



Leicester  
City Council

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## Best Value Review of e-Government Final Report and Improvement Plan

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### REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (ICT & CUSTOMER ACCESS)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

- 1.1 The Council's ICT function was subject to a Best Value review during 2002/3. At the time it was decided to review our progress towards e-government separately. This report concludes the e-government review and makes recommendations for improvement.

#### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The scope of the review is to:
- Ensure the Council is able to achieve the 2005 target of 100% of relevant services being accessible electronically (BVPI157).
  - Consider whether the Council is fully embracing the potential of e-government.

#### 3. THE POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 E-government is incorporated into the Council's ICT strategy and linked to corporate and departmental strategies and business plans.
- 3.2 The authority is required to report progress annually to the ODPM via an Implementing E-Government (IEG) statement. Progress is also assessed as part of the annual CPA inspection.

#### 4. ACTIVITIES COVERED IN THE REVIEW

- 4.1 E-government encompasses all the Council's activities and is therefore the responsibility of managers in all business units.

#### 5. HOW THE REVIEW WAS CARRIED OUT

- 5.1 The IDeA (Improvement Development Agency) has produced a methodology (the Electronic Service Delivery toolkit) for calculating progress towards the 2005 BVPI-157 target of 100% of relevant services being accessible electronically. The toolkit lists all those services that Government would expect to be e-enabled. This review

analysed progress against each of the listed activities. Departmental lead officers were required to document their work plans to achieve the 2005 target and identify any areas where progress would not be made.

- 5.2 To determine whether the Council is fully embracing the potential of e-government we ran workshops in each department to identify awareness of the programme, constraints to progress and to debate how we might overcome these constraints.
- 5.3 We promoted the Council's e-government programme, 'e-modernising Leicester' via these workshops, New Connections (the Council's ICT newsletter), FACE, LINK and an Intranet site. We further researched awareness of the programme via a short questionnaire at October's IT Awareness Event.
- 5.4 A timely Audit Commission review of our progress towards e-government was a useful contributor to this exercise. This review involved interviews with representatives from all departments and a detailed analysis of our e-government plans and progress to date.
- 5.5 The public were consulted via a short questionnaire in Customer Services Centres, libraries and centres for people with disabilities. 411 questionnaires were completed.

## 6. CHALLENGE

- 6.1 The scoping exercise set a series of challenging questions for the review:
  - a. Are sufficient resources assigned to the e-government programme?
  - b. Are managers committed to the delivery of the e-government programme?
  - c. Is our planning 'joined up'?
  - d. Are users aware of our e-government initiatives? Are we meeting their needs?
  - e. Are the Council's free Internet access points accessible to disabled users?
  - f. Is the Council's web site accessible to disabled users?
  - g. Are equality issues being properly addressed by individual e-government projects?

## 7. COMPARE

- 7.1 The only comparators available were detailed in the scoping document but are repeated here for completeness.

*Table 1 : Progress towards the 2005 target against a national average:*

<b>BVPI – 157</b>	<b>2001/2</b>	<b>2002/3</b>
City Council actual	32%	50%

National average	28%	45%
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7.2 The National Land and Property Gazetteer (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. We have achieved NLPG Level 3 (i.e. we are linked to and updating NLPG), which puts us in the top quartile of local authorities.

7.3 The National Land Information Service (NLIS) is a central 'hub', which acts as a collection and distribution point for searches to local search offices, and a uniform interface between the customer and the service provider (i.e. the council). 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 March 2004. Currently 28% of local authorities subscribe to NLIS at Level 1, 20% at Level 2 and 5% at Level 3 (source – Audit Commission report).

7.4 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).

7.5 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.

*Table 2: % of authorities providing over 75% of their officers/Members with ICT facilities.*

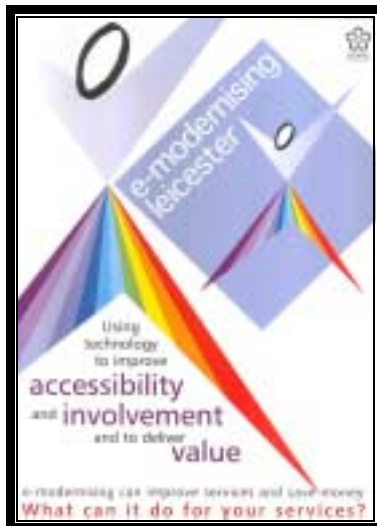
	Nationally		Leicester	
	Officers	Members	Office-based staff	Members
Individual PC (at work or home)	70%	41%	96%	100%
Personal e-mail address	68%	63%	94%	100%
Intranet access	63%	53%	84%	100%
Internet access	43%	62%	48%	100%

7.6 Leicester comfortably exceeds the national averages. However please note that these figures are averages and would therefore not apply equally to all departments. For example in ER&D a high percentage of staff have individual PCs whereas a lower percentage of staff in SC&H have individual PCs.

## 8. CONSULT

8.1 We have called our e-government programme *e-Modernising Leicester*, which aims to improve *access* to our services, *involvement* of our service users in our decision making processes and represent *value* for money.

8.2 Activities to promote the *e-Modernising Leicester* programme include a special New Connections (the Council's ICT newsletter), articles in LINK and FACE, the Leicester Mercury, and an e-Modernising Leicester Intranet site (<http://intranet/e-modernising>).



8.3 During this review we consulted senior managers about their awareness of and views on the *e-Modernising Leicester* programme via a series of departmental workshops. We also consulted with staff generally via a questionnaire distributed at October's IT Awareness event.

8.4 Separately we consulted service users on their awareness of and views about Leicester's web site. In total 411 completed questionnaires were received, 213 from the Council's Customer Services Centres, 143 from public Libraries, and 55 from voluntary sector organisations and centres for people with disabilities.

## 9. COMPETE

9.1 Directors' Board at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> July and subsequently Cabinet at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September agreed the following:

9.2 *'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. 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.'*

## **10. KEY FINDINGS**

### **10.1 CHALLENGE**

#### **10.1.1 ARE WE ON TARGET FOR 2005?**

The outlook from each department (supplied by their Head of ICT representative) appears below (the detailed analysis is available on the e-modernising Leicester Intranet site):

#### **10.1.2 Chief Executive**

All of Chief Executives services are already e-enabled.

#### **10.1.3 Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal**

10.1.3.1 Our aim is to continue to e-enable as many services as we possibly can. We will achieve this by developing our current website and by consulting with suppliers of various departmental ICT systems and developing these systems to be web enabled. Our current forecast is to e-enable 99% of our services by Dec 2005 so our overall outlook is good. We did have a proposal to recruit an e-government officer to take a departmental lead in driving and implementing these system changes, but due to the nature of our current departmental status, these plans have been put on hold.

#### **10.1.4 Education**

10.1.4.1 The development of the Education & Lifelong Learning website has moved at a rapid pace over the last twelve months, generating much positive feedback. Due to reduced resources it is expected that the pace will slow over the year ahead, however, it is still anticipated that steady and continuous progress will be made.

10.4.1.2 By December 2005, it is forecast that 96% of e-enabled service delivery will be achieved. The barriers to achieving 100% are ensuring effective authentication techniques for applications requiring legal declarations by applicants, establishing appropriate agreements for services sub-contracted to Leicestershire County Council. Also, the department is reliant on the corporate development of systems permitting members of the public to pay for services online as well as facilitating the internal distribution of revenue received in this way.

#### **10.1.5 Environment, Regeneration and Development**

10.1.5.1 Our aim is to e-enable all services by December 2005. The biggest risk factors facing the Department in terms of becoming e-enabled

are lack of resources both for initial capital outlay and ongoing funding and the impact of continuous reorganisation on staffing and service delivery – this in turn has an impact on determining our vision and also a short term impact on support (for accommodation moves, for example) taking precedence over long term planning.

### **10.1.6 Housing**

10.1.6.1 A good early start was made when the Housing Department launched the 'Repairs on line' service in 2001, followed by an application to help people apply for sheltered housing and a service to help Council tenants exchange their homes locally or in a different part of the country. Information is available about some key services in a range of different languages. A web site has been developed to support the Department's partnership working with Tenants and Residents Associations and another for the Supporting People programme.

10.1.6.2 In the past year progress has been less visible as a huge effort has been concentrated on implementing the Open Housing system. So far the Housing Benefits, Council Tax and NNDR systems are in operational use with other modules scheduled to go live in February and April 2004.

10.1.6.3 By December 2005, it is forecast that 100 % of e-enabled service delivery will be achieved. We are planning to deliver authentication which will provide the security needed for our customers to access their data directly. Access will be provided for example to tenant rent account balances, applications for housing, Council Tax accounts and information about Housing Benefit claims

### **10.1.7 Resources, Access and Diversity**

10.1.7.1 We will continue to develop information access and interaction via our website recognising that provision of electronic interactions and access to personal data will require high security standards achieved through registration and authentication techniques.

10.1.7.2 The overall outlook is good. Existing business priorities have prioritised our e-government initiatives. Our forecast shows 93% of interactions will be e-enabled by 31 December 2005. The shortfall is attributed to e-enabling the Registration Service, targeted for 2006 (a timetable dictated by Government).

### **10.1.8 Social Care and Health**

10.1.8.1 Many of the services provided through social care currently have information available on the Internet. Initiatives such as the disabilities information and communication network and the Fostering website have provided specific information about the service areas concerned. Other specific websites are being developed for areas such as Area Child Protection Committee.

10.1.8.2 The information on many other service areas is included on the main council website. A programme is being initiated to complete the gaps in service information available.

10.1.8.3 The outlook is good, as SCHD has been developing e-enabled services consistently in recent years. It is forecast that 99% of services will be e-enabled by 2005, with the shortfall due to areas where services are subject to change by 2005.

### 10.1.9 SUMMARY

The authority's progress in e-enabling services is steady with forecasts of 72% by March 2004 and 86% by March 2005. However, with a forecast of 98% electronic service delivery by December 2005, the authority is not expected to achieve the national target of 100% by that date. The areas where we will not be e-enabled are areas where we are dependent on the progress of others, for example Registration Services is dependent on a National Government project that will not come on line until 2006. We are confident that if we exclude the handful of functions that are effectively beyond our control, and subject to being able to maintain resourcing levels, we are on target for 100% of services being e-enabled.

10.1.9.1 BVPI157 identifies ten interaction types – Providing Information, Collecting revenue, Providing benefits and grants, Consultation, Regulation, Application for services, Booking venues, resources & courses, Paying for goods & services, Providing access to community, professional or business networks, Procurement – and the ESD Toolkit lists more than 600 services areas. Our analysis of the situation in Leicester shows that six of the ten interaction types are expected to be fully e-enabled by 2005. The provision of information, consultation and the provision of access to community and other networks will be largely offered through telephone contact or through the Internet. The collection of revenue and provision of benefits and grants will be mainly done through direct debit, bank transfer and charges to debit/credit cards.

10.1.9.2 The remaining four interaction types – regulation (90%), applications for services (98%), booking venues, resources and courses (93%), and paying for goods and services (94%) - are forecast to be largely though not fully e-enabled by 2005. These types of interaction are more difficult to e-enable with issues such as national legislation (eg. registration of a death requires a hand written signature) and a dependency on third party suppliers/contractors being the main barriers to achieving the 100% target. Whilst we cannot change national legislation, as clients we should use our influence or resort to contract terms with suppliers/contractors to ensure that they are aware of and respond to the needs of e-government.

10.1.9.4 **Key Improvement Recommendations** – *Heads of ICT to continuously review progress towards the targets and report any issues of concerns to its parent group, SRG, for action/resolution as required.*

10.2.1 **ARE WE FULLY EMBRACING THE POTENTIAL OF E-GOVERNMENT? IS OUR PLANNING 'JOINED UP'?**

- 10.2.1.1 The definition of e-enabled (for the purposes of BV157) is that a service is accessible electronically, either by the Internet or by telephone. If accessible by telephone, e-government requires the person dealing with the telephone enquiry to be able to resolve the issue using an ICT solution - it is not sufficient to take a message and put it in the internal post. To be e-enabled the enquiry must be recorded electronically and then automatically routed to the service responsible for its resolution (where immediate resolution is not possible).
- 10.2.1.2 Within departments we have many excellent examples of services using ICT to improve the way they do business: all departments are now using some form of electronic document management. Housing have implemented a highly sophisticated document management and workflow solution for Housing Benefits and Council Tax and are rolling it out across Housing Personnel, Housing Options, Gas Servicing and Housing Management. Social Care and Health are evaluating the same system for possible use across their service. As well as improving the efficiency of the Housing Benefit service available at Welford House, the process of scanning all Housing communications into an electronic format means that Housing officers are no longer dependent on accessing a physical client file from a filing cabinet, but they can view a fully client history (subject to access rights) from anywhere on the Council's extensive network. Another obvious benefit of electronic document management systems is that they can free up large amounts of office space previously taken over by paper files, thereby contributing to the Council's accommodation strategy.
- 10.2.1.3 The Resources department are currently introducing Customer Relations Management (CRM) software, to support the Council's front of house services (the Customer Services Centres and the soon to be launched Customer Services Line). CRM will interface directly and seamlessly into the Council e-mail system, and with other key back office systems for example the ER&D car parking system for receipting the payment of car parking fines. Already in use in the New Parks Customer Services Centre, CRM holds a complete client history of contacts with the Council's via its Customer Access points.
- 10.2.1.4 The Land and Property Gazetteer (LPG) holds a list of all land and property 'parcels' across the city. Each 'parcel' is assigned its own Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN), which will be key to facilitating the joining up of systems across the Council. The LPG is at the heart of the Council's Intranet mapping system City StreAtZ. CRM is the first system to use the LPG as its address source. This ensures consistency in addressing and will be key to joining up with other back office systems and enabling effective reporting. Work is also progressing on linking the LPG to other Council systems including Land Charges, CAPS-Uniform (which covers Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Building Control etc.), Planning, Local Taxation (Council Tax and NNDR), Electoral Registration as well as Education and Social Care.



10.2.1.5 Housing, Education and Social Care and Health have all recently completed, or are soon to complete, major projects to consolidate disparate departmental information systems. The Housing and Education systems both include web front ends to enable service users to transact with them electronically.

10.2.1.6 We also have many examples of joined up e-working with other agencies, including Social Services Disabled Consultation Network, Supporting People, our response to the requirements highlighted in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters', and our e-government partnership with the other Local Authorities in the County which aims to improve access to local government services across the County through a reciprocal service delivery project.

10.2.1.7 In the 'back office', a major project is underway to replace the Council's payroll and personnel systems with an integrated, web enabled solution which as well as streamlining business processes (and reducing costs) will provide functionality such as e-mailed payslips, online timesheets and staff having online access to their own pay details.

10.2.1.8 In an organisation the size of the Council, there are hundreds of relevant projects that we could list here. We've only detailed some of the major ones in order to illustrate the point. The Council's Heads of ICT group (formed following a recommendation in the BV Improvement Plan) has identified areas where we could be more joined up (for example the use of smartcards and a number of ICT related research and development projects) and are taking action to address the issue.

- **Key Improvement Recommendation** – *Heads of ICT should work in collaboration in order to avoid duplication of effort and ensure joined up working across services spanning the authority. In particular, departments to work collaboratively on central shared services including authentication, e-payment, e-procurement and security*

### **10.1.3 ARE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES ASSIGNED TO THE E-MODERNISING PROGRAMME?**

10.1.3.1 The review demonstrates that good progress is being made towards the 2005 deadline and, more importantly, that the Council has recognised the potential offered by modern ICT to modernise the way we do business (section 9.1.2). Obviously more resources would help the organisation move forward more quickly, but despite the budget pressures the organisation has faced over recent years it has consistently been able to prioritise ICT developments where they have been identified as being necessary for the business.

10.1.3.2 In the absence of a current corporate ICT/e-modernising Leicester strategy, showing priorities and resource implications it is difficult to reach any definite answer to the question 'Are sufficient resources assigned to the e-modernising programme?' However, the detailed

research carried out for this review suggests we should be able to fund the work necessary to reach the 2005 deadline successfully.

**Key Improvement Recommendation** – *Develop a joint ICT/E-modernising Leicester strategy as a matter of priority.*

## 10.2 COMPARE

### 10.2.1 HOW DO WE COMPARE AGAINST BEST PRACTICE COUNCILS?

(Also see paragraph 6)

10.2.1.1 The table below, based on information contained in the Audit Commission report, shows how the City Council compares with other authorities in terms of services available now via e-mail or the Internet:

Service	Available in % of authorities	Available in the City Council ?
Library books renewal	22%	✓
Request repair	11%	✓
Report defect/failure	25%	✓
Pay council tax/business rates	32%	
Access council papers	56%	✓
See detail of planning applications	30%	✓
Contact councillor	85%	✓
Comment/vote on policy	40%	✓
Information about local schools	45%	✓
Information about HB entitlement	31%	
Book leisure facilities	4%	
Book tourist accommodation	16%	

## 10.3 CONSULT

### 10.3.1 ARE STAFF FULLY ENGAGED IN THE E-MODERNISING LEICESTER PROGRAMME? ARE MANAGERS COMMITTED TO E-MODERNISING LEICESTER?

10.3.1.1 A series of workshops and presentations, attended by more than 100 staff, were conducted in each of the seven departments of the Council from August through to November 2003. The workshops usually involved a presentation on *e-Modernising Leicester* followed by discussions focused on issues or themes relating to e-government appropriate to the department concerned. A questionnaire was distributed to attendees of all workshops and 44 completed questionnaires were returned.

10.3.1.2 Only a minority of attendees (38%) felt they had a good level of understanding of e-government before the workshops. However this

increased to 77% after the workshops, which proved their effectiveness.

10.3.1.3 It is reassuring that most respondents (81%) are currently looking at ways to use ICT to help modernise their services.

10.3.1.4 Partnership working is a key objective of e-government and about half the respondents said they are joining up services with other agencies.

10.3.1.5 There is a perception that lack of resources (both money and time) are the major constraints to modernising services.

10.3.1.6 Less than a quarter of respondents had a good level of understanding of BVPI-157 the performance indicator that measures electronic service delivery. This increased to over three quarters following the workshop.

10.3.1.7 In addition to the workshops, a questionnaire was distributed at October's IT Awareness event. There were 400 attendees at the event and 130 completed questionnaires. Most respondents (75%) had heard of e-Modernising Leicester and a small majority (58%) felt they understand what it means. However, only a small proportion (28%) know what the 2005 e-government targets are. Furthermore only 18% of respondents are aware of their service's plans to meet the 2005 targets and only 26% know how far e-enabled their service is. There is clearly a lack of awareness in this area, which needs addressing.

10.3.1.8 In response to the question "Where would you go to find out more about e-government generally or the *e-Modernising Leicester* programme?" most people (75%) said they would refer to the Intranet, followed almost equally by Awareness Events (36%), the Internet (33%) and their line manager (32%). Least resorted to were New Connections (the Council's ICT newsletter) and other printed material both at 17% and workshop events (15%). Attendance at the series of workshops to raise awareness of e-Modernising Leicester has varied across departments and these have been mainly targeted at senior managers, which might explain the 15% figure.

10.3.1.9 These findings highlight the importance of –

- Regularly updating the e-Modernising Leicester pages on the Intranet,
- Continuing with the programme of workshops and presentations in departments and using other means including the Intranet and IT Awareness events to raise awareness of e-Modernising Leicester, and
- Ensuring that line managers in particular have a good understanding of e-Modernising Leicester.

**Key Improvement Recommendation** – Continue to raise awareness and understanding of the e-Modernising Leicester programme in general and the 2005 targets in particular.

**10.3.2 ARE THE PUBLIC AWARE OF OUR E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES? ARE WE MEETING THEIR NEEDS?**

10.3.2.1 The Council's Internet web site, originally launched in May 1999 and since redesigned twice in response to user feedback, has seen phenomenal growth in terms of the pages of information offered and use. The number of unique users, that is separate individuals visiting the web site, increased by about 90% during the last two years. The number of web pages viewed by visitors to the web site also increased by about 66% during that period.

(source – IEG 3 Statement)	Actual ('000s)		Forecast ('000s)		
	01/2	02/3	03/4	04/5	05/6
• Page impressions (annual)	2,999	4,985	7,726	11,589	17,383
• Unique users, (annual)	365	690	1,062	1,594	2,390

10.3.2.2 The most popular pages, after the home page, are Jobs, Libraries, A to Z of Services, News and LeicesterActive (information about whats on in the city). Despite the increasing popularity of our site, we were keen to carry out some local research to better understand Council service users' awareness, and views of www.leicester.gov.uk. A questionnaire was sent to several libraries, many Leicester Disabilities Network centres (LDICN), various voluntary organisations through Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL), and the Council's two Customer Service Centres (CSC). A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed. There was an excellent rate of return, with 411 completed questionnaires (82%) being returned.

10.3.2.3 Overall just over half the respondents (56%) were aware that the Council has a web site. Awareness was greatest amongst Internet users in Libraries (78%), slightly less so (76%) amongst users of LDICN centres and VAL organisations, and least (35%) amongst visitors to the Customer Service Centres.

10.3.2.4 Approximately half of respondents from Libraries and LDICN centres and VAL organisations had used the web site compared to only 14% of CSC visitors.

10.3.2.5 Of those who responded, approximately half had visited the web site during the previous week (55% for Libraries users, 42% for LDICN and VAL users, and 45% for CSC visitors) or the previous month (33% for Libraries users, 46% for LDICN and VAL users, and 31% for CSC visitors). This indicates regular visits to the web site.

10.3.2.6 Again of those who responded, most thought the web site was easy to use, although 25% of CSC visitor respondents didn't think it was (compared to 20% of LDICN & VAL users, and 8% Library users).

10.3.2.7 Most people (approximately 85%) use the web site for general or specific information. Only a small minority (3%) contact the Council through the web site. This is a slight improvement on the MORI Leicester Residents Survey in 2001, which showed less than 1% contact the Council via e-mail. Online payment through the web site is very limited.

10.3.2.8 For those who have not used the web site, lack of access to the Internet is cited as the main reason for not visiting the web site. This is particularly so (68%) for visitors to the CSC.

10.3.2.9 As you would expect, most libraries users (93%) were aware that they could get free access to the Internet from a local library, however a large minority of LDICN and VAL users (38%), and a majority of CSC visitors (59%), were not aware of this free facility.

#### ***Key Improvement Recommendations –***

- *Actively promote the Council's web site, in particular the interactive facilities that are available.*
- *Further promote awareness of free Internet access in Libraries.*

## **10.4 COMPETE**

See paragraph 8.

## **11. EQUALITY**

### **11.1 ARE THE COUNCIL'S FREE INTERNET ACCESS POINTS (IN LIBRARIES, COMMUNITY CENTRES ETC) ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED USERS AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS E.G. LOW INCOME, ELDERLY ?**

11.1.1 All Library buildings offer adequate or better access for disabled users except for Aylestone Library, which has a narrow doorway and step which present problems to users with mobility problems, and the Reference & Information Library where there is no public lift so access to the first floor is severely restricted.

11.1.2 The public access computers in Libraries are accessible for people with a range of disabilities. All computers have the Windows 2000 operating system, which includes a Narrator (a screen reader), Magnifier (a screen magnification program), and an on-screen keyboard. In addition, two libraries have JAWS (text to speech software) and Zoomtext (enhanced screen magnification) installed. A third library is due to have these installed. There is at least one large (21" screen) computer monitor in every Library, which helps people with visual difficulties. Libraries are exploring an additional range of assistive equipment - trackball mice, joystick controlled mice, Bigkeys keyboards, arm-rests and the like.

- 11.1.3 The Leicester Disability Information and Communication Network, launched in July 2003, is aimed at people with disabilities and their carers. The Network provides four state of the art computer suites in four social care centres and another five suites in voluntary sector centres in the city. These suites, specially adapted for the needs of users with disabilities, provide access to a wide range of ICT facilities including the Internet.
- 11.1.4 An Internet web portal has also been built to provide a central point for information and consultation on issues that affect people with disabilities and their carers as well as services that are available to them.
- 11.1.5 Ten electronic touch screen LDICN kiosks will be installed in different locations around the city including health centres and the Customer Services Centre in New Parks. The kiosks have been specifically designed to maximise accessibility for users and will provide additional information and Internet access points.

## **11.2 IS THE COUNCIL'S WEB SITE ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED USERS AND ETHNIC MINORITY LANGUAGE USERS?**

- 11.2.1 In June 2003 we commissioned SOCITM to review our web site. As part of this work a consultant from the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) examined our web site from the perspective of the visually impaired. They found that overall the web site meets their requirements and achieves a fairly good standard of accessibility. They suggested a few areas where some simple changes would make a substantial difference and these improvements have now been done.
- 11.2.2 Some information is available in audio format and six languages other than English. SOCITM commented that the audio section is a great innovation and the languages section has more translated material than most sites.

## **11.3 ARE EQUALITY ISSUES BEING PROPERLY ADDRESSED BY INDIVIDUAL E-GOVERNMENT PROJECTS?**

- 11.3.1 There is evidence that equality issues are being addressed as part of individual e-government projects, and examples of the Council recognising the potential of ICT as a tool to improve social inclusion. However a checklist of considerations, including details of existing projects, contact details and guidance notes, would be a useful tool to ensure issues are being addressed consistently.

**Key Improvement Recommendations** – *Develop an e-Modernising Leicester equality checklist.*

## **12. IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES**

- Heads of ICT to continuously review progress towards the BVPI157 targets and report any issues of concerns to its parent group, SRG, for action/resolution as required.
- Heads of ICT should work in collaboration in order to avoid duplication of effort and ensure joined up working across services spanning the authority. In particular, departments to work collaboratively on central shared services including authentication, e-payment, e-procurement and security
- Develop a joint ICT/E-modernising Leicester strategy as a matter of priority.
- Continue to raise awareness and understanding of the e-Modernising Leicester programme in general and the 2005 targets in particular.
- Actively promote the Council's web site, in particular the interactive facilities that are available.
- Further promote awareness of free Internet access in Libraries.
- Develop an e-Modernising Leicester equality checklist.

See Appendix A for the Best Value Improvement Plan

### **13. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 13.1 Departments indicated in their detailed analysis that they could achieve those 2005 targets within their control within existing budgets.
- 13.2 The development of the Council's joint ICT/e-modernising Leicester strategy will allow us to better understand the financial implications of our ICT aspirations. The detailed planning should be complete by May 2004.

### **14. INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT'S REPORTS**

- 14.1 Steve Brandwood of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) agreed to be our independent consultant and completed two reports – one of the scoping document and another of this final report. It is worth noting that Steve had previously been our independent consultant for last years ICT Best Value review.
- 14.2 Steve's review of the Best Value scoping report (attached at Appendix B) was generally very positive about our approach and included some useful suggestions that helped shape the subsequent review. Steve also supported the Council's decision to only undertake an outsourcing review should a particular area of the council be found to be under-performing.
- 14.3 Steve's review of the final report is attached at Appendix C. His analysis concludes that 'The Council's approach to the Best Value Review of its e-Government activities has been conducted within a rigorous framework which ensures the Council has a clear understanding of its current position and its future vision.' It also notes that 'it is clear from the national Best Value Performance Indicator statistics that the Council is seen as being above average in

its progress towards the target of 100% services available electronically.' The report goes on to note/recommend:

- A need to establish where Best Value can be achieved by working in partnership with other organisations.
- The importance of encouraging individual service areas within the Council to input their views on how the e-agenda could or should be shaped.
- Further public consultation to obtain views on how services would be better delivered via Internet technology (not simply on awareness of the new delivery channels).
- A corporate approach to authentication, e-payment, e-procurement and security. The report suggests that some cost savings could be identified from more corporate working.
- To Continue to monitor the progress of, and learn from, the National e-Government projects.
- Further promotion of the new access channels to encourage greater take-up.

14.4 Steve's comments have been taken on board in the final Improvement Plan.

## **15. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

15.1 All these documents are available on the e-Modernising Leicester site of the Intranet unless otherwise indicated.

- i. Improvement Plan (also held at Appendix A)
- ii. Detailed analysis of departmental progress towards the 2005 target.
- iii. The Independent Consultant's reports (also held at Appendix B and C)
- iv. The Audit Commission summary and recommendations (draft report only)



<p><b>Improvement Objective No. 1</b>                  Develop a joint ICT/e-modernising Leicester strategy as a matter of priority  <i>Note: this objective is the same as Improvement Objective No 1 from the BV review of ICT completed last November. It has been updated to reflect the current position.</i></p>	
<p><b>Outcomes</b>                  Better services through more efficient and effective use of ICT.                  'Joined-up' ICT investments.                  A 3-5 year council-wide ICT investment strategy.                  An ICT Strategy/e-Government programme that key stakeholders own and are fully committed to.</p>	<p><b>Action</b>                  1.1 To develop an ICT Strategy/e-modernising Leicester that is 'owned' by all key stakeholders by February 2004, with costs and resources concluded by May 2004. The strategy to include consideration of partnership working.                  1.2 ICT Strategy/e-Modernising Leicester issues to be incorporated in all 2004/5 business plans.</p>
<p><b>Overall Lead Officer:</b>                  Jill Craig</p>	<p><b>Overall Timescale:</b>                  ICT Strategy to be in place by May 2004</p>
<p><b>Method of measuring improvement:</b>                  Existence of fully costed and resourced strategy.                  Good levels of awareness as evidenced through a questionnaire.</p>	
<p><b>£ Overall:</b>  <b>Costs</b>    <b>Savings</b></p>	<p>Work is already well progressed on this task. There were a series of externally facilitated workshops for senior managers during the Summer of 2003; the cost of these workshops was covered in the BV Review of ICT. The outstanding work will be completed by Council staff and can be accommodated within existing resources.                  It is not possible to quantify savings, however the primary reason for developing a detailed strategy is to ensure all ICT investment is effective and aligned to the needs of the business. In addition, a clear, long-term strategic vision will place us in a strong position to bid for national funds should opportunities arise.</p>
<p><b>Progress:</b> Aims, objectives and principles have been agreed following corporate-wide consultation.</p>	

<b>Improvement Objective No. 2</b>	
Further promote the e-Modernising Leicester programme within the Council.	
<b>Outcomes</b> High level of awareness of the e-Modernising Leicester programme. Evidence of joined up working on e-government projects.	<b>Action</b> 2.1 Regular articles in New Connections. 2.2 Continue to deliver the e-Modernising Leicester workshops. 2.3 Regularly update the e-Modernising Leicester Intranet site with corporate and departmental progress reports. 2.4 Run an e-Modernising Leicester themed IT Awareness event. 2.5 Heads of ICT to consider other ways of engaging individual service areas in shaping the e-agenda.
<b>Overall Lead Officer:</b> Ismail Vania	<b>Overall Timescale:</b> Promotional activities on-going. IT Awareness event June 2004.
<b>Method of measuring improvement:</b> A short awareness questionnaire next May (repeating the questions asked in the questionnaire carried out as part of this review). No examples of duplicated effort e.g. two departments individually researching the same issue.	
<b>£ Overall:</b>	
<b>Costs</b>	Minimal – can be met from existing budgets
<b>Savings</b>	As with objective 1, it is not possible to quantify savings, but joined up working will help ensure we are maximising the return on out investment.
<b>Progress:</b>	

<p><b>Improvement Objective No. 3</b></p> <p>Continue to raise the profile of the new access channels (e-mail, Internet, telephone contact centre, kiosks) and monitor take up to ensure resources are prioritised towards demand.</p>	
<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>A shift towards the new access channels commensurate with our own development of, and investment in, these channels.</p>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>3.1 Establish internal targets and measures for e-services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer take up;</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction;</li> <li>• Value for money/cost effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p>3.2 Establish reporting arrangements</p> <p>3.3 Promote new access channels through appropriate means working closely with departments and the corporate communications team.</p> <p>3.4 Consider how best to engage service users in shaping the design of our e-enabled services.</p>
<p><b>Overall Lead Officer:</b></p> <p>Ismail Vania</p>	<p><b>Overall Timescale:</b></p> <p>Agree targets and measures by March 2004. Quarterly reports to commence July 2004</p>
<p><b>Method of measuring improvement:</b></p> <p>Regularly produced take-up reports considered by SRG and Heads of ICT. This task will also establish targets and measures that can be used for this purpose.</p>	
<p><b>£ Overall:</b></p> <p><b>Costs</b></p> <p><b>Savings</b></p>	<p>Costs to be determined but expected to be small; should be met from existing budgets</p> <p>Traditional channels of contact eg. face-to-face are more costly than electronic channels of contact eg. Internet. Hence a move from traditional to electronic channels would mean savings. However this is expected to be a gradual process over a long period of time.</p>
<p><b>Progress:</b></p>	

<b>Improvement Objective No. 4</b>	
Develop equality guidelines for project managers responsible for e-government projects.	
<b>Outcomes</b> Improve access to services for disadvantaged groups of service users.	<b>Action</b> 4.1 Develop an e-Modernising Leicester equality checklist working closely officers responsible for equality issues.
<b>Overall Lead Officer:</b> Jill Craig	<b>Overall Timescale:</b> March 2004
<b>Method of measuring improvement:</b> Equality issues recognised and addressed in e-government projects.	
<b>£ Overall Costs</b>	There would be some staff time cost, though little financial cost, in developing an equality checklist
<b>Savings</b>	Most of the savings would be intangible by improving access to services through electronic channels and addressing social inclusion issues.
<b>Progress:</b> The NCC have been commissioned to carry an accessibility audit of the Council's Internet web site.	

### **Improvement and Development Agency for local government**

29 September 2003

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Independent report on Leicester City Council 'Best Value Review of E-Government SCOPE' Document

#### **Introduction**

This report was commissioned by Leicester City Council to provide an independent consultant's view on their 'Best Value Review of E-Government – Scope' document.

The 2005 e-government target for all local government services available on-line has encouraged local authorities to focus on, and develop, their e-government strategies. The IDeA aims:

- to promote and share the innovation and good practice
- to provide support
- to provide focus for the implementation of local e-government
- to champion the interests of local government with central government, suppliers and other sectors
- to provide a platform for national infrastructure projects

This unique view of the development of local e-government provides a good basis for comment on the scope of Leicester City Council's Best Value Review.

The consultant was involved in assurance of the council's ICT Review.

This report comments on each section in turn.

#### **Introduction**

This section provides a good context for the Review by making reference to the National Strategy for Local e-Government, BVPI 157 and the national projects being administered by the IDeA. The inclusion of these references shows understanding of the key national drivers and resources.

In addition to the points made, some detail from the National Strategy would add value to this section. The National Strategy puts in place a number of Pathfinder and National Projects managed by local authorities. The Pathfinder projects are now complete and offer solutions to other local authorities using final reports made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and published (<http://www.lgolpathfinder.gov.uk/en/1/lr1036594829.html>). The outputs of the Pathfinders would assist in Leicester City Council in challenging and comparing its own developments against other authorities' findings in key e-Government areas. It would also provide an opportunity to learn from work already conducted, thus reducing costs in development. The National Framework provides a programme for a number of National Projects, which aims to ensure that all councils have access to key electronic services and building blocks, without having to build them from scratch.

The National Projects aim to bring together councils, central government, the private sector and others to define and deliver projects and national local e-government solutions. It has two strands, both relevant to achieving best value:

- priority services. Providing ways in which local electronic services can make contributions to delivering the seven priority services areas identified by the Central-Local Partnership; and
- technical building blocks of local e-government and inter-government communications infrastructure.

The majority of Local e-Government National Projects will have completed their development work by March 2004. This will allow at least 21 months for delivery and roll out to other Local Authorities (supported by Local e-Government resources) before the end of 2005.

It is important that the Best Value Review looks at these strands of work in order to ensure that it meets the three aims of achievability, relevance and senior buy-in, that the council has set itself in the document.

It is also worth noting that the LASER project is currently stalled whilst awaiting policy decisions from Central Government.

### **Our vision**

The consultant notes Leicester City Council's vision for e-Government.

### **Key drivers for the review**

The consultant notes the key drivers for the review. The improvement plan that results from the review should also be a key driver for the review. Although important, external drivers are unlikely to provide the long-term impetus for e-government change. Council should drive the review with the aim of providing relevant electronic services and embracing the potential of e-government whilst considering what improvements in service delivery can be made.

The broad aims of the review are to be commended but would also benefit from reference to the improvement plan.

### **Activities to be included in the review**

It is clear that much of the e-government programme has been reviewed as part of the council's ICT review and that the e-government review is centring on the council's ability to meet the 2005 target. This was an obvious gap in the ICT review, which the council are correct in bridging. The adoption of the IDeA's ESD Toolkit methodology for calculating progress will also provide a useful onward monitoring tool to measure improvements after the completion of the review.

### **Applying the 4 C's**

#### **Challenge**

The consultant notes the good work already done to e-enable council services both in terms of delivery over the internet, but also supporting more traditional channels of delivery – telephone, face to face etc.

The development of the Customer Service Centre New Walk Centre, the newly opened Customer Service Centre in New Parks and the Information and Communication network for disabled people, shows commitment to providing a one-stop-shop service for the people of Leicester, but it would be useful to understand in more detail how technology supports these centres. It is unclear if staff have direct access to back office systems to enable enquiries to be dealt with at the first point of contact.

E-government provides an opportunity to not only deliver services over new and more convenient channels, but also to deliver joined up services from across the council. Evidence of joining up is shown in some key areas of the council – specifically Health and Social Services – which should be commended, as these services in particular will improve the lives of the most ‘at risk’ members of the council’s population. However, the development of separate telephone contact centres for other services – Council Tax, Environmental Services and Housing Repairs – does not support the notion of a simple, single point of contact authority. It is noted that the council is on target to launch a general enquiries contact centre, but it is unclear if this will deliver the ability to conclude services via this single point of contact, or if it is simply a general information and referral point.

It is also unclear as to how initiatives such as the National Land and Property Gazetteer will provide an infrastructure for this joining up, or how the council will work with published e-government interoperability standards to ensure that it can link to national single point of contact initiatives proposed under the UK-Online framework, and how linkages can be made to partner organisations.

A wider and longer-term view of the challenge of e-government should therefore be considered as part the review.

### **Consultation**

It is agreed that this is needed to enable the council to fully understand the needs of the population to ensure that the way in which services are delivered are of the highest value to the people of Leicester.

The council appears to respond well to the results of consultation, as shown by the development of the New Parks Customer Service Centre and the General Enquiries Contact Centre, but it would be valuable to follow up this consultation to see if these developments have satisfied customer requirements, not just in the context of each service but against the council’s wider e-government performance.

As stated, the council should not only monitor national consultations closely, but should also develop strong local consultation to validate their findings.

### **Compare**

The council’s performance is just above the national average, so it is clear that a Best Value review at this stage would provide the council with a critical view of how it can develop further.

NLPG developments should be commended, but it is not clear how the council intends to use the NLPG to assist in the delivery of integrated services. Comparisons with authorities that have utilised the NLPG to deliver joined up service should be made.

The issue of integration is also apparent from the SOCITM ‘Better Connected 2003’ survey. The council is clearly above average in the information and

self-service aspects of web service delivery, but a review should be conducted investigating what can be done to fully integrate services in this environment, as well as via other more traditional channels.

The council's provision of ICT to staff and member should be commended.

### **Compete**

The view on outsourcing is noted and it is agreed that only if the review shows that a particular area of the council is under-performing, that a review of outsourcing should then be undertaken.

### **Improvement Plan.**

The development of improvement plans built into the SRG and Heads of ICT work programmes will ensure that the results of the review are implemented. The council should ensure that implementation is closely monitored against key performance indicators.

### **How the review will be carried out.**

The use of the Audit Commission review of the council's e-government work will provide a good basis for an independent view on the council's activities and progress. However, it is important that the council does not measure its e-government work purely by the BVPI157, but uses this opportunity to challenge its approach to service delivery using technology.

Innovative ways to measure the impact of peoples' lives should be sought over and above the use of the BPVI framework. This could be assisted with further consultation with the local community regarding the way that they want services to be delivered.

Steve Brandwood

Improvement and Development Agency

8 October 2003



### Improvement and Development Agency for local government

19 December 2003

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## Independent report on Leicester City Council 'Best Value Review of e-Government Final Report and Improvement Plan'

### Introduction

This report was commissioned by Leicester City Council to provide an independent consultant's view on their 'Best Value Review of e-Government Final Report and Improvement Plan' document.

The consultant was involved in assurance of the council's ICT Review and was asked to provide review on Leicester City Council's 'Best Value Review of E-Government SCOPE' Document (contained in Appendix C of the Final Report).

### General observations

The Council's approach to the Best Value Review its e-Government activities has been conducted within a rigorous framework which ensures that the Council has a clear understanding of its current position and its future vision. The extent and detail of the work should be commended, as should its plans to take forward the agenda as part of E-Modernising Leicester.

Particular commendation should be given to the Council's use of its Audit Commission Report (which was fortuitously timed), the use of the IDeA's Electronic Service Delivery Toolkit and consultation (both within the Council and with local people and businesses).

It is clear from national Best Value Performance Indicator statistics that the Council is seen as being above average in its progress towards the target of 100% of services available electronically. However, the scope of the review makes a very useful contribution to developing knowledge further in terms of establishing if the level of resources available are sufficient, there is commitment in the Council to the agenda, there is user awareness, the services are accessible, address equality issues and are planned in a 'joined up' way. It is this last point of 'joined up-ness', which is an issue for the Council's e-Government agenda as it is within this area where the most savings could be made. The Final Report does address this issue by recommending a joint ICT/E-Modernising Leicester strategy as a matter of priority and collaboration between Heads of ICT.

There is an onward need for the Council to establish where Best Value can be achieved by working in partnership with other organisations and by using the results and products being developed under the ODPM's Local Government on-Line initiative. Shared e-government services could potentially reduce costs across local government and for individual councils and will need to be considered as the e-government agenda moves forward.

### Consultation and awareness raising

It would appear from the report that awareness of e-government within the Council has improved dramatically due to the consultation exercises and awareness sessions conducted. However the report does not provide information on how individual service areas provide their views on how the agenda should or could be shaped. This is important if the Council is to ensure that individual service areas are to buy in to a corporate initiative. The report notes the need to ensure that managers are aware and understand E-Modernising Leicester and that staff should be involved in

further awareness events, but this should be a two way process to ensure that all opportunities are examined.

The Council's website is well used and would appear to be increasing in use based on the statistics provided. Again, the report would suggest that consultation conducted with the public was limited to awareness rather than with the aim in obtaining views on how services would be better delivered via internet technology. The reference to a low contact level via email and the website (which is increasing) would reflect the issue that transaction services (understanding the need in many cases for changes to legislation outside the Council's control) are not fully available on-line.

## **Service areas**

In general terms, the service areas would appear to be making good progress, although it is noted that the Council expects to not meet the 2005 target. It is encouraging to see that the majority of transaction types will be available electronically by 2005, and would agree with the statement that there will be a percentage of transactions, particularly regulatory services, which will require changes to legislation before these can be offered in an electronic environment.

The e-enablement of the Chief Executive services provides a good lead for the rest of the authority, although it is understood that these services are often limited to the provision of information rather than transactional service. But the statement does provide a clear message to the Council that the agenda is being led by example.

It is unfortunate that Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal have not been able to recruit an e-government officer as the appointment of a champion in each service area will be required to provide a link to other service areas to ensure that where services can be joined up, they can. With this said, it would appear that good progress is being made, particularly in the areas of booking and paying for services.

Education and Lifelong learning services appear to be on track, but is interesting to note that corporate payment services are identified as a barrier to delivering 100% of services electronically.

Environment, Regeneration and Development services, although understanding the issues they face, would appear to have a high risk attached to delivering the 2005 target. There would appear to be a substantial amount of research still to conduct in order to establish if goals are achievable. There would also appear to be an opportunity to examine what corporate resources could be made available for shared services in terms of payments, authentication and registration.

It is unfortunate that Housing have not provided a return for the final report.

Resources, Access and Diversity also share a need for registration and authentication techniques, which could be provided via a corporate service. However it is clear that there is good progress being made and it is understood that Government timescales on specific functionality will delay the 100% target.

Social Care and Health would appear to be making good progress.

There are several themes, which are apparent in all of the submissions from service areas, which could potentially delay meeting the 100% target. One would hope that these are being investigated corporately, as central shared services such as authentication, payment, procurement and security could and should be provided as a corporate resource.

## **Joining up services**

It is clear from the submissions that there is a requirement for centrally procured systems and services for the benefit of a variety of service areas should be

highlighted. In addition, the Council should also investigate options for joint central resources with other councils and organisations. This type of partnership approach is being investigated in partnerships such as Kent Connects (an ISB funded, LGoL partnership looking at shared portal services. One of the key elements is to implement a county wide ICT network which will link the partners, thus enabling a re-engineering of the way they work together and providing a seamless approach to the services they offer to Kent residents and businesses. The Partnership aims to reduce costs for each of the partners (which include Districts, Counties and Unitaries, the Police, Ambulance and Fire Services and the Health Authority) via shared infrastructure and services - <http://www.kentconnects.com/partnerships/>.

The investment in and use of shared infrastructure such as the NLPG by the Council is noted and, as discussed when commenting on the Scope of the Best Value Review, much can be learned from the developing ODPM funded National Projects. Projects such as the Valuebill, CRM and PARSOL projects offer an opportunity to reduce costs in development of key service area infrastructure. The PARSOL project, in conjunction with the Planning Portal offer a shared web infrastructure to Councils to reduce investment costs in front end delivery.

The development of a Council Corporate ICT/e-Modernising Leicester Strategy would assist in understanding these issues better.

## **Resource**

The report suggests that resource will be available to reach the targets laid out by each of the service areas. It is also clear that the Council has provided resource to ensure that ICT progress is being made where business priorities require it. However until now, the lack of a recognised Corporate ICT/ e-Modernising Leicester Strategy has concreted a disjointed approach to e-government. This is understandable in any local authority as the number, complexity and statutory nature of local government (an authority has over 700 services to conduct!) means that change will always be a challenging process.

The review has gone some way in identifying this as an issue and the next stage must be to determine if sufficient resources are being applied to the programme. However, in order to ensure Best Value, the Council will also need to establish if sufficient resources are being applied to the right places.

## **Improvement objectives**

The Council should be encouraged to continue to develop a joint ICT/e-Modernising Leicester Strategy for the reasons identified by the review and this report. The timescales are tight, but must be adhered to ensure that issues are incorporated in the business plans for the new financial year. Then following the preparation of the strategy, the Council should ensure that it is maintained and enforced.

It is suggested that some cost savings could be identified in the areas of corporate shared services. It is likely to be a future aim, but some review of what saving could be gained from further partnership working should be included.

Promotion of the e-Modernising Leicester programme within the Council should be supported. In order to ensure buy in, this should be a two way process with the service areas.

It is agreed that the council should raise the profile of new channels of access, as these will in time reduce the costs associated with more traditional channels. This needs to be done in close consultation with Leicester's users and not just be based on measure of take up.

The Council would appear to ensure that e-government projects are accessible to all and the additional improvement object to reinforce this is useful.

Steve Brandwood  
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December 2003