STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

2007 – 2010

Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. **Introduction**

The one thing constant in local government is change. Councils have seen huge changes to the services they provide over the last few years and this is set to continue. Stockton Council is no different. Examples are:

- Increased demand due to an increasing and changing population
- Delivering on children and adult agendas
- Delivering against national efficiency targets
- Delivery against internal MTFP efficiency targets
- Providing easier access to our services
- Providing more flexible and timely services
- Increased partnership working

The above all have the potential for increased costs, yet the Council has a target of low Council Tax increases and faces a difficult period in relation to the funding which is provided by central government.

The Council is also has an excellent four star CPA rating which it seeks to maintain, building upon its culture of continuous improvement. There is a constant expectation that the Council will deliver more. It continually looks for new ways of delivering services and has a history of partnership working which under the Government Integrated Services agenda will expand even more.

The introduction to the Council Plan encapsulates this drive and anticipation:

> In Stockton there is a level of optimism about the local area which has not been seen for many years. Local people are more positive about the future of the Borough than ever before. Public services are improving, and there is a sustained investment in the physical regeneration of the Borough which is beginning to transform quality of life for local people. Investment in our housing, our economy, in local policing and in our schools is at record levels. We can see the results of this investment: optimism about the future of the local economy is at a record high, and satisfaction with the Council's services is in the top 10% of national results. In service terms, there are many notable successes. Our children are achieving record levels of GCSE passes. Overall levels of crime are at a 10-year low. The Borough is also one of the cleanest in the country.
>
> The challenge now is for the Council, working in partnership with the local community and our public, private and voluntary sector partners, to sustain this improvement. Our Community Strategy sets out our joint vision and priorities for the local area, and this Council Plan focuses on Stockton Council's contribution to our shared vision.

Figure 1: Council Plan 2007-2010 extract

To deliver what are challenging change programmes and maintain its excellent status, it is paramount that the Council maximises the use of its resources. Information & Communication Technology (ICT) is one of these key resources.

ICT is integral to most successful organisations today and over recent years has become increasingly important to the delivery of Council services. In this technology age, our citizens, partners and our internal colleagues and Elected Members have increasing demands for more responsive, flexible and timely service delivery.

To date, the Council has made investments in ICT but based more on a tactical basis rather than strategic approach. This has been successful and achieved the Government's E-Government targets as well as our own Public Service Agreement stretched e-service delivery targets. ICT's work on Information Security Management and its ISO certification is a leading light nationally, it has also performed well in national benchmarking exercises.

Beyond this, in the main, ICT investments have been made on a departmental silo basis, as services promoted their own agendas. Although successful in implementation, this approach has delivered a large programme of predominantly service based ICT projects.

The ICT Service itself has been generally viewed as a utility based service which itself has progressed strongly over the last few years. However, the development of technology is so integral to the organisation it is now time to ensure that a more robust strategic approach to ICT is utilised to drive through and deliver the changes required.

The purpose of an ICT Strategy is to give a focus and framework for future ICT investments and projects, linking these into the priorities of the Council Plan in support of the Community Strategy (see figure 2). The aim of this ICT Strategy is to raise the profile and awareness of the importance of ICT investments and the governance which surrounds these and associated benefits realisation. It is also to provide an effective technology architecture which not only provides robust and reliable underpinning to Council services but is an architecture which acts as an enabler and catalyst for service delivery both within the Council and across our partners.
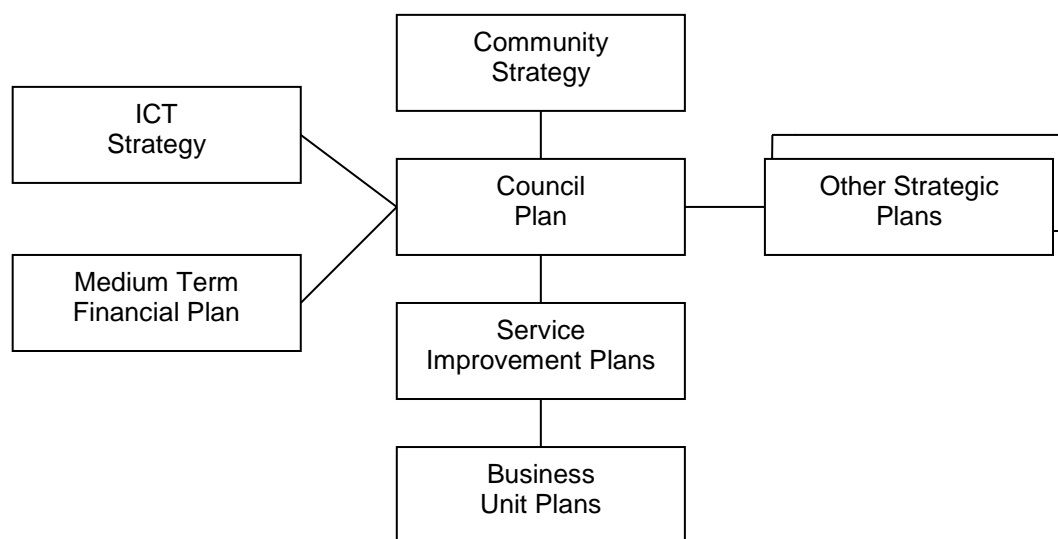

Figure 2: Strategic planning framework

The development of this ICT Strategy has been undertaken in conjunction with NCC Group Ltd. Desktop research was undertaken about the Council and its plans. A consultative approach was then undertaken with key stakeholders, these being CMT and all Service Group Management Teams. Individual meetings were also held with the Corporate Directors and Chief Executive. These sessions were aimed at gaining a wider understanding of service requirements and current practice, and providing a

challenge to current views and processes. As well as a framework for the development of the strategy, NCC brought both public and private sector market intelligence and best practice to the process.

Ultimately through this framework a vision was extracted and developed, identifying actions for both ICT and the wider governance in which it operates. Through facilitation and information sharing with all Service Groups, the ICT Strategy has been developed from the requirements of the Service Improvement Plans, Business Unit Plans and the Council Plan which these ultimately support.

The culmination of this approach was a presentation of findings and proposals to the Extended Management Team (CMT and SGMTs combined). These were endorsed by the Extended Management Team.

2. **Current Position**

The pressures affecting local government are outlined in the introduction of this report. There are also many ICT related issues and pressures. These include:

- Central government is forcing local authorities to meet a complex change agenda which has serious implications in relation to information management and integration, but in the absence of this the Council would itself also be driving such changes forward

- Process boundaries are changing as a consequence of the government's partnership agenda and national platforms and there is a need to deliver integrated services across the Council's service portfolio and beyond e.g. Every Child Matters

- The Council is under considerable pressure to continue to deliver high-quality services at a reduced cost

- Sustaining the current excellent four star CPA rating in relation to improvement will be difficult to achieve without innovative use of technology

- The Council generally operates its ICT as a series of silos with opportunities for more active co-operation between service groups; ICT investments have been focused on cost rather than value and have been tactical in nature

- Much senior management time is spent on dealing with external change and yet there is little recognition of the potential contribution of ICT to overcoming the challenges faced

- The Council is anxious to improve its services and it recognises that new investment ICT can play a major part in delivering these improvements.

Without an integrated technology platform, there are significant implications of the above pressures on ICT systems and services. These are:

- The complexity of the ICT infrastructure and the amount of effort required to change will increase exponentially

- The operational effect of reconfiguring services in the absence of the ability to integrate rapidly will result in degradation of core services

- That investment at a corporate level is required in the appropriate infrastructure technologies if technology enabled process change is to reduce costs and improve efficiency

- The improvement in an already efficient Council will require transformation rather than incremental change to sustain high CPA ratings in the future

- That the complexity of the technology infrastructure will continue to increase, unless service groups act more corporately in relation to ICT and the Council is able to introduce mature ICT governance processes

The research process undertaken in the development of the strategy has identified strengths and changes required for the future. These are outlined in the table below.

Service Dimension	Strengths Today	Challenges For The Future
Value	Very good value for money service provision	Raising ICT from a "utility" service seen primarily as a cost into one which adds significant business value.
Day to Day Service Provision	Very good day to day service provision	Obtaining the necessary funding and ensure that capacity is in place to deliver the breadth of required service.
Delivery	No strong centralised or collective control of projects	Project and programme delivery perceived as not yet delivering fully on expectations. Making sure that business change and ICT enablers are joined up.
Architecture	An undocumented architecture which can evolve into a strong strategic framework	Ensuring that the new architecture is deployed when there are short-term tactical decisions to be made. Anticipating the need to switch from legacy platforms to avoid being forced into taking a tactical decision on platform changes.
ICT Governance	An emerging ICT Strategy Group drawn from across the Council	Addressing the key governance weaknesses which include: - Giving greater clarity of how ICT decisions are made - Obtaining a closer fit between the Council's strategy and its ICT Strategy - Linking ICT governance more strongly into corporate governance - Linking ICT governance into local and regional bodies.

Figure 3: Perceived views of ICT

The Council does however need to adopt a more strategic position in relation to ICT if it is to meet its future requirements and have the capability to rapidly re-configure service delivery. Some work has already commenced in this regard.

3. **Target Future Position**

The strategy development process identified the potential benefits offered by modern ICT. These include:

- A mobile workforce, made possible through new technologies

- Real-time access to information in key service areas such as Social Care and Education

- The ability to rapidly re-configure services according to demand

- Better asset management including making better use of buildings

- Demonstrating improvement and potential to external bodies such as the Audit Commission

- Enhanced ability to work with multi-agency partners external to the Council

- Improving citizen satisfaction

- Being seen as an attractive employer able to recruit and retain staff

To obtain these benefits the Council needs to invest in three specific areas:

- Secure remote and mobile working technologies at network and client levels

- Sound and scalable technical ICT; designed to deliver integration

- Robust information management and workflow across the Council and with our partners

The above investments must be made in the context of a strategic architecture based on components which will deliver technical integration as standard and be configurable and able to undertake the functions required from service specific applications.

The strategy development process also considered scenarios in relation to strategic architecture. These were:

- To continue with a strategy of "no strategy" as in place at present and evidenced by the current applications portfolio.

- The adoption of a strong strategic architecture framework based on the selection of key infrastructure applications and investments such as enterprise content management, graphical information & spatial analysis, customer relationship management, workflow, integration toolsets and mobility technologies.

The strategy of "no strategy" i.e. continuation of the present position, was rejected for the reasons already outlined earlier in this report. It was agreed that the strong strategic architecture framework is an aspiration that will start with the formal adoption of an intermediate strategic framework based on a consolidation of current applications and investments.

4. **Strategy Delivery**

To deliver the strategy a change programme needs to be introduced which will require corporate backing if it is to succeed. The key areas are:

- ICT Service Restructure
- ICT Governance
- ICT Investment
- Business Change Programme

An outline of these areas is given below.

ICT Service Restructure

The proposals for the Stockton Darlington Partnership include an ICT Service restructure. This places renewed focus on three main areas:

- Strategy, architecture design & process excellence
- Customer engagement
- Technical robustness & efficiency

Combined, these allow ICT to develop beyond the utility and provide a service portfolio which has the capacity to deliver the ICT Strategy.

ICT Governance

There needs to be an adoption of a set of strategic principles which will form the basis of the Council's ICT governance framework. These will be developed around the following points:

- There will be collectively funded long-term irreversible investments in technology, people and business change

- Activities will be properly resourced and pursued aggressively to realise the anticipated value and benefits

- There will be a mandatory requirement to comply with agreed technical standards and architecture

- There will be a mandatory requirement to comply with agreed governance processes

- There will be single instances of shared applications and tools which utilise common data

- The Council will undertake the gradual replacement of existing applications, where possible, by the new infrastructure components for workflow, content management and mobility

ICT Investment

In developing the ICT Strategy, an estimate has been made of the additional investment required for mobility and workflow technologies in ICT over and above the

investments in underlying infrastructure already factored into the Stockton Darlington Partnership (some of which are precursors to this strategy).

The table below gives an indication of the investments.

	Up Front Investment	Recurring Costs	Total Over a 10 Year Period
Mobility Technologies	£ 350k	£ 50k	£ 850k
Client Technologies	£ 1m	£ 330k	£ 4.3m
Home Working	£ 500k	£ 500k	£ 5.5m
Workflow Technologies	£ 400k	£ 80k	£ 1.2m

Figure 4: Strategic ICT investments

Some of these costs are anticipated as cash neutral in that they displace existing costs within services. This applies to:

- Client Technologies – the purchase of mobile IT devices instead of a standard PCs

- Home Working - equipping staff with home working equipment rather than office based

The remaining two areas of mobility and workflow technologies are new costs to the Council.

- Workflow technology can be seen as a capital investment as it will be a Council-wide application used by all services and therefore requires being purchased up-front for the benefit of all.

- Mobility technologies relate to the cost of equipping and connecting each end user. As this is on a per-user basis, this could be viewed either as a pay-per-user cost born by the services themselves, or funded corporately through capital and revenue provision.

Business Change

The third critical step in delivering the ICT Strategy is the creation of a business change programme which will exploit the Council's new infrastructure components. It is this programme which will significantly assist in the Council maximising the use of resources in its aim to deliver continuous improvement whilst making efficiencies.

The business change programme will involve fundamental reviews of service delivery across the Council with the aim of exploiting the investments in ICT to maximise service efficiencies and delivery. This business change programme and the associated technology investments delivered through the strategy will also compliment the emerging review of accommodation and flexible working methods. This will dovetail with what is an emerging standard nationally termed "Work Wise".

Timetable

The timetable associated with these actions needs to dovetail with the proposals for the Stockton Darlington Partnership, which has identified a two year transition period for ICT.

As well as restructuring the service to provide a more robust strategic and customer focussed role, during the transition period research and development of a business case for a new ICT architecture will be undertaken and it is this which is required to underpin the ICT Strategy. Alongside this, work will be undertaken in developing detailed business cases for the investments required to deliver the ICT Strategy i.e. mobility and workflow. Once these have funding approved, this transition period also encompasses the purchase and implementation of these systems.

It is from this point that a programme of business transformation projects will be rolled out across the Council on a service by service basis. An outline timetable is shown below:

Q3 2007/8	Q4 2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
SBC DBC Partnership Approval	SBC DBC Partnership Formation	ICT Partnership Transition		Partnership Mainstream >>>	
		Architecture research & business case	Architecture procurement & implementation	SBC Business Change Programme >>>	
ICT Strategy Approval	ICT Governance Review	Mobility & Workflow research & business case	Mobility & Workflow procurement & implementation		
	SBC Accommodation & Flexible Working Programme (Work Wise)				
	MTFP Process				

Figure 5 - Stockton Darlington Partnership and SBC ICT Strategy Timetable