



Transformational Government: ICT Strategy 2007-2012

September 2007

Executive summary

Our vision for the provision of ICT services reflects the overall ambitions of the Council. Over the next 5 years we will facilitate:

Delivery of quality services for our customers based on local need and value for money.

Moving towards being an Authority that commissions rather than directly provides services.

Improved efficiency, providing the same or better quality of service at reduced cost.

Reduction of the Council's carbon footprint.

We will achieve this by:

Harmonisation of ICT systems – we will continue to work with the other Councils in North Yorkshire and the wider region to move towards a greater harmonisation of ICT systems.

Improve networking infrastructure – we will further develop our network infrastructure to enable systems to be accessed from remote locations, support remote users and provide improved telephony facilities.

Mobile/Remote technologies – we will maintain an awareness of the latest developments and as part of the development of improved business processes we will introduce further mobile/remote technologies where appropriate to enable the provision of services from remote locations.

Business process improvement – we will develop improved business processes and introduce of new ways of working to take maximum advantage of the opportunities made available by technology to realise efficiency savings. All service areas will be involved in improving efficiencies and ICT Services will advise and facilitate the provision of the technologies and supporting infrastructure to enable this to happen.

Rationalisation of assets – as part of our drive to improve overall efficiency we will work towards rationalising our ICT infrastructure and the amount of ICT equipment we use, and reducing our requirements for office accommodation.

Skills development – investment in skills development will be required to ensure our current systems are utilised to maximum effectiveness and staff and councillors are equipped with the necessary skills to enable them to use new technologies and work processes.

New policies – to address increased potential for breaches of security and to ensure systems and technology are being used as securely and effectively as possible.

Organising to deliver – we will investigate the potential for further partnership working; review our ICT staffing structure; and where appropriate, introduce structural changes with the aim of reducing the number of ICT staff we directly employ.

Maintaining our current systems – we will ensure that our ICT assets are secure, and maintained and upgraded in line with our business needs and suppliers' recommendations.

Promoting take-up of electronic services – as this is the most cost effective method for our customers to deal with us.

National strategy – we will continue to maintain an awareness of national developments (e.g. Government Connect) and respond appropriately.

Budgets – implementation of the strategic developments identified in this document will require up-front investment with the potential to realise significant benefits, ongoing efficiencies and cost savings. A benefits realisation plan will be developed to ensure that the monies saved by the implementation of this ICT Strategy are secured.

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1. Introduction

Our vision for the provision of ICT services reflects the overall ambitions of the Council. Over the next 5 years we will facilitate:

Delivery of quality services for our customers based on local need and value for money.

Moving towards being an Authority that commissions rather than directly provides services.

Improved efficiency, providing the same or better quality of service at reduced cost.

Reduction of the Council's carbon footprint.

This strategy document provides an overarching framework in which ICT will be delivered across the council. It outlines the vision for the provision of ICT services and sets the direction for the implementation and use of ICT systems and supporting infrastructure.

This is a strategy for the whole Council and whilst our ICT Section will have a key part to play in its implementation, it will require all service units to play their part to ensure its success.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with councillors on the eGovernment Working Group, members of our Strategic Management Team; Heads of Service; Access to Services Project Board; and key staff.

2. Current Position

We have undergone a period of significant transformation as a result of implementing our eGovernment Programme. We are now in a position where 100% of services that can be accessed electronically are available online and numerous systems are in place to support service delivery.

Website

We have 100% of services available online for residents and businesses. Residents are able to request services or make payments as well as find information about every service we deliver.

Since we made all services available online there has been well over 100% increase in the number of visitors to the website.

As of September 2007 we are receiving 30,000 visits from 15,000 different people viewing over 150,000 pages per month. This equates to over 40% of all households in the Selby district. In 2006/07 we received over £300k in online payments.

In April 2007 we launched our re-branded website with improved navigation structure to improve the accessibility of our information and services. This introduced our new MySelby page which offers people a simple way of finding out about a variety of local services and useful day-to-day information, meaning that the website is an even more effective local resource for the whole community.

Our 'Elections 2007 – Live Results!' feature published live election results for the area's town and parish council elections online as they were declared. The website data shows that the results page for the Selby District Council election was viewed nearly 6,500 times during the election count period and over 1,000 separate page views were recorded for the parish council results. This was recognised by a national publication as Selby District Council was one of a very few authorities to provide this service.

Our website is a key element in the self-service journey, making it easier for our customers to be able to serve themselves.

Public Access to Planning Information

The online planning application service has continued to improve since its introduction over 12 months ago. We are currently rated as one of the top 40 authorities in the UK in the latest Pendleton national survey conducted by Central Government. The survey looked at a range of criteria, including being able to view planning applications on-line, access the Selby District Local Plan, see relevant reports, submit applications electronically and pay for applications via our Website.

We are in the process of providing a similar service to enable building control applications to be available online.

Intranet

We have enabled access to the Intranet via the Web to facilitate remote access for Councillors and officers working outside the office.

Remote Working

We have enhanced the services to enable improved access to our systems remotely enabling more staff to work from home.

Telephone System

We are near the end of the process of implementing a new telephone system. Our current system has reached the end of its useful life and we need the enhanced facilities that a modern system can offer in order to provide a better service for customers in the Customer Contact Centre. The new system will also provide enhanced performance monitoring to help improve and ensure the consistency of service to our customers.

Customer Contact Centre

We have negotiated a lease for premises in Selby town to accommodate the Customer Contact Centre. The majority of staff have been recruited and are in the process of being trained to provide this new service.

The introduction of the Customer Contact Centre will contribute to the reduction in our office accommodation requirements enabling the potential to rationalise our assets.

This is supported by our CRM System which links the customer service advisors working in the front-office dealing with customers, with the specialist staff working in the back-office.

Partnership working

We have made significant progress with working in partnership with East Riding of Yorkshire (ERYC) who host a number of systems on our behalf:

Council Tax

Benefits

Intranet

Customer Relationship Management System

In addition ERYC manage our Firewall installation. The result of working in partnership with ERYC is that we have been able to:

reduce the number of ICT staff directly employed by the Council;

reduce the overall cost of providing the service;

gain access to specialist expertise; and

improve resilience.

Following the outcome of the Unitary Bid for North Yorkshire, we will work towards the implementation of an enhanced two-tier structure. This will mean working more closely with North Yorkshire County Council and the other Councils in North Yorkshire to deliver services in partnership.

SMS Pilot

We have implemented the use of SMS messaging for customers to report graffiti, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles.

3. Looking to the future...

3.1 Harmonisation of ICT systems

The harmonisation of systems with our neighbouring councils will be a key element in facilitating partnership working.

Harmonisation of systems will open up the possibility of hosting ICT systems at a reduced number of locations in the region. For example, if all councils in the area were using the same systems the potential would exist to combine systems on a reduced number of servers and licences covering a larger area with overall reduced support and running costs. This also has the potential to reduce our accommodation requirements (*See 3.5 Rationalisation of assets*).

It is expected that there will be procurement benefits if we are in a position where we all buy and maintain the same systems. Having the same systems in place will also enable working practices to be re-engineered more easily to a common standard and for these to be shared amongst a number of councils.

The ICT Managers from the Councils in North Yorkshire meet regularly to discuss developments and share best practice. As systems are replaced there has been a migration towards the harmonisation of ICT systems.

We will embrace the potential for enhanced two-tier working and work with North Yorkshire County Council and the other Councils in North Yorkshire and the wider region towards a greater harmonisation of ICT systems.

Actions that we will take towards this goal will include:

- maintaining and reviewing records of ICT systems in place in the region;

- establishing preferred systems and suppliers;

- working to harmonise system replacement dates; and

investigating the potential for joint procurement, including the possibility to jointly procure fewer larger systems to cater for more than one council.

We will reinforce this by introducing new procurement and authorisation processes (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*) to ensure that when ICT Systems are procured, where possible and appropriate, these are harmonised with the systems implemented by councils in the region.

3.2 Improve networking infrastructure

Historically there has been the requirement for ICT systems and the users of those systems to be in close proximity to each other, typically in the same building, with network cabling installed within the building used to connect the two.

With the advent of improved communications technologies it is possible to decouple the system from the user. This enables:

users to work away from the immediate vicinity of the computer network; and

ICT systems to be hosted remotely.

Once the users and the systems do not have to be in close proximity, the potential for introducing new working practices arises.

For example it would enable the possibility for all the processing relating to a particular service to be undertaken at a central location in North Yorkshire. Or it could be possible for this processing to be distributed throughout the region with the ICT system centrally hosted - or a combination of both.

There has been a significant increase in the connection speeds available over the Internet and more recently, wireless networking technologies that provide broadband speeds have become available. In addition, North Yorkshire County Council is developing a high speed wide area network (WAN) covering the whole of North Yorkshire.

We will further develop our network infrastructure to enable our systems to be accessed from remote locations, support remote users, facilitate improved partnership working and provide improved telephony facilities.

To achieve this we will review our network infrastructure requirements with regard to the other elements in this strategy and where appropriate we will;

- increase our utilisation of the County WAN;
- improve our Internet connectivity;
- implement wireless networking to support mobile/remote technologies;
- and
- implement software that enables access to systems from remote locations.

This has the potential to facilitate increased partnership working to improve efficiency in service delivery (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*) and could potentially mean better utilisation of office space across North Yorkshire (*See 3.5 Rationalisation of assets*).

3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies

There have been significant improvements in the mobile/remote technologies available, the key improvements being:

- smaller, more robust devices enabling increased portability;
- longer battery life and reduced power consumption allowing users to work remotely, away from immediate sources of mains power; and
- introduction of wireless networking capabilities allowing users to connect to computer systems from remote locations.

In effect, the latest technology now allows the potential (with appropriate security measures in place) for authorised users to access any of our ICT systems from virtually any location. Examples include working:

- from home
- on the road

whilst visiting customers
at a remote office location

Enabling more staff to work remotely:

opens up the possibility of delivering services at the customer's location (e.g. their home, business or other organisation);
enables officers to work more closely with our customers;
offers the potential to provide a better service at reduced cost; and
will contribute to the reduction in the our accommodation requirements.

The Council currently uses mobile/remote technologies to support:

Rent Collection
Housing Repairs
Car Parking; and
Markets.

In addition, all frontline services have been issued with mobile telephones so that staff can communicate with and gain access to information whilst away from the office.

We will maintain an awareness of the latest developments and trends in mobile/remote technologies and wireless networking (*See 3.2 Improve networking infrastructure*). As part of the development of improved business processes (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*) we will introduce further mobile/remote technologies where appropriate to enable the provision of services from remote locations.

3.4 Business process improvement

Developments in technology now make possible new, more efficient ways of delivering services that have yet to be fully realised. Officers no longer need

to be tied to their desks or work in a fixed location, so services can more easily be designed around the customer and their requirements.

Improvements to our networking infrastructure (*See 3.2 Improve networking infrastructure*) and the introduction of further mobile/remote technologies (*See 3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies*) will enable new more efficient ways of working.

We will develop improved business processes and introduce new ways of working to take maximum advantage of the opportunities made available by technology to realise efficiency savings. All service areas will be involved in improving efficiencies and ICT Services will advise and facilitate the provision of the technologies and supporting infrastructure to enable this to happen.

Examples of where potential improvements to business processes can be made include:

Enabling more staff to work remotely will contribute to the reduction in our accommodation requirements.

Maximising the use of our document image processing system will reduce our storage and accommodation requirements and utilising features such as automated workflow will improve the speed and accuracy of communication.

Improving the use of our Intranet and the introduction of internal eForms will facilitate improved internal communication and efficiency.

Improving the use and take-up of online consultation will reduce paper, printing and postage requirements.

Introducing networked printers will lead to a reduction in the number of desktop printers required and the ongoing cost of maintenance and consumables and replacements.

Improving our procurement processes to ensure that ICT facilities are not duplicated. For example this could prevent the purchase of a desktop printer when a suitable networked printer was already available in the area.

Introducing new procurement and authorisation processes to ensure that when ICT Systems are procured, where possible and appropriate,

these are harmonised with the systems implemented by the other councils in the region.

It is expected that the benefit of these elements together will also lead to a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint, both reducing costs and being of benefit to the environment.

3.5 Rationalisation of assets

Plans are in development to relocate to a new civic centre at some point in the future. If we can reduce our demand on office accommodation then the potential exists to occupy less office space than we currently require. This provides possibly the single biggest potential to realise significant cashable efficiency savings.

Advances in technology have made available more powerful ICT equipment. We presently have ICT systems installed on separate servers to provide the level of power required. With the introduction of more powerful systems the possibility exists to combine a number of currently separate systems onto a single system (*See 3.1 Harmonisation of ICT systems*). This has the potential both to reduce overall costs and the amount of space required to house the equipment.

By making use of networking technologies it is possible to utilise fewer higher capacity networked printers with lower running costs. This has the potential to reduce the amount of individual desktop printers and the amount we spend on consumables and replacement equipment (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*).

The use of mobile/remote technologies (*See 3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies*) mean that staff are able to work outside the office thereby reducing the demand on office accommodation. With improved business processes (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*) together with the introduction of changes to the way our accommodation is used, we can potentially make a significant reduction in our requirement for office space.

We can also make better use of our existing systems to reduce our storage and printing requirements. For example maximising the use of our document

image processing system will reduce our storage and accommodation requirements and utilising features such as automated workflow will improve the speed and accuracy of communication (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*).

By working in partnership the potential exists to further increase the number of systems hosted remotely (*See 3.1 Harmonisation of ICT systems*). This will have the effect of further reducing our accommodation demands.

Improving take-up of the website (*See 3.10 Promoting take-up of electronic services*) will lead to a reduction over time of the number of customers who need to call in to the office or use the telephone. This will in turn lead to the possibility to reduce the requirement to provide face-to-face services and therefore reduce the demand for office space used to provide these services.

As part of our drive to rationalise our assets and improve overall efficiency, where appropriate we will:

- take advantage of the advances in technology to rationalise our ICT infrastructure and reduce the amount of ICT equipment we use;

- introduce mobile/remote technologies and improved business processes to reduce our accommodation requirements (*See 3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies*);

- maximise the use of our current systems to reduce printing and storage costs (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*);

- work in partnership and seek to host ICT systems externally (*See 3.1 Harmonisation of ICT systems*);

- promote the take-up of electronic services as this is the most cost effective way to provide services (*See 3.10 Promoting take-up of electronic services*);

3.6 Skills development

With the introduction of new technologies (*See 3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies*) and improved business processes (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*), investment in skills development will be required to ensure that

staff (end-users and specialist ICT staff) and councillors are equipped with the capability to make full use of the systems available.

As part of the redesign of our business processes we will:

- undertake an assessment of training needs; and
- develop a training plan in line with our workforce strategy to address the training needs identified.

Where possible we will seek to utilise skills already existing within the organisation and take advantage of 'train the trainer' training to reduce costs.

3.7 New policies

This ICT strategy introduces a number of changes that need to work together if these are to be successfully implemented and the resulting benefits realised.

The introduction of remote and mobile technologies (*See 3.3 Mobile/Remote technologies*) to enable new ways of working outside of the office environment increases the potential for breaches of security to occur.

Examples could be where:

- a laptop containing sensitive data gets stolen; or
- someone external to the Authority obtains usernames/passwords to gain access to our systems.

The successful introduction of new business processes (*See 3.4 Business process improvement*) is dependent on those concerned following the correct procedures. If processes and procedures are not followed correctly there would potentially be a risk of a security breach occurring or failure of a business process.

There is also the potential to reduce our carbon footprint by ensuring everyone uses power-saving features on their desktop ICT equipment.

To address these issues and to ensure systems and technology are being used as effectively as possible we will identify the areas where policies are

required and introduce new policies or amend existing policies as appropriate with the aim of ensuring a high level of security, efficient working practices and the reduction in our carbon footprint.

3.8 Organising to deliver

The advent of improved communications technologies together with the implementation of improved networking infrastructure (*See 3.2 Improve networking infrastructure*) offers the potential for ICT systems to be hosted at locations outside the Council's office accommodation.

We currently have a number of systems hosted externally:

our website is hosted by our website supplier;

our Council Tax, Benefits, Intranet and CRM systems are hosted by East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC); and

ERYC also manage our Firewall installation.

The result is that:

we are able to access a level of skills that would not be practical to maintain in-house;

we have reduced the pressure on our office accommodation; and

we have been able to reduce the number of ICT staff we directly employ.

We recognise that being a relatively small organisation it is not practical or cost effective for us to maintain the required level of specialist ICT skills to support all our systems and infrastructure.

We will investigate the potential for further partnership working in order to:

reduce our dependence on highly skilled ICT specialists within the organisation, moving towards accessing specialist skills as required from outside the organisation; and

move towards the external hosting of all our systems if appropriate and cost effective to do so (*Also see 3.1 Harmonisation of ICT systems and 3.5 Rationalisation of assets*).

We will pursue this together with a review of our ICT staffing structure and where appropriate introduce structural changes with the aim of reducing the number of ICT staff we directly employ.

3.9 Maintaining our current systems

We will keep track of all upgrade and maintenance requirements and their associated costs and keep our systems up to date in line with our business needs and suppliers' recommendations.

We will ensure that our systems are secure as far as is reasonably practical and introduce or amend policies as appropriate to ensure that this level of security is maintained.

Where legislative changes require systems to be updated we will ensure that these are implemented within the timescales required.

We will ensure adequate budget provision (*See 3.12 Budgets*) to enable systems to be upgraded and maintained in line with our requirements.

3.10 Promoting take-up of electronic services

We want our customers to use our electronic channels for communication as this is the most cost effective method to deal with us.

We have been running a highly effective take-up campaign to promote the take-up of electronic services by citizens, the business community, and other organisations, achieving over 300% increase in take-up since all services were first made available electronically in December 2005.

Our website is advertised on the sides of refuse collection vehicles, recycling vehicles, and property services vehicles. We also developed a campaign of

media-releases devising original ideas and twists on stories to ensure they were published in the local press.

We will continue to promote the availability of electronic services to encourage their take-up. We will continue to issue media-releases, ensure the website is advertised on the council's vehicles, and ensure the website is kept up to date with timely and relevant information.

3.11 National strategy

We have responded to developments in national strategy and emerging requirements from central government as appropriate. Officers are members of numerous networks through which information is disseminated so we have access to the latest information, best practice and thinking.

We will continue to maintain an awareness of national developments and emerging requirements. Where there is a need to respond, plans will be developed and actioned accordingly.

3.12 Budgets

We are under pressure to reduce our overall spend and realise year-on-year efficiency savings. Implementation of the strategic developments identified in this document will require up-front investment with the potential to realise significant benefits, ongoing efficiencies and cost savings.

To support the implementation process we will ensure that:

the financial requirements are established as implementation plans are developed, and any associated costs are identified and subject to business case approval on a case-by-case basis;

services currently funded by the eGovernment capital fund are incorporated into the mainstream budget through the medium-term financial plan;

the existing computer development reserve is reviewed as part of the implementation plan and the financial implications considered alongside the Council's long-term financial strategy;

provision is made to ensure the long-term sustainability of our ICT infrastructure; and

a benefits realisation plan is developed to ensure that the monies saved by the implementation of this ICT Strategy are secured.

4. Glossary of Terms

BPR, Business Process Improvement	The general term used to describe the redesign and re-engineering of services for improved access, economy and efficiency.
Broadband	High speed computer network allowing quick access to information throughout all offices.
Contact Centre	The general term used to describe a place where citizens can access council services by talking face-to-face with staff and that provides the capability to handle enquiries, requests for information, payments, and complaints relating to the Council's services and those of its partner organisations.
CRM, Customer Relationship Management, Citizen Relationship Management	CRM is the general term used to describe software that is used to manage interactions between customers, (citizens, businesses and organisations), and an organisation, (the Authority).
Customers	The citizens, businesses and organisations for whom the Council provides services.
Document image processing system	A system that stores in electronic format scanned images of documents. This reduces the need for paper to be in circulation and also the amount of storage space required.
Electronic Government, eGovernment	The overall term used to describe the use of Information & Communications Technology, (ICT), in the modernisation of public services.
eGovernment Programme	The programme of work to implement ICT systems and supporting infrastructure to enable electronic delivery of services.
Electronic Payments, ePayments	The provision of automated payment services for goods and services using the Internet. Also the internal use of electronic methods of payment within an organisation.
Electronic Procurement, eProcurement	The use of technology to automate and improve the process of buying goods and services from suppliers.
Electronic Services	The use of technology to either deliver or support the delivery of services.
Firewall	The technology that separates our internal network from the internet to help prevent unauthorised access to our systems.
Government Connect	A national programme to connect local and central government together with access for citizens.
ICT, Information and Communications Technology	The general term used to include all aspects of modern technology, including Personal Computers, large-scale computers, computer networks, telephones, mobile devices, the Internet, and Web technology etc.

	devices, the Internet, and Web technology etc.
Intranet	A network of information identical to the Internet in the way it works but that is available only to staff within an organisation.
IT	Information Technology. See ICT.
Mobile/Remote Technologies	Portable technologies that enable information to be accessed and systems to be updated on the move or from remote locations.
MySelby	A personalised section of our website that provides localised information for our customers.
Networking infrastructure	The technology, both wired and wireless that enables electronic communication between separate systems and users.
SMS Messaging	Short Message Service or text messaging as used on mobile phones.
WAN	Wide Area Network. North Yorkshire County Council is developing a WAN to cover the whole of North Yorkshire. This will enable better communication within the region.

5. Appendix 1 – Links to Corporate Policy

This document outlines our ICT Strategy for the next 5 years, setting the direction for the development of plans to realise our vision.

It ties in with our Seven Strategic Themes:

- Putting customers first
- Protecting the environment
- Healthier communities
- Promoting prosperity
- Community safety
- Making better use of resources
- Organising to deliver

And our priorities for 2007/08:

- A clean, green and healthy environment. To assist residents to recycle more of their waste and so reduce landfill
- Safer and stronger communities
- Improving facilities for adults and older people, particularly in rural areas
- Delivering an improving housing service
- Meeting the needs of children and young people
- Championing the reduction in greenhouse gases and leading by example

It has been developed in consultation with councillors on the eGovernment Working Group, members of our Strategic Management Team; Heads of Service; Access to Services Project Board; and key staff.