



SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

ICT REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A review of ICT was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 19 July 2012. There was a general feeling that there were issues surrounding ICT that would benefit from a review by overview and scrutiny and the outcomes from this review could provide valuable input to the ICT commissioning review which was about to start.
- 1.2 This report sets out the findings and recommendations arising from the scrutiny review by the scrutiny task group.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Membership of the task group:-

- Councillor Colin Hay (Chair)
- Councillor Andrew Chard
- Councillor Simon Wheeler
- Councillor Andrew Wall

Terms of reference agreed by the O&S Committee

- To review the proposed brief for the commissioning review of ICT and recommend any changes
- To understand the current position regarding ICT and the assessment of whether it is fit for purpose and sufficiently resilient
- To contribute to defining the outcomes from ICT as part of the commissioning exercise with an emphasis on the members and customer perspective.
- To scrutinise the business case for any ICT proposals and to challenge as necessary by gaining a thorough understanding of the current ICT budget and charging structure and comparing this against any options being considered
- To scrutinise the subsequent phases of the review

3. HOW DID THE TASK GROUP GO ABOUT THIS REVIEW?

3.1 The task group met on four occasions and spoke to a range of people involved in ICT and the planned commissioning review at the Council. They all contributed to the discussions at our meetings and were able to respond to members questions or bring back additional information to subsequent meetings. The officers involved were:

- Pat Pratley, Project Sponsor for the ICT commissioning review and sponsor of the scrutiny task group
- Mike Brown, Strategic ICT advisor
- Paul Woolcock, ICT Infrastructure Manager
- Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources

3.2 Members would like to thank all of the officers who attended meetings and contributed to the review and also thank Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager and Jennie Williams who provided additional support to the group.

3.3 The task group reviewed a variety of evidence including:

- the report produced by Mike Brown in July 2011 which provided a view on the current ICT situation at that time
- the current costs and performance of ICT and recharges to other services
- proposed ICT investment
- the options for ICT which were currently under consideration
- the project brief for the commissioning review
- output from outcomes workshops with Members and service managers
- updates on Members ICT and government connect issue to which we added the personal experiences of members of the task group.

4. OUR FINDINGS

4.1 The ICT review carried out in 2011 highlighted many of the issues we have looked at, the issues raised then are being addressed but it is worth running through them again here:

ICT Champion at Senior Management level

4.2 The service was found to be generally good and fit for purpose; however the results of both 'single status review' and the loss of any 'market supplement' had a detrimental effect on staff morale. Coupled with the team losing members to the commissioning team and GO, plus a lack of a senior manager and for a time an Assistant Director, has meant some lack of direction. This lack of a 'champion' at SLT may have led to a resourcing drift and allowed some issues to be lost. The question for SLT is – If there is such reliance on a strong champion for a service, how corporately does it act? SLT decisions have a very strong influence on Cabinet decision making. We recognise that the move of ICT into the Resources Directorate and the appointment of Director of Resources have started to address these issues. The Director of Resources as a member of SLT and the Executive Board quickly acknowledged the lack of strategic support to the ICT

team and engaged external ICT advisory support in recognition of this gap. The proactive engagement of the Director of Resources, the ICT advisor and the Cabinet Member in the ICT commissioning review is evidence again of the recognition that strategic support has been somewhat lacking. Strategic support and ICT champion roles need to be considered in relation to whichever commissioning option. Officers have advised it is not possible at this point to place a cost of the strategic support role as it will need to be considered as part of the overall costs of each option appraised.

ICT Benchmarking

- 4.3 According to SOCITM the ICT service levies a low recharge to the authority, but it was unclear how accurate this statement is when the underinvestment over the years is taken into account. The current infrastructure is showing signs of age, with system downtime happening more often. It is not critical at this stage but does indicate a need for investment. We understand this is being addressed in the current budget cycle. There is a need for long term ICT infrastructure investment plan and this will be needed to support the ICT commissioning review.

ICT future investment

- 4.4 We believe that GO has had a more significant effect on CBC's infrastructure than was taken into account at the project stage. This should have been better understood and made clear at the time. The task group were concerned that as the ICT provide for GO, the council's choice of ICT options may be constrained in the future by having to consult with all our GO partners. Council needs to understand that in looking at options for future ICT services, this must be done in discussion with our partners in GO.

Officers response to this is that in addition to GO, other ICT application usage has had an impact on network response times, for example, increased use of on-line planning, idox scanning, etc. The GO network capacity planning work was undertaken and estimates of the impact on network traffic were prepared and the infrastructure was designed to accommodate the additional network traffic generated by GO. The GO network traffic is one of many factors that has contributed to the reduction of network speed. We understand that ICT is now addressing the problem by replacing the CBC network core switches which will improve response times.

ICT Services for Cheltenham Festivals

- 4.5 We learnt during the course of the review that the council still runs the network for the on-line booking system for Cheltenham Festivals. We understand this is historical but we are concerned about the impact on the council's network at peak booking times and the cost to the council of providing this 24/7 operation. We do feel this needs to be assessed as part of the commissioning review.

ICT operation 24 days/7 days a week

- 4.6 On the general issue of a 24/7 operation, there is an increasing expectation from our customers that they can do on-line transactions such as parking fines, paying council tax etc at any time of the day or night. The council should be clear about the additional cost of providing this 24/7 service when identifying staff savings from transacting more business on-line rather than face to face.

Implications of council's accommodation strategy

- 4.7 It was noted that the uncertainties around the council's accommodation strategy has also had a detrimental effect on the infrastructure investment programme. Whilst it would make no sense to spend large sums of money on infrastructure that is not portable – such as wiring, in a building that may not be the council's long term home, nevertheless this lack of investment means the system is now showing signs of age. The council's accommodation strategy should be clearer this autumn and should be used to inform future ICT planning.

Government Connect

- 4.8 The way in which the requirements of 'Government Connect' delayed a solution for mobile working (including for members) has cost the authority dear in time and money. We should know how the requirement imposed by our 'inspector' differ from others and what cost to us this has meant. We should point this out to government. We were about to use a very similar solution to the current Citrix solution some 4 years ago.

Disaster Recovery

- 4.9 Disaster recovery was a problem, but there is now a working solution using the Depot. Given the pressure on depot for space and the close proximity of the depot to the Municipal Offices which does not necessarily mitigate for the loss of power to Cheltenham, this may or may not be the best long term solution. A multi-site multi council solution may be better. Some years ago the EGG partnership established a 7 council communication infrastructure that could have been used but was abandoned just before the 2007 floods. In our view this could have been used then when Shire Hall was not useable. Officers advised us that regarding the 7 council communication infrastructure a private high speed data communications network has been installed between the four 'GO' partners' ICT sites, and at the Depot. Discussions have been underway for several months with the Forest of Dean to install equipment in both council's ICT rooms which will store working copies of each other's critical business systems, with backups of these systems being transferred between sites on a nightly basis. This may go ahead regardless of any formal shared ICT service with the Forest. Cotswold and West Oxfordshire have already implemented this type of solution.

Officers also updated us on the recent power failures when along with other businesses in Cheltenham, the Municipal Offices lost power twice during the day. This was a good test of the disaster recovery procedures and business continuity plans. The council had already put in place some actions to address some of the learning points identified during the April powercut. This resulted in a reduced recovery time following the restoration of power and improved communication plans. In this particular case the depot also lost power so this led us to question whether the depot is the right location for our back up systems or whether a location away from Cheltenham with an alternative power supply would be more appropriate. As the ICT host for GO, the council also has a reputational issue to consider in ensuring that it can continue to supply services to its GO partners, possibly by enabling staff to working from alternative sites. It was noted that consideration also needs to be given to staff and members working remotely via Citrix, how their service may be affected and how this is communicated. All these scenarios need to be looked at as part of the commissioning review to ensure the

optimum solution for disaster recovery is put in place.

5. COMMISSIONING BRIEF AND COMMISSIONING REVIEW OUTCOMES

- 5.1 The ICT commissioning review project brief was reviewed and it was felt to be comprehensive. No amendments were made.
- 5.2 The working group reviewed the output from the customer needs workshops held with officers and Members earlier in the year. Officers also provided summary output from the Members and service managers outcomes workshops explaining that the information gathered had been used to create a set of outcomes which would guide the ICT commissioning review. The primary outcome of the ICT commissioning review is for a “modern, in touch and innovative ICT service which is an integral part of the business, that understands and responds to the complex business needs of the Council and its partners enabling delivery of services in innovative, effective and efficient ways”.

6. MEMBERS ICT

- 6.1 Member ICT Support was only covered briefly in the Review of ICT report and given the current developments in remote working we felt this was an important area for the task group to review.
- 6.2 We were advised that a proposal for Members ICT following the elections in May 2012 was initiated by Democratic Services and agreed with ICT, the Director of Resources and the Cabinet Member Corporate Services. This included a target for rolling out the new Citrix facilities to new members within 1 week of their election and other members within 4 months. The necessary budgets were put in place to support this and a communication plan agreed with the Cabinet Member.
- 6.3 New members were issued a briefing note on ICT facilities as part of their election pack and a slot was included in the new members Open Day. This sets out what the council would provide, the expectations on the member, an overview of the facilities and the support that would be provided. This briefing note and the introductory session also highlighted that members would be responsible for resolving any issues with their own equipment or service provider as ICT could not support this. As Members are increasingly using their own equipment, it is not feasible for ICT to have knowledge of each type of PC, Laptop or iPad, and the different systems they use.
- 6.4 We concluded that it has taken too long to decide on the ICT package for members and the solution should have been in place for the new council this year. There are still decisions needed on what exactly will be offered in terms of facilities and wider support beyond that offered by the ICT help desk. We appreciate this is a rapidly changing area for all councils so it is important we look to see what other councils are doing and learn from them. Officers need to work closely with members to understand the various needs of individual members due to their knowledge and understanding of ICT. As yet not all of the ‘help desk’ appear to be up to date with Citrix which should be resolved as soon as possible. We understand from officers that the relatively high degree of staff turnover on the help desk has necessitated the use of agency staff, and drafting in of other

ICT staff to provide cover at busy times, and so help desk training has suffered. ICT management are expecting to have fully trained, permanent help desk staff and permanent ICT cover staff in place by October.

- 6.5 It was unfortunate that there was a delay in receipt of the Vasco tokens – a matter beyond the council's control, which meant that there was a delay in the roll out of Citrix to new members. Once the tokens were received, ICT endeavoured to supply them as soon as possible although progress has been slower due to the summer recess period and availability of members.
- 6.6 As well as the roll out of the new Citrix facilities, members are now being offered further training on the facilities available to them via the intranet and modern.gov which should help encourage members to opt for this new way of working. They should also be encouraged to share their experiences and learning points on Citrix with each other. Whatever facilities we supply to members, the council must ensure they are fully compliant with the data security requirements relating to Government Connect and members are fully aware of the Acceptable Use policy they all sign up to when using council systems.
- 6.7 We hope that in the future members may be able to make more use of electronic equipment for reviewing reports thereby reducing the considerable cost of printing committee and working group papers. If the new strategy is to encourage members to use their own equipment then we need to ensure that the full range of facilities is available to them within the Municipal Offices. We think there should also be appropriate provision for the public attending meetings who may wish to follow agendas and reports on line. This should be addressed as part of defining the outcomes for members ICT.
- 6.8 Regarding Members Allowances, we understand the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) have been kept informed of developments in ICT. In their report to Council on 26 March 2012 they noted that ICT provision for members was under review and asked for a further update when firm proposals had been drawn up. The Democratic Services Manager wrote to the IRP on 3 May 2012 with a proposal for members ICT and asked the panel whether they would like to meet to discuss. It was proposed that as the new facilities would enable members to use their own computing equipment it would no longer be necessary for the council to provide a laptop to new members on the assumption that most members would have access to their own facilities at home. However if any member had difficulties they could request in advance of their basic allowance to purchase new equipment. The IRP responded by email in support of the proposal and felt there was no need for them to meet to discuss further at this stage.
- 6.9 On that basis the roll out commenced with no new laptops being issued to new members but with the option to request an advance of their members allowance to purchase new ICT equipment. We understand one new member has taken up this option. All members were advised of the change on 16 July 2012 by the Democratic Services Manager in an email highlighting the benefits of the new technology, the changes to council provision of equipment and the budget that the council was providing to support the roll out.

- 6.10 Although we understand Democratic Services did not receive any adverse comments to this communication, we do feel all members should be given the opportunity to raise any issues they may have with this new approach to Members ICT provision in the context of Members Allowances. If there is a sufficient level of concern then Democratic Services can raise them with the IRP who can consider whether they need to reconvene to review the issue.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 During the course of this review we have consulted with officers involved in this issue. The Cabinet Member Corporate Services attended our third meeting and had the opportunity to take part in the discussion regarding the proposed areas and review the final draft of the report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Taking all our findings into consideration, the task group agreed a number of recommendations, namely that
- i. the Senior Leadership Team ensure the necessary strategic lead is given to the service and its staff.**
 - ii. a long-term ICT infrastructure investment plan is put in place as part of the current budget cycle and as an essential element to support the ICT commissioning review.**
 - iii. the impact of GO, and other IT applications on the council's current ICT infrastructure, and network performance, be reviewed and fully understood as part of the ICT commissioning review.**
 - iv. the impact of the council's accommodation strategy on any decisions regarding expenditure (or delay in expenditure) on ICT infrastructure are fully understood**
 - v. the cost and operational impact of the requirements of Government Connect should be assessed by the Director of Resources and if significant then the Cabinet Member should consider making higher representations to government.**
 - vi. the options for disaster recovery should be reviewed in discussion with our GO partners to ensure the best long-term solution is adopted as part of the commissioning review and the council continues to review and enhances its plans on an ongoing basis.**
 - vii. requirements for members ICT support are fully specified as an outcome from the commissioning review and that any services offered to members are fully compliant with data security requirements relating to Government Connect.**
 - viii. the roll out of remote working facilities to all members should be progressed with a view to offering all members this option by end of November 2012 and ensure necessary support facilities are put in place.**
 - ix. the options of providing wifi to members and the public in the Municipal Offices is progressed**
 - x. the Democratic Services Manager should be requested to contact all members giving them the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have with the revised members ICT provision in the context of**

the Members Allowance Scheme which can then be forwarded to the IRP if these are of a significant level.

9. PROGRESSING THE SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Having discussed our recommendations with the project sponsor for the ICT commissioning review, we are confident that recommendations i) to vii) can all be fed into the ICT commissioning review and therefore we feel these recommendations should be made to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services.
- 9.2 In terms of the ICT commissioning review going forward, we understand the Cabinet member is proposing to invite non-executive members to join a Cabinet Member working group to support him in this review. We feel this approach has worked well on other commissioning reviews and therefore would give it our support.
- 9.3 Recommendation viii) regarding the roll out of members remote working is one that can be put in place now and further investigation can be carried out on ix) so we would make both those recommendations to the Cabinet Member Corporate Services for more immediate action.
- 9.4 In terms of the reference set for us by the O&S committee, we feel confident that this review has covered the first three bullet points and have provided some valuable input to the ICT commissioning review from a members' perspective.
- 9.5 We acknowledge that the final two bullet points in our terms of reference are still outstanding. We would recommend to the O&S committee that they keep a watching brief on the ICT commissioning review and scrutiny members will have the opportunity to scrutinise the business case for any ICT proposals or subsequent phases of the review when they are reported to Cabinet, using the call-in process if necessary. However we would hope that if the views of non-executive members are fully taken into account via the Cabinet Member working group then call-in would not be necessary. We feel the task group has completed its work at this stage and could be available to be reconvened at a future point if necessary.

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Appendices	1. The One page strategy for this review
Background information	1. IRP report to Council March 2012