

North Somerset Council

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REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY & SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 14 MARCH 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: MEMBERS' ICT UPDATE

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

**OFFICER PRESENTING: MIKE RIGGALL, STRATEGIC ICT CLIENT
MANAGER, CORPORATE SERVICES**

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel notes the progress being made in regards to the development of ICT services for members' and takes the opportunity to question and challenge officers accordingly.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report provides details of actions and projects that have been completed in recent months specifically to improve ICT for members. The report also makes reference to organisational ICT projects which have improved general ICT services and benefitted members.

2. POLICY

- 2.1. Improving IT services to members is a priority of the council's ICT Strategy.
- 2.2. Ensuring that members have access to the information they need to make considered and informed decisions and fulfil their duties as councillors is a statutory requirement of the authority.

3. DETAILS

Context

- 3.1. The members' ICT service is delivered by the council's strategic technical partner, Agilisys, as part of the overall Support Services Contract. Contractually and operationally the support element of the service is separate from the mainstream ICT service and performance is measured against its own service level agreement.
- 3.2. The enhancement of members' ICT systems is carried out through the provisions of the mainstream ICT service within the Support Services Contract. The priority of such projects across the council is determined through an assessment of intended project outcomes against council aims and objectives, ability to generate savings, make work practices more efficient, all of which are considered against the cost of implementation. Development resources are limited and in high demand; the council

is currently maintaining a schedule of 112 active projects, 14 of which are considered major projects such as Mobile Working and the replacement of the Northgate adult social care system.

- 3.3. ICT services for members are governed through a cross-party steering group. This group is chaired by the Executive Member for ICT, and it provides reports to the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny panel.
- 3.4. The steering group provides a forum in which to raise frustrations with the ICT service, not to highlight an individual's issues, but to identify and resolve those elements of the service that do not work well and negatively affect many, or all, members.
- 3.5. The steering group also prioritises and promotes the ideas put forward by members to improve the ICT service itself, and to improve the technology deployed to ensure that it is fit for purpose in supporting the members in their roles as elected councillors.
- 3.6. All ICT services within the council operate within an information security framework which is designed to ensure the integrity of ICT systems and protect the information which those systems manage. Whilst the technical equipment and many of the software tools used by the council are widely used domestically, the council cannot adopt a domestic approach to information security. Security of our systems is achieved at a price which is often realised as a restriction of some functionality that we take for granted when using equipment in a domestic environment.

Current Development Requests

- 3.7. As described in paragraph 3.5 above, the steering group provides governance over a forward plan of ICT development activity. A summary of topics that are currently being managed by the steering group plan can be found in the table below:

Members' Requirement	Progress Summary	Report References
Provide access to the HR system to enable members to complete online expenses forms.	This facility will imminently be available following re-engineering of the council's iTrent HR and payroll system. Business processes will need to be changed to accommodate new way of working.	3.8 – 3.10
Allow e-mail to be retained on the iPads indefinitely.	Completed in 2016. E-mail can now be retained on an iPad indefinitely. At some point an iPad will consume all available storage space which will require the removal of unwanted or unused information.	3.11 – 3.13
Allow members to store documents such as officers' reports and e-mail attachments in a suitable location outside the iPad's e-mail client.	Initial solution completed in 2017. It is possible to access Microsoft OneDrive from members' iPads which provides long term storage for corporate documents.	3.14 – 3.16

Make it easier to chair a meeting using the iPad.	Reported to steering group that this cannot be resolved using the current equipment. Using a hard copy of a meeting agenda helps to alleviate the problem to some degree.	3.17 – 3.19
Provide access to the council diary.	To be delivered through Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools.	3.20 – 3.21
Provide a mechanism to allow members to collaborate on documents.	To be delivered through Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools.	3.22
Provide a video conferencing facility on the iPad to prevent the need to attend some meetings in person.	Apple Facetime is installed on the iPads however this does not currently integrate with the council's other video conferencing systems.	3.23 – 3.24
Make the committee papers application available to personal iPads.	As discussed in 3.6 previously this is a restriction caused by the information security framework and will not be resolved in the foreseeable future.	3.25 – 3.28
Enable access to the intranet.	The intranet will shortly be changing and services which are provided as an integral part of it will be accessible to members via their iPads.	3.29 – 3.32

Online Completion of Expenses

- 3.8. Officers in the council complete expenses claims electronically using the iTrent HR and Payroll system. Until recently this system has only been accessible from devices that were either directly wired to the corporate network, or connected by using a virtual private network (VPN) over a wireless network. The reasons for this are complex and technical and largely revolve around design decisions which were taken to prevent members from having to establish secure network connections to the council's systems in order to access the most basic functions available on the iPad.
- 3.9. The council has recently changed the configuration of iTrent such that it is now accessible from outside the corporate network. This change enables teachers to access payslips electronically, and members to submit expenses claims.
- 3.10. New business processes will be required to support members' electronic expenses and details of the new process maps will be released to the steering group when they are complete.

E-mail Retention

- 3.11. Restrictions governing the length of time for which e-mail could be retained on an iPad have been removed so that e-mail will, theoretically at least, remain on the device indefinitely.

- 3.12. Members are still bound by policy controls which are designed to ensure that the authority does not breach the principles of the Data Protection Act. Officers and members must adhere to the Records Management Policy and retain information within the constraints of the Record Retention and Disposal Schedule. Advice on both documents can be provided by the Information Governance Team if required. Members should also be mindful that, in spite of the additional capacity provided by the new model of iPad, storage space is still a finite commodity.
- 3.13. In deciding to retain correspondence, members should also be mindful of requests for information made to the authority under the Freedom of Information Act (2000), and subject access requests made under the Data Protection Act (1998). The scope of both Acts of Parliament relates only to material already held by the organisation. If material has been deleted *prior* to a request being made then that material does not fall into scope of either Act.

Network Storage Area for Documents other than E-mail

- 3.14. Members have indicated that it would be very helpful to have access to a document storage area where they could hold information in structured folders. Previously the iPads archived committee papers automatically after three months and offered no facility to save valuable committee papers, or any other documents such as e-mail file attachments, in a central storage area for future reference.
- 3.15. As part of the ICT Transformation Programme, the council has deployed a number of Microsoft Office 365 tools, most of which are either already available to members from their iPads, or will be available to members shortly. One such tool, Microsoft OneDrive, provides a personal storage space that allows members to create their own folders and transfer files from their iPads for longer-term storage.
- 3.16. Two OneDrive training sessions were offered to members during February and just under half of members made use of the opportunity. Further sessions are currently being arranged to take place in March to accommodate members who were not able to attend the earlier dates.

Chairing Meetings

- 3.17. Officers recognise that it is difficult to chair a meeting efficiently using any single screen mobile electronic device to manage the agenda, make suitable notes and read the meeting papers. Whilst the iPad screen can be divided into two windows, the physical size of the screen limits the usefulness of this functionality.
- 3.18. Apple's iPad Pro potentially offers a solution in the form of a physically larger device however further work is required to assess whether simply increasing screen size would have the desired outcome.
- 3.19. In the short term, reliance on a hard copy of the meeting agenda offers a low-tech approach to ease the burden of chairing a meeting and the iPads have been reconfigured such that they now offer the ability to print to a suitable Air Printer. Whilst printing from the committee papers app is not possible, the agendas of all council meetings are available on the council web site and can be printed from there.

Council Diary, Shared Calendars and Collaborative Working

- 3.20. The council diary is held in a public folder which is accessed through the Outlook e-mail programme and provides a view of all democratic services meetings taking place across the council. Despite its name, the public folder is only accessible from within the council. The council diary has not historically been accessible from members' iPads for the same reason described in paragraph 3.8 that renders the iTrent HR and Payroll system inaccessible from iPads.

- 3.21. The deployment of Microsoft Office 365 however now allows all of Microsoft's office collaboration tools to be accessible to members and this includes the use of shared calendars. Whilst there is a technical distinction between a public folder and a shared calendar, the explanation of this is beyond the scope of this report. It is possible however to convert a public folder into a shared calendar and this approach is being taken to make the council diary accessible to members.
- 3.22. Officers will work with the Members' ICT Steering Group to exploit the potential of the other Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools to enable the use of group shared calendars and offer members a means to collaborate on documents and projects that can be configured at different levels, e.g. by party, ward or specific interests.
- 3.23. The iPads already offer Apple's Facetime application for the purposes of conducting one-to-one video calls with colleagues and training in this application can be arranged as part of the dedicated members' ICT support service.
- 3.24. In total there are three video conferencing systems currently in use within the council:
- Room-based Lifesize cameras and screens installed in key meeting rooms in Castlewood and the Town Hall
 - Microsoft Skype for Business which is currently deployed on every council Windows desktop
 - Apple Facetime which is installed on members' iPads

The council has commissioned a feasibility study to investigate the work required to integrate all three systems such that it is possible to video-conference between the different technologies deployed.

Personal Devices Used to Access authority Systems

- 3.25. The authority does not allow personal devices to be used to connect directly to the corporate network, nor to store authority records that are not in the public domain.
- 3.26. The information security policy and its associated implementation framework were last reviewed in August 2015 by the Internal Audit department and the controls and restrictions implemented by the authority were found to be appropriate. There is no reason to review these policies again at the current time.
- 3.27. Regardless of the authority's information security policy, the committee papers application will not work on a privately-owned iPad without considerable further development work by Agilisys.
- 3.28. For members, access to the authority's e-mail system from a privately owned computer is possible using Outlook Web App (OWA) which is another of the Microsoft Office 365 tools. This can be accessed through the Office 365 portal at <https://office.com> . Members will need to log in using their domain account names and passwords as fingerprint authentication will not work in this case.

Access to the intranet

- 3.29. The existing intranet provides access to information pages maintained by individual service teams across the council and as a gateway to other systems such as finance, HR/Payroll and the ICT self service desk. It is also provides easy access to the internal telephone directory.
- 3.30. Similar to most other council IT systems, the intranet is not accessible from outside the council's network and remains inaccessible from members' iPads. The reasons for this have been explained in 3.8 and 3.20 previously.
- 3.31. The intranet has remained in its current form for over ten years and is now operating on a platform that is well beyond its service life. The council has considered many

options for its replacement over the course of the past six months and has now settled on an approach that will see the intranet reduced essentially to a home page to act as a gateway to other services, with all other intranet functionality being delivered through the Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools described previously.

- 3.32. As Members already have access to the Office 365 collaboration tools via their iPads, they will be able to access information and services that are currently delivered as an integral part of the intranet. It is important however to be able to distinguish between services which are provided by the intranet directly and services which are delivered by other systems and only use the intranet as a launching point. This can be a difficult concept to grasp as the distinction is not always obvious. The online telephone directory for example is an integral part of the intranet whereas the corporate mapping tool, Earthlight, is not.

ICT Support

- 3.33. Members have direct access to their own dedicated ICT support service provided by Agilisys. There is no requirement for members to speak to the ICT service desk and log a call in the way that is expected of council officers.
- 3.34. The service takes the form of a named officer permanently assigned to the role however during periods of sickness and leave, duties are allocated to another Agilisys engineer.
- 3.35. In addition to providing one-to-one support for all ICT issues and incidents, the officer is available to conduct drop-in sessions, provide training either on a group or a one-to-one basis, write suitable documentation and ensure that information reaches members, particularly when there are problems with any of the council's major ICT systems.

Extending the Scope of the Committee Meetings Application

- 3.36. The committee papers application will only support the distribution of documents to members that are part of the formal committee process; there is no means to distribute ad hoc documents, or to support other meetings. Whilst this is technically possible to achieve, there are potential implications for the democratic services officers who would have to manage the back-office processes that are required to send the correct documents to the correct members. The application presents additional limitations when considering the flexibility requirements that can be demanded of informal meetings, and also for facilitating those meetings which include membership from those who do not have access to the papers application.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1. Consultation with members is managed through the ICT steering group, a cross-party group of members interested in ICT issues, which reports to the scrutiny panel.
- 4.2. Any likely changes in working practices of members that arise as a result of ICT projects and affect how officers communicate with members will be discussed through the Directorate Engagement Boards. These Boards are part of the formal governance process for the services delivered through the Support Services Contract.
- 4.3. Democratic services officers will be required to contribute to the design of any solution that involves distributing papers for meetings outside of the formal committee structure.
- 4.4. External consultation is not required for the projects likely to arise from this programme.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The majority of projects being discussed with the ICT steering group are corporate projects with appropriate funding already in place. The deployment of Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools for example was achieved through the ICT transformation programme and no specific additional costs were attributable to members' budgets.
- 5.2. Where additional costs are necessary to deliver priority outcomes for members, such costs will, where possible, be contained within the provisions of the Support Services Contract, or existing capital and revenue budgets.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1. The major risks and opportunities associated with the work plan are summarised in the following table:

Risk / Opportunity	Mitigation
Change in working practices for members, particularly in respect of submitting expenses electronically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive training and change management plan. • Bespoke documentation and other training material. • Comprehensive support available through the dedicated members' ICT support service.
iPads run out of storage capacity and cannot accommodate new committee papers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term storage for documentation has been made available via Microsoft OneDrive for Business.
Bypassing some technical security controls to simplify working processes for members increases the likelihood of compromise of council systems or inappropriate disclosure of personal information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks have been recognised and accepted in order to allow the iPads to function at a basic level without the need maintain secure connections to council systems.
Microsoft's development roadmap for the Office 365 collaboration tools is not clear and could lead to the authority developing solutions using tools which Microsoft intends to deprecate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a 'ways of working' approach that reflects Microsoft's vision of how it anticipates a unitary authority using the Office 365 tools. • Commission Microsoft to run a development workshop from which a suitable strategy will be produced.
Technology not reliable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive testing. • Dedicated support service for members.

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. It is accepted that not all members will be able to adopt the new technology and the provision of hard copy material and traditional methods for submitting expenses for a small number of members is likely to continue throughout the life of this Council.

- 7.2. New technology can assist individuals with visual impairments and some other conditions such as dyslexia to read documentation. Where it is agreed that this is not appropriate however hard copy material will continue to be provided where a particular case can be justified.
- 7.3. All committee documents will continue to be available to the general public through the council's web site and existing arrangements for the statutory publication of notices and papers will continue to remain unaffected.

8. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. There are unlikely to be any immediate implications for the wider organisation arising from the information described in this report.
- 8.2. Some of the longer term development projects described in Section 3, such as the use of technology to support virtual working groups, will require officers to work in different ways to support the members. Such change management will be handled through any resulting project board.
- 8.3. Any changes to the distribution of committee papers will impact the operational processes of the committee practitioners.

9. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1. The only element of the work described in the report which has required an analysis of options relates to the replacement of the council's intranet. The options considered included:
 - Build a replacement intranet using a Microsoft SharePoint platform
 - Build a replacement intranet using an alternative technology platform
 - Utilise a purpose-built, "out of the box" intranet solution
 - Utilise a digital collaboration platform such as Knowledge Hub to replace some elements of the intranet
 - Replace the services currently provided by the intranet using existing Microsoft Office 365 tools
- 9.2. The organisational requirements for a replacement intranet were captured as part of a council-wide engagement exercise managed by the Corporate Transformation Team. An analysis of these requirements indicated that a solution could be created from existing tools and the expense of a traditional intranet was not warranted.

AUTHOR

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council ICT Strategy 2013-2016

B:\F& R\Support Services Partnership Team\Service Delivery\ICT\Service Strategy Documents\2013-2016\ICT Strategy 2013-2016 1_0.pdf

Mobile Technology for Members, Report to Scrutiny Panel of 17 September 2013

B:\F& R\Support Services Partnership Team\Service Delivery\ICT\Projects\Members iPads\Report to Scrutiny Members iPads 1_0.pdf

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