



Lewes District Council

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IT Strategy 2007 - 2010

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Background

“What’s this about then?”

1. Three years is a long time with anything to do with computers. But this strategy attempts to set out a coherent framework for our Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments over the next three years. What we want to do, how we’ll do it and the benefits we expect to get.
2. It’s a cliché, but everything is changing faster than ever before. And most things are changing faster because of ICT developments. That’s as true in the Council and with our customers as it is anywhere else.
3. Without a strategy we run the risk of being pulled and pushed all over the place by technology changes, demands for the “next big thing”, supplier hype and chasing “quick wins” at the expense of sensible development. With a strategy we should give ourselves at least a chance of delivering what’s needed to meet our customers’ demands and improve services.

Influences

“How did we decide what to do?”

4. This strategy can’t exist in isolation, even from some of the risks described above. The main influences affecting the strategy are:
 - **Council priorities.** ICT supports the Council in achieving its priorities and this strategy has to take account of the aims in the overall Council Plan, the other key strategies and the individual service plans for the coming years.
 - **What’s gone before.** We have made significant investment in our IT systems over the past 4 years. Much of this was a result of the funding behind the national e-government programme and while we may not have agreed with the priority given to some aspects of that programme, it has left a legacy of investment that should be built upon.
 - **Rising customer expectations,** particularly around speed and availability of response because of the growth in web services, email, SMS (text) messaging. There is also an expectation of openness i.e. that we will make as much of our information as possible available.
 - **Technology changes.** As already stated, the technology changes quickly. Three years ago we were not considering “thin client” (terminals) computing or VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephones, but both are

now used in the Council very successfully. This strategy is based on what we think will be technologically practical over the next three years, but it will undoubtedly have to be reviewed in time.

- **Shared services.** We are being encouraged by the Government to look for efficiency savings with partners through the development of shared services. We already have some sharing arrangements in place that have brought about savings, but this will be an increasing theme over the next three years.
 - **Finance.** The cost of hardware has been falling steadily over the past few years, but application and implementation costs have been rising reflecting the increased complexity of systems and the need to change “back-office” processes to make best use of the investment made.
5. The strategy went through a rigorous evaluation internally involving in particular the IT staff, Corporate Management Team and the IT Steering Group.

Objectives

“So what are we going to do?”

6. We are going to concentrate on the following objectives:
- **Increasing flexibility** within the authority by improving facilities for mobile and home working and to allow more flexible use of our accommodation.
 - **Improving access** to information and services for both internal and external customers.
 - **Improving resilience** by further efforts on security, disaster recovery and business continuity planning and by reducing the number of potential failure points in the infrastructure
 - **Increasing efficiency** by helping departments to exploit all the functionality in our existing ICT systems, ensuring that new investment has a sound business case behind it, providing more self service facilities to reduce the demands on staff and introducing systems that improve business processes and help reduce complexity and cost.
 - **Reducing complexity** in both our systems and the business processes around them by integrating systems, standardising equipment and introducing corporate wide tools so users get a standard reliable service.

- **Improving information usage** by improving storage, sharing it more effectively and managing it as a resource. Also by having adequate procedures in place to ensure we have good quality data.
- **Improving user skills** by identifying and delivering high quality learning and development activities.

Methods

“How are we going to do it?”

7. Delivering this strategy will involve a large number of overlapping projects and the planning can't be done in isolation from departmental service priorities. And obviously, the costs and technologies will change over the next three years so what is not possible now, might become so later and vice versa. Therefore, the activities needed to deliver this strategy will be reviewed each year and an annual service plan setting out the year's projects will be produced each March for the coming financial year.
8. Broadly though, the major planned steps for the next three years (subject to a suitable business case) are:
 - An improved telephone system
 - A corporate records management system
 - A corporate customer contact system
 - Further development of the web site to improve self-service facilities
 - More technological support for home and mobile working
 - Wireless connectivity in our office buildings
 - Further investment in our network infrastructure to build in resilience and security
 - Further investment in our GIS (Geographic Information System) tools to help consolidate and present information
 - Increased ICT and systems training for staff
 - Consolidation of servers and storage to help reduce costs

Outcomes

“What will anyone notice?”

11. If these objectives are met then in three years time we will see:
 - Less departmental and more corporate systems and methods of working, particularly related to customer contact handling, fault resolution, information management etc. This will lead to a change in organisational structure, at least for those working in these areas
 - All internal administration functions handled electronically
 - Reduced customer contact via “face to face” or telephone, but more via email, web forms, text messaging
 - An increased demand for IT support and resources, but offset by savings elsewhere in the organisation
 - A reduced accommodation demand

Benefits

“What difference will it make to anyone?”

9. Customers, whether individual citizens or businesses, will have quicker and easier access to the information they need. They can be confident that the information we hold about them is accurate, relevant, and secure, shared responsibly when we need to and can be accessed quickly and efficiently. As a result the services they receive will be improved, be quicker, more responsive, and more consistent, no matter how accessed.
10. Staff will have the equipment they need, running the systems they need, holding the information they need. They will become more skilled and able to help resolve issues beyond their particular service specialism. Their routine tasks will be more automated freeing their time to concentrate on delivering quality services.
11. Partner organisations will be able to access the information they need, manage information sharing well, and integrate services where appropriate.
12. Councillors will see the same benefits as the staff do, so they will be able to respond to constituents’ needs and have access to the information they need to see the effectiveness of their policies or inform their decisions in the future.

Resources

“What will it take to do this?”

13. The Council already invests heavily in ICT and there is a central ICT budget. The IT Unit’s staffing is currently sufficient. But to fully implement this Strategy will need further investment.
14. There is some scope within the current budget for minor investments on infrastructure, but for many of the major projects this strategy suggests, increased investment following a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits will be needed. This will be done on a project by project basis and where necessary the strategy and annual service plans will have to be changed to reflect where a project is not viable. Some investment may be through shared service initiatives that are designed to produce revenue savings that can then fund further investment.

Risks

“What could go wrong?”

15. The main risks to this strategy are that the total programme is too expensive or does not bring the anticipated benefits, that technology changes require us to re-evaluate the programme, that increasing shared service work changes the need for some of the planned improvements, that resources have to be diverted to other unplanned priorities and that national decisions or priorities bring about other work.
16. These risks will be minimised by keeping the delivery plans for the improvements under constant review, prioritising any issues that arise and where necessary agreeing changes in the strategy with the Lead Councillor.

More Information

“Is there more detail?”

17. By necessity this strategy is at a high level. The detail of how much of this will be achieved or to what level is included in a number of other documents .e.g. Security Policy, Annual Service Plans, Web Development Plan. These are all available on the Council’s intranet, Infolink.
18. Also on Infolink are a number of other strategies and plans that will affect and be affected by how the strategy is implemented. These include:
 - Business Continuity Plan

- Data Quality Strategy
- Risk Management Strategy