Agenda Item	**21**
Report No	**FHR/ 136/13**

The Highland Council

Finance, Housing & Resources Committee
9th October 2013

Annual ICT Strategy Review

Report by the Assistant Chief Executive

Summary
This report provides Members with the information about the work that has been undertaken to review and revise the ICT Strategy for the Council.

1.   Background

1.1   The Highland Council's Strategy for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the period October 2012 to March 2017 was approved at Finance, Housing and Resources Committee in August 2012. A commitment was made to review the Strategy on an annual basis to ensure that it is kept up to date with developing National and Local Government ICT Strategies, legislative changes and other strategically significant changes within the ICT sector, as well as the changing business needs of the Council. The revised ICT Strategy can be accessed via

http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A341FC52-CDE1-4D18-90A9-37FA1A942BA2/0/ICT_Strategy_20122017_Oct2013_Revision1.pdf

1.2   The essential aim of the new ICT Strategy remains unchanged: to continue to exploit and further develop the Council's investments in ICT to enable continuous improvements to service delivery, and to support and enable initiatives which make Council services more accessible, more convenient, more operationally efficient and cost-effective.

1.3   This first annual review has confirmed that much of the original ICT Strategy remains valid, robust and therefore largely unchanged. However, there have been a number of modifications and enhancements made to the Strategy. The more significant changes have been highlighted in the following sections for members' particular attention.

2.   The Changed National Context (Section 4 of the Strategy)

2.1   The Council's ICT Strategy has been amended to reflect the recently published "Local Government ICT Strategy – Delivering Better Services for Communities" and has also been informed by the Scottish Government's national digital public services strategy and action plan: "Scotland's Digital Future: Delivery of Public Services".

Whilst both these documents were published after the approval of the Council's existing ICT Strategy, their general principles were already embedded within the document, and hence modifications to Section 4 of the Strategy have been largely limited to changes of wording or emphasis, for example a more explicit commitment to: "…deliver services and manage Council data in a way that supports businesses, provides new business opportunities and contributes to economic growth."

2.2   Significant changes to the UK "Freedom of Information Act" came into force on 1 September 2013 incorporating new open data rights as a result of the passing of the "Protection of Freedoms Act 2012". These amendments give individuals the right to request data in an open and reusable format. This would allow individuals to reuse and exploit the data, even for commercial purposes. As part of the changes, the Local Authorities will be required to publish any requested dataset as part of its publication scheme. Whilst the changes do not currently affect the Scottish FOI legislation, the changes do not give new rights of access, but are concerned with data formats and the ability to use/reuse data.

2.3   In preparation for the likely replication of the obligation to publish data in accessible formats in the Scottish FOI legislation, and taking account of "The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005" as well as the EU INSPIRE Directive, the ambition to make Council data available in accessible formats has been included as a new Strategic Objective in the Strategy. Significant new or modified Strategic Objectives have also been detailed in the following section.

3.   New or Modified Strategic Objectives (Section 7 of the Strategy)

3.1   As a result of the thorough review of the telephony project originally planned under the Transformation Programme, the Council has instead decided to implement a new 'Unified Communications' solution. This new Strategic Objective will remove some of the boundaries between fixed telephones, mobile telephones, instant messaging and video conferencing.

3.2   The new Unified Communications (UC) project will also take cognisance of the Council's already expressed aim to investigate and exploit the opportunities provided by Shared Services.

3.3   There is an explicit and continuing commitment to ensure that the quality of ICT services provided to the Council continue to be fit for purpose and meet Services' business needs. This is also an essential element of the ICT Re-provisioning strategy for the Council's ICT Re-provision post April 2015.

3.4   With an increasing number of applications being delivered over the web, there is a commitment to ensure that there is an increased level of resilience provided by the Council's core ICT infrastructure.

3.5   The Council's Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will be further developed, with the emphasis shifting to exploiting new hosted data management and map delivery services to help reduce costs, alongside a programme of work to increase the uptake and utilization of GIS and the Council's own geographic datasets within Council Services and the wider Highland community, and address the Council's obligations under the EU INSPIRE Directive.

3.6   There will be comprehensive support for the Education, Culture and Sport Service in the development of the Schools Management Information System.

3.7   We plan to work with software suppliers to ensure that business intelligence is included as standard for new procurements to provide on-demand, real business intelligence, and that data is made available in open file formats – such as CSV files - to allow ease of data extraction, exchange and integration with other software and reporting tools, as well as ease of publication for (re)use by 3rd parties. The additional benefit of making Services 'information self-sufficient' will enable them to make swifter and better-informed decisions regarding the design, efficiency and management of the services they provide to the public and other stakeholders.

3.8   In support of the above, we will investigate the UK Government's Open Data licencing model ('Open Government Licence v2.0') to consider its adoption for future publication of the Council's own datasets in support of the strategic aim to publish data for (re)use by 3rd parties.

4.   New or Modified Targeted Future Position - Benefits (Section 9 of the Strategy)

4.1   With multiple vendors of applications, and a need to 'join-up' data and business information across systems, the Council will seek improved system integration and communication through open data format standards, such as XML, and potential use of integration software.

4.2   In tandem with the above 'enabling' action, we will also seek to improve business decision-making through access to better and more accurate up-to-date data, supported by new Business Intelligence tools to allow 'self-serviced' and flexible reporting, rather than relying on vendors to produce reports, often at additional cost.

5.   Implications

5.1   Resource Implications
There will be specific resource implications arising from the implementation of the proposals contained in this report and Strategy but it is too early to quantify these. The costs, savings and other benefits will be reported through the governance arrangements put in place around the implementation of each proposal.

5.2   Legal Implications
There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The presumption for the shared development and operation of systems with other public bodies may present some legal and procurement challenges which will need to be addressed at the time.

5.3   Equality Implications
There are no equality implications arising from this report. Where changes to ICT Systems and Services are being proposed the Governance arrangements will identify any specific equality implications.

5.4   Climate Change & Carbon Clever Implications
There are no specific Climate Change & Carbon Clever Implications arising from this report.

5.5   Risk Implications
There are no specific risk implications arising from this report. Where changes to ICT Systems and Services are being proposed the Governance arrangements will identify any specific risks.

Recommendation

Members are asked to

1.   APPROVE the revised ICT Strategy.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive

Date: 18/09/2013

Author: Neil Huggan

Background Papers: ICT Strategy 2012-2017 Version 1.00 (13/08/2012)