



Leicester
City Council

CABINET

1st September 2003

**Best Value Review of E-Government
SCOPE**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (ICT & CUSTOMER ACCESS)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek approval to the scope of the e-government Best Value review which is attached as Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the scope of the Best Value review of E-Government

3. FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 E-government is a cross cutting theme affecting all services across the Council therefore it is not practicable to calculate the total value of the services under review.

4. REPORT

- 4.1 The proposed scope for the review is:

- To ensure the Council is able to achieve the 2005 target of 100% of relevant services being accessible electronically.
- To consider whether the Council is fully embracing the potential of e-government.

The review will consider:

- Achievability – Organisational ability, and commitment to deliver our e-government programme.

- Relevance – Whether our e-government programme is focused on service users' needs and aspirations.

4.2 How does the theme relate to the Performance Plan and Key Strategies

E-government is about using ICT to modernise the way we work and is therefore part of the Council's ICT strategy. The Authority is required to report progress annually via an Implementing e-Government (IEG) statement. Progress is also assessed as part of the annual CPA inspection.

4.3 Timescales

The final report will be ready for consideration by end October.

5. **STANDARD PARAGRAPHS**

Other implications	Yes/No	Paragraph referred
Equal opportunities	Yes	Section 8 – equality
Policy	No	
Sustainability and environmental	No	
Crime and disorder	No	
Human rights act	No	
Elderly/people on low income	No	

6. **REPORT AUTHOR**

Jill Craig
Service Director (ICT & Customer Access)

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	No
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Best Value Review of E-Government SCOPE

1. Introduction

1.1 The *National Strategy for E-Government* published by the ODPM in November 2002 states that e-Government is at the heart of the drive to modernise government. Local e-Government (as defined in the National Strategy) is about:

- Transforming services;
- Renewing local democracy
- Promoting local economic vitality

1.2 Local authorities are subject to the Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI-157 a measure of electronic service delivery. Electronic service delivery is only an element of the e-government programme, but this is currently the only national e-government measure.

1.3 BVPI-157 is defined as –

“The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery”.

1.4 The Comprehensive Performance Assessment also takes account of BVPI-157 and progress on e-government generally.

1.5 In addition, although there is no legislation requiring it, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) is encouraging local authorities to participate in the following key national projects:

1.6 The **National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG)**.

The NLPG is a national index of land and property data. The NLPG is a means by which local authority data can be consistently referenced to

enable it to be identified, retrieved and integrated with other data. It is the foundation of the data infrastructure for joined up government. There are three official levels of NLPG implementation; these are;

Level 1: committed to implement NLPG,

Level 2: in progress,

Level 3: linked to and updating NLPG.

1.7 The **National Land Information Service (NLIS)**.

The NLIS is initially concentrating on providing a service to the conveyancing community (solicitors, agencies or individuals), in order to speed up and simplify the process of buying or selling property. NLIS is the national central 'hub' through which local land charges searches can be channelled. The 'hub' acts as a collection and distribution point for searches to local search offices, and a uniform interface between the customer and the service provider (the council). There are three levels at which an authority can be part of NLIS:

Level 1: Registered but not connected,

Level 2: Starter system in place or requested,

Level 3: Automated interface with NLIS hub.

1.8 The **Local Authority Secure Electoral Register (LASER)**.

LASER is creating nationally linked, but locally maintained, electoral registers providing seamless national access to quality controlled electoral register information. Each local authority is required to approve a new licence agreement which confirms its commitment to the LASER joining process and to use of their data in this way.

2. **Our vision – Accessibility, Engagement and Value**

2.1 Leicester City Council's vision for e-government is:

- Convenient, cost effective and well regarded public services equally accessible to all.
- Giving the people of Leicester the opportunity to be involved in shaping the Council's decisions.

3. **Scope**

3.1

- To ensure the Council is able to achieve the 2005 target of 100% of relevant services being accessible electronically.
- To consider whether the Council is fully embracing the potential of e-government.

3.2 The review will consider:

- Achievability – Organisational ability, and commitment to deliver our e-government programme.
- Relevance – Whether our e-government programme is focused on service users' needs and aspirations.

4. Activities to be included in the review

4.1 The delivery of e-government is a responsibility of managers in all business units. Accountability for e-Government at Corporate Director level resides with the Director of Resources, Access and Diversity and the Service Director (ICT and Customer Access) co-ordinates progress across the Council via SRG and Heads of ICT.

4.2 Improved Customer Access is at the heart of the Council's e-government agenda. The Council's Customer Access strategy, which includes front of house arrangements, telephone access and our web site, was included in the Best Value Review of Customer Care.

4.3 In addition, last years Best Value review of ICT included a review of the Council's ICT Strategy and its ICT Project Management arrangements.

4.4 In other words, much of the Council's e-government programme has already been Best Value reviewed. However, we haven't specifically assessed our capacity to meet the 2005 target or challenged whether, as an organisation, we're fully committed to exploiting the full potential of e-government. We also need to revisit the relevance of our e-government programme to the needs of our service users.

4.5 The IDeA has produced a methodology (the Electronic Service Delivery or ESD Toolkit) for calculating progress towards the 2005 BVPI-157 target. All local authorities are expected to adopt the ESD Toolkit to enable consistent and meaningful comparative analysis. LCC will recalculate BVPI-157 according to this model by end July. The ESD Toolkit lists all those services that Government would expect to be e-enabled. All applicable services included in the ESD Toolkit listings will be considered as part of this review.

5. Applying the 4 C's

5.1 Challenge

5.1.1 e-Government is a national requirement in that all appropriate services must be e-enabled by 2005.

5.1.2 e-Government challenges an organisation to modernise the way it delivers services. Increasingly our service users are expecting to be able to contact us via new service channels: the Internet (45% of UK homes now have Internet access), e-mail, mobile phones, kiosks and digital television. However the majority (>70% according to our most recent MORI survey) still prefer telephone access and there is a core, but significant, demand for face-to-face services, particularly from more disadvantaged social groups. The Council has responded positively to this challenge:

5.1.3

- a. The Council's web site www.leicester.gov.uk was launched in May 1999 and now receives over 700,000 page views per month (644,113 in May 2003; 365,124 in May 2002, 268,513 in May 2001 and 50,371 in May 2000).
- b. 50% of services are now accessible electronically, with many on-line transactions including making payments, reporting Housing Repairs, applying for Jobs and Library book reservations.
- c. Committee papers are available on-line within 48 hours of meetings.
- d. We have telephone contact centres for Council Tax, Environmental Enquiries and Housing Repairs and are on target to introduce a general enquiries contact centre by October 2003.
- e. The Customer Services Centre, New Walk Centre, first opened in 1993 and continues to develop and expand the range of services it offers. Its popularity has increased each year since opening - over 120,000 visitors last year, compared to 100,000 the year before and 40,000 during its first year of opening. We opened our first Neighbourhood Customer Services Centre in February this year. Usage of this new centre has far exceeded expectations and feedback from the local community has been extremely positive.

5.1.4 Our web site is highly rated (twice listed as one of the top ten Unitary Authority web sites by the acclaimed SOCITM Better Connected review). Leicester Radio rated the site 'web-site of the day' on May 1st this year!

5.1.5 E-government is about much more than enabling access to services via the Internet. Existing initiatives such as Social Care and Health's CareFirst, Housing's Integrated Housing System and Electronic Document Management Systems and Cultural Services 'The Card' are key building blocks of our e-government programme. For example, CareFirst is a key building block towards the development of a joint Health and Social Services Electronic Social Care Record. These major projects serve to demonstrate how the Council has mainstreamed e-government into its core business.

- 5.1.6 Social Inclusion and Accessibility is at the heart of our programme. The web site www.leicester.gov.uk is nationally highly regarded for its accessibility to visually impaired users. Information is available in the main minority languages and web pages are designed to reduce barriers to disabled users. The web site is continually developed to national and international accessibility standards to further enhance access to information and services for all groups of users.
- 5.1.7 During 2001 the Council secured more than £750,000 funding for a project to develop an Information and Communication network for disabled people in Leicester. The scheme which will be launched in July 2003 will operate through designated access points around the City, particularly day centres and voluntary organisations, and covers a range of services and opportunities, including: employment, leisure and recreation, welfare and benefits, social care, health and personal care, training, transport, council services, and other areas.
- 5.1.8 We have developed new information channels such as free public Internet access in libraries; kiosks; and web sites developed for Leicester's Tenants and Residents Associations to publish their own content.

5.2 Consultation

- 5.2.1 To date, local consultation *specifically* focused on the Council's e-government strategy has been minimal. However, individual services do have well established structures and forums for consultation with service users and the response to new e-government initiatives is closely monitored. For example the Tenants and Residents web sites were strongly welcomed by the Leicester Federation of Tenants Associations.
- 5.2.2 The Leicester Disability Information and Communication Network included extensive consultation with potential service users about what they wanted from the project and the types of adaptations they required.
- 5.2.3 The project to introduce a General Enquiries Contact Centre is a direct response to the Council's most recent MORI survey that identified the telephone as the preferred method of contacting the Council. The same survey identified very low levels of customer satisfaction with the accessibility of Council services.
- 5.2.4 Surveys carried out as part of the BV Customer Care review pointed to a demand for more localised services. The New Parks Customer Services Centre (opened earlier this year) was the Council's response to that research.
- 5.2.5 Nationally, there has been extensive e-government driven consultation programmes. Central government has invested enormous sums of

funding into researching the availability and take up of new access channels (digital TV, the internet etc) and we monitor this research closely.

5.2.6 The local consultation that we have carried out, mirrors the national findings very closely (e.g. that the Internet is the preferred access channel for a relatively small minority, but that demand is increasing), however we will consider whether more specific local consultation is necessary as part of this BV review.

5.3 Compare

5.3.1 The table below shows our performance against a national average -

BVPI-157	2001/02	2002/03
City Council actual	33%	50%
National Average	28%	45%

5.3.2 We have achieved NLPG Level 3 (we are linked to and updating NLPG), which puts us in the top quartile of local authorities.

5.3.3 We are currently at NLIS Level 2 (we receive requests electronically), which puts us on a par with most other local authorities. We expect to achieve Level 3 (automated interface with NLIS hub) by December 2003.

5.3.4 The authoritative “Better Connected 2003” survey of local authority Internet web sites classifies our web site as “Content Plus” according to a four point scale –

- Promotional - provide information but little interaction (20% of sites).
- Content - provide more sophisticated information and some interaction (49% of sites).
- Content Plus – provide very useful content and more advanced online self-service features (29% of sites).
- Transactional – are accessible, complete and coherent with more than one type of online interaction; e.g. payment, applications, consultation, bookings (2% of sites).

5.3.5 An issue affecting the capacity of officers and Members to contribute to the implementation of e-government relates to the ICT facilities that are made available to them to conduct Council business. The table below shows the percentage of authorities that provide over 75% of their officers/Members with the ICT facilities listed.

	Nationally		Leicester	
	Officers	Members	Officers	Members

Individual PC (at work or home)	70%	41%	96%	100%
Personal e-mail address	68%	63%	94%	100%
Intranet access	63%	53%	84%	100%
Internet access	43%	62%	48%	100%

Leicester comfortably exceeds the national averages.

5.4 Compete

5.4.1 We found during the ICT Best Value review that it is very difficult to compare the costs of what we're doing. For obvious commercial reasons such data is not readily available.

5.4.2 There are two main approaches to addressing competition: wholesale partnership or outsourcing, and localised outsourcing for particular services. As this review covers all services delivered by the Council this latter option should be addressed as part of local service reviews.

5.4.3 It is worth noting that those Councils that have wholesale externalised their front-of-house, including ICT, functions (e.g. Liverpool) tend to be those with significant problems. This is where private companies who can invest large sums of capital can secure a significant revenue stream against their initial investment. For as long as the annual expenditure for the Council is less than it was at the beginning, both parties benefit.

5.4.4 Leicester has already got well-established front-of-house arrangements, including the Customer Services Centre, Housing Repairs, Environmental and the Council Tax telephone Contact Centres so it is unlikely such whole sale outsourcing to a profit making organisation could generate savings.

5.4.5 We know from previous contact that potential suppliers of these services will only talk to us if they believe us to be serious about our intent.

6. Improvement Plan

6.1 The outcome of the review will inform an improvement plan which will be incorporated into the SRG and Heads of ICT work programme as appropriate.

7. How the review will be carried out

7.1 The Audit Commission is carrying out a review of our e-government work as part of its 2003 work programme (see Appendix A for the Project Specification). It is proposed that this forms a major part of this Best Value review.

Heads of ICT will act as the Programme Board for the review.

7.2 Challenge

7.2.1 The Audit Commission will challenge whether sufficient resources have been assigned to the e-government programme by reviewing progress against our IEG statement, auditing our BVPI157 analysis and interviewing key players in departments.

7.2.2 We will supplement this work through a series of meetings with groups of senior managers in departments to discuss their response to the e-government agenda, to identify any constraints to progress and to challenge their commitment to e-government.

7.2.3 In addition, we're currently working with departments to review their progress towards 100% electronic service delivery by 2005 using the BVPI157 work for baseline comparison. This work should result in a programme of work with clear target completion dates.

7.2.4 Equality

Equality and social Inclusion are features of the national e-government programme. This scoping document has identified a number of initiatives and actions the Council has already taken, however we need to satisfy ourselves that equality issues are being appropriately addressed in our local e-government programme. Specifically we will consider:

- Whether the Council's free internet access points are accessible to disabled users;
- The accessibility of the Council's web site;
- How equality issues are addressed by individual e-government projects e.g. the telephone access project.

7.2.5 We will take advice from relevant local organisations and ensure the lessons learned from the consultation carried out from the Disabled Consultation and Information Network is shared across the Council.

7.3 Compare

7.3.1 The Audit Commission has carried out a number of these e-government reviews during which they have collected an extensive source of data against which they can compare our progress. Their review will also include best practice advice.

7.3.2 The only comparators available are already covered in section 6 (above).

7.4 Consult

- 7.4.1 We will use the Intranet and the departmental meetings to consult more widely on our e-government vision.
- 7.4.2 We will consult local organisations such as the Centre for Integrated Living on the accessibility of our web site and on our telephone access project. We will also consider using the People's panel for wider consultation on issues such as access preferences, awareness of free Internet access points etc.
- 7.4.3 We will take advice from the Audit Commission as to whether our current approach to consultation is sufficient or whether it should be supplemented by more direct, local consultation.

7.5 Compete

- 7.5.1 Almost all e-investment is already subject to competition – system procurements, web development work, consultancy etc. The ICT & Customer Access division is the corporate lead for e-government, but there are no full-time resources committed to e-government. Instead it takes up a significant amount of the time of the Service Director (ICT & Customer Access) and that of the Strategy and Programme Manager. Departmental lead officers similarly are pursuing the e-agenda in addition to a wide range of other things. In other words there isn't an e-government function that could be market tested in the traditional sense.
- 7.5.2 One option is to consider externalising, for example, all Customer Access activity (telephone and face to face) services. This would include the General Enquiries, Housing Repairs and Council Tax telephone contact centres and the Customer Services Centres, although research in other Council's shows that suppliers are more likely to bid if other services are included in the 'package' for example Revenues and Benefits, and Payroll and Personnel. As already mentioned, suppliers will only talk to us about such options if they believe us to be serious about our intentions.
- 7.5.3 Directors' Board at its meeting on Tuesday 8th July agreed the following:

'All staff and services should be within the scope of the review as e-government is a cross cutting theme which may affect all services To include all services in the review and then to subject them to competition would not be cost effective.

We are therefore not scoping any service in for external competition at this stage. However, if during the course of the review it proves that we

are behind our targets on some services, then we will consider the option of external competition.'

8. Review timetable

Task	Resource	Target
Agree Project Scope	Service Director (ICT&CA) – meeting attendance.	End June
Update BVP1157 and review planned work programme.	Strategy and Programmes Manager – 10 days. Departmental leads – 1 day each	End July
Audit Commission review of Leicester's progress towards e-government	Audit Commission. Two hours per departmental lead and SRG representative. Resource to implement recommendations – potentially significant.	First draft by end July
Departmental seminars to discuss the Council's vision for e-government, departmental commitment to the 2005 target, and to identify any constraints to progress.	Web Manager, Service Director (ICT&CA), Strategy & Programmes Manager, Departmental Lead – 3 day each per department, including preparation and analysis of findings.	End September
Consult on e-government vision: <i>Internal</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce consultation literature. • Develop Intranet site. • Publicise via Intranet home page, New Connections, departmental meetings (above) 	Strategy and Programmes Manager – 20 days Service Director (ICT & CA) – 5 days Departmental Leads – 3 days each	Complete consultation end September. Analyse findings by early October

<p>and FACE.</p> <p><i>External</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider shape of consultation – the questions to be asked, the target audience, the preferred method etc. • Produce consultation literature 		
Final report		End October
