs of communities, staff and partners within West Dunbartonshire Council area.

8.2 Committee is asked to note in Section 8 of the ICT Strategy document, the financial bids already progressing to support the delivery of the strategy

8.3 Committee is asked to note governance of the ICT Strategy will form part of the existing governance arrangements for Corporate Asset Management and Corporate Finance Strategies.

8.4 Committee is asked to note that an annual progress report and plan for coming year will be made available.

8.5 Note that future bids for investment to deliver the ICT strategy will be through normal bidding process and a 5-year rolling plan of investment to deliver the remainder of the ICT Strategy will be brought to Committee following agreement of the 2011-12 capital programme in June 2011.

8.6 It is recommended that the Committee approve the ICT Strategy 2011 – 2016.

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Date: 1 April 2011

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Appendices: Corporate ICT Strategy version 1.0

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All