



Leicester
City Council

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ICT & E-GOVERNMENT FINAL REPORT & IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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List of Abbreviations

CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CD	Compact Disc
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CLABs	Centrally Located Administrative Buildings
CS&NR	Cultural Services & Neighbourhood Renewal
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
EDISS	Education Department Information Systems Support
EDP	Education Development Plan
ER&D	Environment Regeneration & Development
FMIS	Financial Management information System
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT & CA	Information and Communication Technology & Customer Access
IEG	Implementing Electronic Government
LEA	Local Education Authority
LL	Lifelong Learning
NGfL	National Grid for Learning
PC	Personal Computer
RAD	Resources Access & Diversity
SIMS	Schools Information Management System
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timescaled
SOCITM	Society of Information Technology Managers
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget

1.0 Introduction and scope

The principal question of the review is:

‘Is ICT supporting the Council’s strategic agenda’

This breaks down into four areas:

- Is the Council investing effectively in ICT?
- Does the ICT support service represent good value?
- Will our e-government strategy ensure the organisation meets the e-government objectives?
- Do we have the ICT capacity and capability to meet the Council’s strategic agenda?

At the ‘Fundamental Challenge’ stage it was agreed to separate the review into two parts, the first part to address the questions:

- Is the Council investing effectively in ICT?
- Does the ICT support service represent good value?

and to be completed within the Year 3 Best Value review timescales.

The other two areas will be looked at during 2003 following a review of our ICT Strategy and E-government Route Map.

This Final Report refers specifically to the first part of the review.

The services included in the review were:

- The whole of ICT Services, Resources Access and Diversity
- Departmental ICT support sections in Culture, Education, ER&D and Housing
- The Education Information Systems Support Team (EDISS)

2. The Policy Context

ICT is one of the Council’s four resource strategies. The Council’s e-government agenda is detailed in its Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statement.

3. The Service

The Council’s ICT support sections together support more than 5,300 users and approximately 6,000 network devices (PCs and printers) over 150 sites. The total review budget is £7,089,507.

EDISS supports 86 primary schools, 16 secondary schools or community colleges, and 11 special schools. These schools have a total number of 50,962 pupils on roll. EDISS also provides some ad-hoc support to the LEA's two pupil referral units and to the Special Needs Teaching Service outposts. The projected income for 2002/03 is £1,591,530.

There are approximately 180 staff, directly employed in the business units across the authority, involved in delivering ICT services. The following table details the equality profiles of the ICT functions –

Staff FTE	Gender		Disabled	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or other ethnic group
	M	F						
ICT & CA								
133	76	57	6	94	3	34	2	0
CS&NR ICT								
5.8	5	1	1	4	0	2	0	0
Education & LL ICT								
tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
EDISS								
tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba	tba
ER&D ICT								
7	5	2	0	3	0	4	0	0
Housing ICT								
12	11	1	3	5	0	7	0	0

(Note – an equalities survey is currently underway in Education & LL and the results are expected shortly).

4. Challenge

Fundamental Challenge

The continued provision of an ICT support service was fundamentally challenged at the beginning of the review. The conclusion drawn was that, as one of the Council's key strategic resources, it would not be possible to decommission any of the individual services that together make up the Council's ICT support service and continue to support the Council's ICT infrastructure.

Cabinet concluded that the services within the review should continue to be provided and that the review should focus on the following seven key areas:

- i. Strategy
- ii. Implementation of change
- iii. Investment Priorities
- iv. Skills
- v. Awareness
- vi. Good Value
- vii. EDISS

The review poses the following questions (see the individual task group reports for further detail):

- Is the Council's ICT strategy aligned to the business needs of the organisation? Is ICT positively contributing to the achievement of our strategic agenda?
- Is everyone committed to the Council's ICT strategy?
- Can we evidence its implementation?
- Are we considering the corporate, strategic application of current technology e.g. document imaging?
- Are we sufficiently rigorous in the application of corporate standards and procedures or overly prescriptive?
- Do we resource planned changes properly?
- Our users don't feel properly involved in planning new systems, why not? What needs to change?
- Are the project roles and responsibilities properly understood?
- Is the training of staff given appropriate priority?
- Are the Council's investment priorities determined by corporate need or the availability of departmental funding?
- Equality of deployment – are some sections ICT 'richer' than others, if so why? What are the implications of any disparities?
- How effective is our investment in ICT training?
- Does our investment reflect business priorities?
- Is the training received the training needed to do the job?
- Do we apply the most appropriate training methods? What about e-learning?
- We know from consultation that most staff rely on New Connections and the IT Awareness events to keep informed of technical developments. Is this sufficient? How could it be improved?
- Comparison with other local authorities suggests our unit costs are higher than average? Why is this? How can they be reduced?
- Some existing departments are supported entirely by ICT Services; others have their own local, first line technical support arrangements. Which model is most effective?
- Is the Council's ICT support service actually meeting the needs of its customers?
- Is there a need for the EDISS service?
- What are the views of schools and community colleges?
- How does EDISS compare with similar services provided by other LEAs, and external organisations?
- Does EDISS offer a competitive service?

5. Compare

Task	Comparator analysis
Strategy	Independent consultants were appointed to audit our existing ICT strategy against best practice standards.
Implementing change	Internal Audit and the Corporate Projects Manager compared the project management of five major, recent ICT projects against best practice standards.
Investment	Data was collected to compare departmental expenditure on ICT.
Skills	<p>Costs of internal training provision were compared against alternative local suppliers.</p> <p>The Council's investment in ICT training per person was compared against national Local Government averages.</p>
Awareness	71 Local Authorities were asked how they keep staff informed of ICT developments – 14 replies were received.
Value	<p><i>Cost</i></p> <p>The following comparators were used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT cost per payslip • IT cost of Council Tax per dwelling • Unit cost of connection to the voice network • Unit cost of connection to the data network • Support costs per workstation <p>Analysis was based on data supplied by SOCITM (which includes the costs of outsourced provision), the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Midlands Unitary Authority Benchmarking Club.</p> <p>In addition, the cost, performance and user satisfaction, of central ICT support was compared against departmental arrangements.</p> <p><i>Quality</i></p> <p>The Council participated in an independently audited national 'Benchmarking User Satisfaction' survey.</p>
EDISS	A breakdown of EDISS unit costs was carried out and this was compared against those of other LEAs providing similar services, with external providers (e.g. Capita) and with ICT & Customer Access.

6. Consult

Task	Consultation
Strategy	Stakeholder interviews (internal managers). A section heads workshop. A questionnaire to first and second tier officers.
Implementing change	A questionnaire was issued to randomly selected sample of users from each system under review. Project Board members were asked to comment.
Investment	User responses to a 'Skills, Awareness and Investment questionnaire' which 515 staff replied to, were analysed.
Skills	Feedback from staff attending internal courses was considered as well as responses to the 'Skills, Awareness and Investment questionnaire'.
Awareness	Questionnaires from IT Awareness events were analysed. Relevant questions were included in the 'Skills, Awareness and Investment' questionnaire.
Value	Findings of the national 'Benchmarking User Satisfaction' survey were considered in user workshops. In addition, two workshops were arranged with Technical Support staff to better understand the ICT staff view of the service.
EDISS	An analysis of an Audit Commission survey of Leicester schools was carried out plus an analysis of school satisfaction cards and a questionnaire sent to all schools in September 2002.

Note - external users were not consulted as part of this review. It is anticipated that external consultation will feature in the second part of the overall ICT & E-Government Best Value review.

7. Compete

The central ICT support service operates as a Traded Service within the Council, but in practice few of the services are discretionary – those that are include development, procurement and training. Departmental IT functions generally do not offer a traded service i.e. they operate largely 'below the line'.

Hardware maintenance is the only service currently provided externally. Task 6 'Does the ICT service represent good value' considered the current costs of delivery and concludes that on balance our costs are comparable with other local authorities and less than those who have adopted an outsourced option. Nevertheless, the Improvement Plan recommends that alternative forms of service

provision should be investigated in the areas of End User and Network support; this is in recognition of the sustained and increasing demands (many more PCs, widespread use of e-mail, Intranet and Internet are some examples) in these areas. A particular concern is the difficulty in maintaining the skills base of the existing teams.

In addition, the review recommends that if the ICT strategy update concludes we have insufficient in-house resources to meet the change agenda we should conduct a more radical review of the Council's options for delivery of the whole ICT support service. Options could include partnership working, externalisation (whole or selective), re-modelling the current support arrangements and/or increasing the in-house resources.

EDISS is an entirely discretionary support service offered to schools. Other providers of similar services to EDISS were sought. An analysis of the areas covered with relevant costs was carried out.

8. Key findings

Task 1 - Is the Council's investment in ICT meeting the Council's strategic needs?

- Current projects in the existing strategy are aligned to the Council's priorities and are contributing to the achievement of the Council's Strategic Agenda.
- Given that a significant number of stakeholders have little knowledge of the strategy or own the strategy and are unlikely to be working towards its aims, it is not possible to conclude that the Council's investment in ICT is as effective as it could or should be.
- Whilst there is evidence that progress has been made there is an absence of SMART objectives and poor monitoring arrangements. As a result the organisation cannot quantify the benefits or determine whether work is on target.
- There needs to be a greater integration between the ICT Strategy, the business planning processes and operational activity.
- There is a lack of consistency in departmental ICT Strategies. Not all departments have their own ICT strategy. There is no common format for the strategies that exist.

Improvement objective 1 – *“Better alignment of ICT strategy and investment decisions across the Council”* – addresses this task.

Task 2 - How effective are we at implementing ICT change?

A review of five major projects found that each of the projects had a Project Board and a Project Manager; production of the documentation to enable the Boards to manage was good; tight financial control was kept on all of the projects; reporting to Members, Directors' Board, Departmental Management Teams etc. was carried out conscientiously and standing Orders and Financial Regulations were followed.

However:

- We under resource project management and implementation.
- We could improve our planning
- Risk assessment is often absent
- There needs to be greater understanding and support from senior managers to enable project management to work more effectively.
- There needs to be a greater consultation with users at all stages of the project
- There is often little Business Case justification
- Whilst efforts have been made to improve project management standards they aren't always applied consistently.
- We're poor at sharing practical advice and experience. Lessons need to be documented and passed on.

Improvement objective 2 – *“Improved implementation of ICT developments”* – addresses this task.

Task 3 - Investment priorities

Issue 1: The investment in ICT does not appear to be based on a sound analysis of business needs captured by the business planning process:

- The Best Value task 'Is the Council's investment in ICT meeting the Council's strategic needs?' concludes that current projects are contributing to the achievement of the Council's strategic agenda. However, the absence of effective monitoring arrangements mean it is not always possible to quantify benefits or determine whether work is on target.
- Core management information, for example up-to-date inventories and correctly coded expenditure, was hard to find and verify.
- There is evidence that some investment in hardware is opportunistic (spending any money left in the budget at the end of the year) and is not based on a review of business needs.
- The research identified few Asset Replacement Plans. This is of particular concern given the high numbers of lower specification PCs across the Council.
- There is no corporate view on procurement options other than buying, for example leasing.

- Parts of the Council do display vision, awareness and innovation, but there is no corporate system for passing this on to other parts of the authority.

Issue 2: The lack of, or poor quality of, the Council's ICT infrastructure (investment in PCs and/or networking) beyond the CLABs is compromising the Council's ability to make maximum use of ICT:

- Non-office based staff have very little access to information held on the Intranet, and very few e-mail accounts.
- Office-based staff in remote locations often do not have direct access to the Council's network, and are isolated from the electronic information available to other staff.
- The Council's commendable aspiration of giving every employee an e-mail account and access to the Intranet does not seem achievable in the current investment climate.

Issue 3: We have a fragmented approach to investment in major ICT systems.

- Development and re-investment issues are largely dealt with at departmental level and this could lead to fragmentation and missed opportunities (see task 1, 'Is the Council's investment in ICT meeting the Council's strategic needs').

This task is addressed by Improvement objectives 1 and 2.

Task 4 - Skills

- The corporate IT Training unit is highly regarded and compared with other local providers represents value for the provision of Microsoft training.
- Formal IT Training in desktop applications is well below the national average. (Although it should be noted that the HR Best Value review evidenced that the Council's general investment in training and development is comparatively high).
- Cost and time are cited as the main reasons for not investing more in IT training. There is a perception amongst users that the IT training they receive is not based on need, but on whether or not their manager is interested in IT. If the manager is not interested then IT training is not a priority.
- There are cheaper providers of ECDL training, although the costs don't include ongoing telephone support.
- There is contradictory evidence about the value or otherwise of European Computer Driving Licence training.
- Lack of ICT literacy amongst managers is inhibiting them from responding fully to the e-government programme and other agendas.

- ICT training requirements do not appear to be considered as part of the business planning process.
- Although e-learning appears to have great potential for delivering training, further investigation is needed into the costs involved and possible methods of gaining the commitment of staff to completing their e-Learning course work.

Improvement objective 4 – *“Improved and consistent levels of ICT training across the Council”* – addresses this task.

Task 5 - Awareness

- The majority of people who read ‘New Connections’ the Council’s IT newsletter produced by the ICT & Customer Access division of the Resources department, or attend the IT Awareness event, find them useful.
- There are issues with the distribution of New Connections and attendance at IT Awareness events.
- Contact with other Council’s suggest that Leicester does more than most other Council’s to keep users informed of developments. However, 39% of staff replying to the Skills, Awareness and Investment questionnaire feel the Council could do more to keep them informed of IT developments.
- Suggestions to improve New Connections include hot tips, a users letter page to give them the chance to ‘voice concerns’, details of planned maintenance and information about training that is available. New Connections could also be used to publicise service level detail from the ICT Trading Agreement so staff can be clear what they can expect and what is expected of them.
- Not all departments have a departmental ICT user group. Without a departmental user group it isn’t clear how departments feed back discussions from the ICT-Technical Strategy Group, which is the corporate body tasked with reviewing, amongst other things, desktop standards.

Improvement objective 5 – *“To improve levels of ICT awareness”* – addresses this task.

Task 6 - Does the ICT Service represent good value?

Costs:

- The basis of calculating costs varies between authorities. Notwithstanding this, the authority’s ICT costs are on the whole comparable to the national average.
- Leicester has been working closely with SOCITM for some years now to develop national benchmarks and has a reputation for being a leader in the field. On this basis it may be concluded that Leicester’s charges are more accurately determined than others.

- Similarly cost comparisons between central support and departmental support are difficult to make due to a lack of common costs measurement. However, analysis suggests that central and departmental ICT support costs are similar.

Quality:

Although the consultation survey showed similar levels of Customer satisfaction between departmental and central ICT support, overall feedback shows a need to improve support and user confidence. The concerns highlighted were:

- Customer dissatisfaction with end user support:
 - Time taken to respond to and resolve calls;
 - Assigning the appropriate priority to support calls;
 - The skills of the support staff;
 - Support staff not understanding the business;
 - Confusion over the respective roles of departmental and central support staff.
- The Council is becoming increasingly dependent on the network infrastructure. Any server down time has an immediate and detrimental effect on service delivery.
- Users aren't clear what support they can expect and how they can negotiate variations in service levels.
- Users aren't always clear what the Council's desktop standards are or how they can influence them.
- Arrangements to connect new users to systems are cumbersome.

Improvement objective 6 – *“Improved user confidence and satisfaction in ICT support”* – addresses this task.

Task 7 - EDISS

Is there a need for the EDISS service? What are the views of schools and community colleges?

There is strong evidence to suggest that a local ICT service is required. Schools have increased their use of Schools Based ICT Technicians and there is strong agreement among schools that a local support unit such as EDISS is important to them. 100% of schools use the Standard Subscription Service.

Given the strong customer base and increased pattern in trading as evidenced in the service usage statistics, it is clear that the service EDISS provides is valued by schools.

EDISS provides resources essential to the management of central and Government funded ICT projects.

EDISS is included in the LEA's EDP and it, or a similar service, is required to enable the LEA to deliver this.

How does EDISS compare with similar services provided by ICT & CA, other LEAs, and external organisations? Does EDISS offer a competitive service?

Although comparisons against ICT & CA were not possible for all unit costs because the services provided and the customer bases are so different, it was possible to show that costs are similar on average. For example EDISS charges a significantly higher rate for technician call out but charges for annual PC maintenance are significantly lower.

Comparisons against other LEAs were not possible for all unit costs. However, it was possible to show that EDISS costs are about average. For example EDISS provides a technician call out service and consultancy service that compare favourably, and charges an average rate for PCs.

Comparison against external providers for an overall service has not been possible due to the diverse support arrangements on offer. EDISS is however significantly more cost effective than Capita for SIMS support and training.

Although other providers' costs have been obtained, it is not possible to determine, where those costs appear to be lower than EDISS, whether there is a reduction in the quality of the service provided. Comparison of quality of service has therefore not been possible.

Evidence from the Audit Commission Survey, Best Value survey and customer satisfaction cards, suggests that the overall level of satisfaction with the service is good. However, the Best Value survey showed that there is some dissatisfaction with the service in certain areas e.g. management of major projects.

Improvement objective 7 – *“To improve the EDISS service”* – addresses this task.

9. Improvement Objectives

The following improvement objectives are recommended (see the Improvement Plan for further detail)

1. Better alignment of ICT strategy and investment decisions across the Council.
2. Improved implementation of ICT developments.
3. More effective use of the Intranet.
4. Improved and consistent levels of ICT training across the Council
5. To improve levels of ICT awareness.
6. Improved user confidence and satisfaction in ICT support.
7. To improve the EDISS service.

10. Equality

Diversity, equality and tackling social exclusion are high priorities for the Council. Equality is therefore a key policy and practice area that is addressed throughout this Best Value Review. The mainstreaming equal opportunities checklist has been used to focus on measurement of equality performance for the ICT service across the authority.

ICT is primarily a support service and one of the Council's key strategic resources. Members and staff are the direct customers of our ICT services. Public users of the Council's front-line services, suppliers, partners and other stakeholders are our indirect customers.

Access to information systems such as e-mail, Intranet, Internet and business applications such as FMIS, CareFirst, Housing Benefits, is usually through PCs, laptops, printers and other such devices.

With the increasing use of and dependency on ICT within the Council, there is a risk of excluding certain sections of our internal customers, including –

- persons with a disability e.g. dyslexia, visual or aural impairment;
- people lacking ICT skills;
- those who do not use ICT routinely for their work;
- staff working at remote sites;
- people who speak languages other than English.

However ICT itself offers solutions to overcome the barriers to use. Visually impaired users in the Council have been provided with special equipment to address their special needs such as Braille keyboards, voice recognition software and speech synthesisers. The ICT service supports equipment and software in the interpretation and translation units within the Council including specialist software applications to produce material in Braille, audio and minority languages. IT Training have delivered special training courses tailored to the needs of blind users.

This review has also found that some staff, based in offices away from the city centre, have poor ICT facilities and non-office based staff have poor access to the Intranet. They are therefore potentially excluded from access to Council information. The improvement plan addresses these issues by actions to review facilities at remote sites and giving a minimum level of access to the Intranet from all Council sites.

The needs of our indirect customers are also recognised and being addressed. The Council's Internet web site is highly regarded nationally, particularly for its accessibility to visually impaired users. Summary and contact information is also available in minority languages on the web site. Customers with hearing difficulties can contact the Council using e-mail or the Minicom service.

Through the People's Network initiative, all libraries in the city offer the public free access to PC's with Internet, Microsoft Office and a wide range of CDs. This particularly benefits people (approximately 60% of the population) who do not have IT facilities at home.

An information and consultation network is being established for disabled people in partnership with Social Care & Health, Education & Lifelong Learning, Libraries, Health agencies and the Voluntary Sector. Specially adapted Internet connected PCs are being installed in centres around Leicester giving access to a web portal for disabled people to access information and be consulted on issues affecting them.

The Council is working in partnership with various support agencies to provide cost-effective and reliable housing-related solutions which complement available care services and support independent living for vulnerable people. Integral to the project is an ICT system to receive, process and output data.

11. Sustainability

Sustainable development is one of the Council's key objectives and ICT offers valuable opportunities to support sustainability. The Council's sustainable development checklist was used to determine the contribution made by the ICT service to promote sustainable development.

The bi-annual IT Awareness events are used to raise awareness on the use of computer equipment to improve efficiency and in turn reduce the amount of paper used in the office environment.

Over 5,300 Members and staff use e-mail and exchange millions of messages internally and externally resulting in major savings on paper memos and letters. Similar numbers are connected to the Council's Intranet and have electronic access to over 15,000 pages of information. Documents such as standards, policies, procedures and guidelines are much easier to search and update electronically than on paper. As the Intranet becomes the preferred means of accessing this information fewer paper copies of these documents are produced.

The Council's Internet web site is increasingly being used to provide information and for transaction. Examples include –

- an online facility to search for vacancies in city schools. This includes electronic job descriptions, person specifications and application forms.
- all public committee minutes and reports are published on the Intranet and Internet web sites, not only resulting in fewer printed papers but also bringing greater transparency to the

decision making process and giving Members a more effective role in reflecting community concerns.

These initiatives have are beginning to have a significant impact on the use of paper and in the longer term will be much more important for sustainability, particularly through the e-government programme.

ICT plays a vital role in regeneration and economic development. New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Renewal schemes and the SRB programmes aim to deliver economic prosperity and regenerate deprived areas of the city. The regeneration process links needs and opportunities, economic growth, social cohesion and cultural development, health, social care and environmental sustainability.

CCTV monitoring (24 hours a day 7days a week) from control centres is used to deter and detect crime and prevent anti-social behaviour enhancing security especially in the city centre and residential estates. Emergency alarms and telephones, connected to central ICT systems, are used to respond to alerts from vulnerable people in approximately 6,500 homes in the city.

Information on deprivation is contained within the Atlas of Social and Economic Conditions. These maps and key statistics are available electronically and provide key information about areas of the city for staff and Members and help planning and policy making to create safer and stronger communities.

CityStreAtZ, a computerised mapping system on the Intranet, which will incorporate the Atlas, has maps of all parts of the City and can be searched by address, postcode or building name. This enables many more staff to use highly detailed maps that previously were based on paper and were difficult to use. This system has much potential to deliver a wide variety of information and will in due course be launched on the Internet as well.

A People's Panel has been set up to provide the Council and the Health Community with a quick and easy way of getting feedback on the quality and the delivery of the services provided. The People's Panel also provides both authorities with the opportunity to get a view from the public on any changes to services that may be under consideration. Responses will be received through channels including the telephone and email.

As part of the Council's Revitalising Neighbourhood programme, which aims to improve services in local neighbourhoods, a Customer Service Centre is about to be established in the New Parks area of the city. Should this pilot prove successful, and subject to funding being available, additional local Customer Service Centres will be opened in other neighbourhoods. The joint provision of a range of services with

partners in the public sector, such as the Health service, and the voluntary sector is also being considered.

The provision of ICT infrastructure and ICT training are key elements of many of these projects.

The NGfL programme in schools, People's Network in Libraries, two UK Online centres in the city and other such initiatives are all helping to develop ICT skills and awareness amongst large sections of the city's communities, skills critical for sustainable growth in the "Information Age".

12. Financial Considerations

The costs of improvements set out in the Improvement Plan that have been quantified are as follows-

Improvement Objective	Cost £	Funded by
1. Better alignment of ICT Strategy and investment decisions	35,000	ICT & CA and departments
2. Improved implementation of ICT developments	3,000	ICT & CA
3. More effective use of the Intranet		Overall costs to be determined
4. Improved and consistent levels of ICT training		Overall costs to be determined
5. Improve levels of ICT awareness	0	ICT & CA
6. Improved user confidence and satisfaction in ICT support		Overall costs to be determined
7. To improve the EDISS service	27,500	EDISS and Information Services
TOTAL COST	£65,500	

The remainder of the costs and funding will be determined during the course of the implementation of the Improvement Plan.

The review has not been able to identify any savings.

The research has highlighted a service under pressure; one that is struggling to maintain service at the levels demanded by its customer base. User feedback consistently complains of under resourced support teams.

Investment in ICT in the Council is a growth area driven by legislative requirements (e.g. Supporting People project), e-government demands (including 100% electronic service delivery by 2005) and new technology (e.g. web enabling applications). According to this year's

SOCITM “IT Trends Survey”, seven out of ten local authorities increased expenditure on ICT last year faster than the rate of inflation.

The two business process assessments included in the Improvement Plan (desktop support and network support) will determine whether there is any scope for improved service efficiencies or whether the service needs more investment in order to meet the increasing demands being made of it.

13. Independent Consultant’s Report

Leicester City Council. Best Value Review – ICT and E-Government. Report of Independent Consultant’s on the Final Report, November 2002.

13.1 Introduction:

As a member of staff at the Information House (a wholly own subsidiary of the Improvement and Development Agency, responsible for the development of practical solutions to assist Local Government deliver the E-Government agenda), I have been asked to provide an independent assessment on the process and outcomes of the Final Report on the ICT and E-Government Best Value Review for Leicester City Council.

This assessment takes an overview of the Final Report, assesses the processes to identify issues and reviews the improvement plans to address the key questions investigated in the report:

- Is the Council investing effectively in ICT?
- Does the ICT support service represent good value?

This assessment notes areas where the report has been successful in identifying issues and improvements and where possible weaknesses in the review methodology have failed to identify issues and/or where planned improvements may not resolve issues identified.

13.2 Overview of the Final Report:

In broad terms, the report is clear, well structured and well written. The overall report documentation (including the Individual Task Group Reports) provides significant detail on the methodologies used to establish issues and there is a clear link between the issues identified and plans for improvement. The report provides the reader with a good overview of the process and concisely highlights key elements of the review.

The Improvement Plan links all outcomes of the review to identifiable actions to take these outcomes forward. Timescales are outlined in the Plan, however it is noted that there is minimal consideration of the impact of delivering these actions on the teams acknowledged as being the owners of these actions. Budgetary impact is acknowledged, but with a lack of individual project plans for each of the identified actions, it is unclear if each of the teams have the capacity for implementing change.

13.3 Scope of the review

The Final Report asks the principal question 'Is ICT supporting the Council's agenda' and only addresses the key questions noted above as part of answering this principal question. It is understood that at the 'Fundamental Challenge' stage of the review an agreement was made to attend to the further questions of:

- Will our e-government strategy ensure the organisation meets the e-government objectives?
- Do we have the ICT capacity and capability to meet the Council's strategic agenda?

as part of the Council's review of its ICT Strategy and e-government route map in 2003.

There is a concern that without fully understanding what the impact of these following reviews will bring, the review of effective investment and support may not provide the Council with a full picture of future needs and requirements. This could be resolved with a commitment to review the conclusions of the Final Report once a better understanding of future requirements is established.

It is felt that the Report centres on the use and support of technology, but does not consider in detail the wider need to support the information management requirements of the Council. This may form part of the e-government route map or the ICT Strategy, however there are major implications on ICT support services in delivering a joined up approach to sharing information across the organisation.

It is to be commended that ICT is one of the Council's four resource strategies and is therefore high in the Council's overall policy context – linked to it's IEG statement. It is noted that although the Fundamental Review process concluded that the services within the review could not be decommissioned, it recommends that if the Council identifies through it's review of it's ICT Strategy that it has insufficient resource to meet the challenges of the review, a more radical review of partnership, outsourcing and re-modelling should be undertaken. This approach appears to be sound and this assessment agrees that by focusing on the seven identified key areas of

- Strategy
- Implementation of change
- Investment priorities
- Skills
- Awareness
- Good value
- EDISS

the Council can establish areas of improvement in the short term and enables the ability to revise its policy in the medium term.

13.4 Methodology and outcomes:

The establishment of task groups to investigate the seven areas above has proved to be valuable in focusing the report. Where larger teams have been created, they appear to be well balanced and bring the appropriate skills and knowledge to the process.

As noted previously issues have been successfully identified and improvements planned and actioned against each issue.

13.4.1 Is the Council's investment in ICT meeting the Council's strategic needs?

The use of SOCITM to investigate the current corporate and departmental strategies has provided useful feedback, which indicates that strategies are formed in departmental areas, as a result of the division of budgetary responsibility. This in turn results in a fragmentation of investment. These findings are supported by the questionnaire work and KPMG's e-government route map work. It is clear that understanding of departmental ICT issues at corporate level is vital if ICT is to serve the overall business need. The report also concludes that in order for a corporate strategy to be successful in implementation, then all stakeholders must feel they have ownership of the strategy.

The Improvement Plan covers the main issues highlighted with particular emphasis on stakeholder involvement. However it is felt that corporate policy on standards in particular has not been addressed. Standards form the basis for joining information (in data standards and in communication standards (XML)) and are at the heart of e-government. This needs to be an integral part of the strategy rather than reliance on separate documentation (i.e. the ICT Manual). There are no actions attributed to the need for SMART objectives, although this could be provided in the ICT Strategy itself.

13.4.2 How effective are we at implementing ICT change?

Previous experience has been banked as part of this exercise and has provided clear requirements for standards and best practice in project management. The Improvement Plan fully covers these requirements.

13.4.3 Investment priorities

The three issues identified in the report are based on sound methodology. The need for corporate ICT policy is clearly identified and addressed by the development of the ICT Strategy. Again this needs to take into account the ability to capacity build on the basis of objectives in the e-government route map. Investment in corporate ICT activities must be predicated by an understanding of corporate e-government objectives. For example the interoperability of systems and the migration to this interoperability is a corporate issue in terms of building network capacity, however changes to local systems would, if existing budgetary fragmentation continues, be the responsibility of the department or service areas. A corporate approach to programme management, with an ability to prioritise investment should be highlighted in the development of the corporate strategy.

13.4.4 Skills

A good mixture of data analysis and consultation indicates that although the quality of train is regarded as high, although levels of take up are low. The improvement plan to conduct further analysis, build further formality around training and lift awareness amongst both staff and management are appropriate responses.

13.4.5 Awareness

Improving awareness is identified clearly but the methodology. Examining other Councils has successfully identified methods of delivery. The proposed improvement actions should improve levels of awareness. No direct savings have been identified in this activity, however it is noted that reduced potential for duplication of effort in department areas, along with a reduced risk of re-engineering, would produce savings.

13.4.6 Does the ICT Service represent good value?

The report successfully utilises the work conducted in association with SOCITM to establish it's national ranking with regards to costs in delivering its ICT Service. This area is of less concern, as it is clear that the Council not only has better information on costs, but also has lower cost than other Councils. This low cost is correctly measured against quality of service and highlights that clear performance based monitoring will lead to improved service. It is clear the Council is working hard in the area, not only looking at value for money but at how this value is monitored.

13.4.7 EDISS

The report concludes that through challenging the requirement, comparing the service to what is being used elsewhere, consulting with users and looking at competition, that there is not a current requirement to radically change the service. The report does indicated that levels of support maybe challenged as other ICT initiatives drain resource and EDISS needs to be promoted both within the Council's wider policy and with users. The plans for improvement address the main areas identified, however this assessment suggests that regular reviews should be conducted as the education sector market develops further.

13.5 Conclusions

In considering the Final Report, this assessment can conclude that the Council has recognised the key areas for improvement and identified clear and obtainable actions to ensure best value. Only one area of concern can highlighted by this report and that is with regard to understanding the capacity required for implementing e-government. It is acknowledged that the further development of an e-government route map and the corporate ICT Strategy is yet to be undertaken and this will coincide with the action of some the Final Report's recommendations, however, as correctly identified by the Final Report, these activities must not be conducted in isolation form the Best Value process.

Steven Brandwood
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Information House
Nov 2002

14. Joint Trade Unions Report

LCJTU Leicester City Joint Trade Union Side

**UNISON
T&G
UCATT**

**GMB
NATFHE
AEEU**

20 November 2002

COMMENTS BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ICT & E-GOVERNMENT

The following highlights the main concerns from the Joint Trade Union regarding the Best Value ICT Review.

There is a fundamental problem with the Best Value Review, conclusions and Improvement Plan.

1. There needs to be a change of emphasis on investment and staff training. This will need a commitment from Directors and Elected Members. The result is that a 2% saving cannot be realised, in fact, more investment is required.
2. **As similarly evidenced in other Best Value Reviews, this Review shows fragmentation and lack of consistency between Departments. This is evidenced by:-**
 - i. The different departmental ICT strategies and no common format for strategies.
 - ii. The different development and re-investment issues.
 - iii. The difference in the level and quality of ICT training.
 - iv. Not all Departments have a departmental ICT user group.
 - v. Confusion over the roles of departmental and central support staff.

3. **There is a serious equality issue regarding the access to the Council's Intranet and use of E-mail, especially for non-office based staff.**

Although the Improvement Plan should start to address the access issues, there are still concerns about ensuring that training in basic ICT skills is provided for all employees. Provision of access alone is not sufficient to enable equality in communication and information.

4. **There needs to be better communication and consultation around ICT.**

- i. More involvement of stakeholders as with the ICT strategy.
- ii. Better use of ICT user groups.
- iii. Better promotion and distribution of New Connections.
- iv. More IT awareness events that are accessible to as many employees as possible.

5. There needs to be better working relationships between Departments and Central IT, it does do well for the Council to set end users possibly suffering because of infighting. Departments need to embrace the culture change, this is definitely an area to start with.

FS/NDP/20.11.02.