Northampton Borough Council
ICT Vision Statement

Making the Corporate Plan a Reality
# Document History

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<th>Document Title</th>
<th>ICT Vision Statement</th>
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## Approvals

*The following approvals are required on this document*

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the Council’s Vision for the restructured Business Transformation Service (formally ICT & BD Services). This Vision sets out ‘what’ the Council aspires to provide by way of a future ICT business environment for 21st Century Council services.

This document presents:
- the Council’s ICT Vision
- how the ICT Vision links to other plans and initiatives
- what has been achieved so far in relation to the Vision

 Drivers for the Creation of a Vision Statement

This document is part of the Council’s response to accepted criticism from government bodies that Northampton Borough Council:
- Did not have strategies in place.
- Was not forward looking.
- Had little capability for change and improvement.
- Had no in-house capability for delivery of projects or change.
- Systems were not strategically aligned.
- Change aspects around systems were not carried out.

As part of the ‘Root & Branch’ exercise, structure and proposals for the capability gaps were brought together with ICT Services under a new ‘Business Transformation’ service (at first draft the revised structure had not yet been implemented). As identified by ODPM and IDeA, these changes are required to deliver:
- The Recovery Programme
- The Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) programme
- The Gershon efficiency programme, and
- Service improvement projects

This document is the Vision that addresses these drivers and concerns, as well as reflecting the aspirations of members, citizens, managers, staff, and partner organizations.

Links Between the ICT Vision and Other Initiatives

The ICT Vision document provides the link between the Corporate Plan and the ICT Strategy document. The ICT Vision describes ‘what’ the Council’s ICT aspirations are, the ICT Strategy sets ‘how’ these aspirations are to be achieved, whilst the ICT Programme of Projects describes ‘when’ these are going to be implemented. Underpinning these are the Quality Management System (QMS), ICT related Policies and Service Level Agreements (SLA’s). Other documents with important links to the Vision include:-
- Citizen consultation report on Customer Access
- E-Vision Statement
- Customer Access Strategy

This document will be reviewed and reconsidered within the wider context of the Council’s strategic planning processes on a regular basis, at least annually.
Agenda for Improved Service Delivery

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a key driver of organizational change. It can be used to support the radical improvement of service delivery through the implementation of new or updated business processes. Designing these innovative business processes presents new challenges for Service Managers, Business Analysts and ICT planners:

1. **Customer and Citizen Needs**
   Expectations of service standards are fundamentally changing. With the emergence of the 24-hour society, customers now expect personalised, seamless and integrated services available when and where they want to suit their particular lifestyle. Customers now want public services available out-of-office hours, including weekends, evenings and early mornings. They want to be able to access a wide range of services by phone, in person and electronically. The ICT Strategy will support the Customer Access Strategy agreed by the Council.

2. **Accessibility & Availability**
   Information & Communication Technology has a role to play in increasing the availability of Council services as well as making services more accessible particularly in relation to combating social exclusion in line with the Council’s Strategy.

3. **Information as a Resource**
   The Council collects and stores vast amount of information. ICT will work with Service Managers and the Council’s Head of Communications to deliver developments allowing this information to be analysed and used intelligently and creatively to support and refine strategic planning, improve the targeting of services and the prioritization of resources.

4. **Innovation & exploitation of new technologies**
   New technologies are presenting new opportunities. The key is to maximize the benefits of new technologies through innovation and exploitation in line with the Council’s Strategy.

5. **Value for money**
   Ensure money is spent prudently by making sure ICT investments are supported by sound and robust business cases.

6. **Productivity Gains**
   ICT provides opportunities for significant productivity gains and is a key facilitator for achieving Gershon and other efficiency initiatives. The opportunity exists for significant resources to be released from back office activity to support front-line service development focused on meeting the Council’s key priorities.
“It is the council’s Vision to create a modern Business Transformation Service that drives and supports delivery of joined-up services to Citizens and Customers through effective channels.”

Northampton Borough Council’s ICT Vision is ultimately to support customer-focussed public services. It is about how customers and the Council connect. It is also about changing the way the Council organises and delivers its services to be efficient, effective and customer focussed. The Vision takes as its focus the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that underpin the delivery of these services to citizens, business and organisations. It is critical that this Vision of ICT supporting modernised services is fully embraced by Service Managers.

Citizen Focused Services

“ I can always get to the information or services I need in a format and manner that suits me"

“I have a choice in the way I contact the Council – the Internet, mobile phone, call centre, kiosk or face-to-face via One-Stop-Shop”

It is proposed that development priorities will be based on channels such as Internet, Contact Centre One-Stop-Shop etc, that our Customers say are important to them as identified from the Customer Consultation exercise. To date a First-Stop-Shop has been established in the Guildhall. Work now needs to be undertaken to turn this into a One-Stop-Shop that is capable of dealing with at least 80% of all Council enquiries at the initial point of contact with the Customer. To do this will involve the complete redesign and transformation of Council Services to enable a front and back office split.

The Vision is to develop access channels to provide a personalised service. This will require standardised business processes and standardised service levels across channels. To be able to effectively provide a personalized service will require us to understand Customer contact history, such as when a customer last used our services and which services they currently use or have used. This Vision is therefore to store Individual Customer profiles, eg with CRM, and use them to tailor services around the Customer.

Change Management

Major changes within the Council need to be managed. The Council must be clear about what must change on its journey to achieving excellence. It also must be clear what must be preserved to safeguard services. Change Management ensures the right programme of changes are implemented to realise the Council’s vision. Restructuring under the ‘Root & Branch’ exercise has seen the ICT Services department turned into a new Business Transformation department. This is now home to the Council’s Change Management capability. Proposals for creating the required Business Process Management (BPM) team within the new department have been accepted by the Council’s Programme Board for Customer Focused Services. The BPM team will adopt the Successful Projects in IT (SPRINT) methodology, as promoted by the ODPM’s National Project for Change Management. Similarly, in recognition of findings by the ODPM and IDeA, the Business Transformation department will become the home for the new Programme Management team. By bringing these two functions together under the same department will ensure the change and efficiency programmes are delivered in parallel.

It’s the Council’s Vision to create an in-house Change Management capability to support Business Transformation and continuous improvement.
Business Process Transformation

As the Councils’ business environment changes there is a need to change business processes. External Factors such as the Gershon Efficiency Review, Implementing Electronic Government (IEG), combined with internal factors such as the Root and Branch restructure, all bring about changes to our business processes that must be managed. These changes must not be part of an uncontrolled evolutionary change. Successfully managed business process change can occur as a result of applying Business Process Management (BPM) tools and techniques. It should be recognised that a benefit of this approach is that the Council will become more agile, and therefore better placed to operate in and responding to a changing environment. This benefit allows us to fine tune service delivery according to the demand of the customer. This is a key component of a customer-focused strategy.

The vision is create the BPM team to transform and redesign the Council’s core services around the Customer. Business processes will be developed to allow us to measure performance, identify opportunities for improvement and then to more easily implement these improvements.

Efficiency

“Gershon’s efficiency review requires local government to serve up £6.45bn in efficiency and productivity savings by 2007-08.

Efficiencies in back office functions are now a mandatory requirement to free up resources for re-investing into the front office. A role of the Business Process Management team sitting along side the Programme Management function is to provide the tools to help Services to deliver these efficiencies.

Efficiencies can also be realised through the effective implementation of new business systems that are fully integrated with each other, i.e. with proper connectivity, workflows and interfaces. Service improvements and efficiencies can also achieved by the proper integration of systems when implemented alongside corresponding process change and followed through with focused and relevant training. In addition to this an enterprise project to improve the System Architecture will help to join-up services and provide efficiencies in ICT support services.

The Vision is to undertake a complete system rationalization of the ICT ‘landscape’ in order to develop an architecture to enable business systems to fully integrate.

Partnering

Achieving service excellence is not about the lowest cost of providing a service. It is getting a balance between service quality and cost. In some instances the best balance of quality and cost will be to partner with another organization. Technology is a catalyst for delivering joined up services both internally within the Council and externally to our partner organizations. As part of a joint project with Northamptonshire County Council called ‘Supporting People’, ICT Services have installed the facilities to enable encrypted and secure e-mail to go between the two organizations.

The Vision is to build upon projects such as this. To provide the necessary technical infrastructure to underpin joined up service delivery. This will enable data and information to seamlessly and securely to flow between internal service areas within the Council and to our external partners. This technology will be based on open standards and Government Interoperability recommendations.
Flexible & mobile working

“Flexible and mobile working is a true win / win proposal. Not only can it improve Customer perception of services it can also improve staff perception of the Council as an employer”

Flexible and mobile working has been demonstrated to dramatically improve front line customer facing services and should be seen as a key component when re-designing services for excellence. Flexible and mobile working can also contribute to a better work-life balance reducing absenteeism and stress.

The infrastructure to support mobile working needs to be planned in advance and should take account of the financial impact, both the additional expense and the potential savings that can be made in reduced accommodation costs. It is important that this work is co-ordinated with Human Resources to ensure proper mobile and flexible working policies and procedures are in place and also Facilities Management to ensure accommodation saving are realised. To date, pilot projects for Blackberry, XDA’s and Tablet PC’s have been implemented resulting in very valuable feedback.

Using this feedback, the Vision is to further develop the ICT infrastructure so that it can be used to support a wider range of mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDA’s) like the iPaq or smart phones. Work in this area needs to build upon and use tools provided as part of the National Project for Mobile and flexible working called Project NOMAD.

Communications

Technology lies at the heart of many communications methods, from the phone, e-mail and Internet chat to video conferencing and text messaging. Legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 provide the regulations governing how the Council deals with information from its many communication methods.

As a result of converging traditional voice telephony with Internet technologies major improvements can be achieved. For example converged telephony can be used to more effectively communicate with geographically dispersed staff allowing them to work more collaboratively. Currently the Council’s telephone can support convergence with Internet technologies and a project will be starting in September 2005 to pilot Voice over IP. A part of this pilot will investigate how ‘soft phones’ can be used to enhance the facilities provided to Councillors.

The Vision is to develop an infrastructure consisting of consolidated voice and data technologies reducing telephony operating costs whilst at the same time providing a more flexible infrastructure for rolling out web based applications.

e-Democracy

“We want the Council to listen to what we are saying”

The term e-democracy is about using technology to encourage citizen participation in decision-making and in doing so can also be used to reach those parts of society that would, for various reasons, be excluded using traditional methods. Engaging local people is a key component of Citizen focused Services.

The Vision is to use technology to reach out to communities such as voluntary, community, advocacy and faith groups to connect them together and engage them in Council decision-making. This is achieved again by building upon and using tools that can be found in the National Project for Democracy.
Value for Money

Value for money is about ensuring: the Corporate Strategy is reflected in ICT procurements, these procurements are supported by a sound business case, measured outcomes of the procurement have been agreed and post implementation these outcomes are reviewed to ensure they have been delivered. Value for money is also about evaluating all of the pre-procurement options such as partnering. Currently IT procurements are at a tactical level driven by the need to replace ageing systems. Few procurements have been driven from the top level strategic requirements of the Council and even fewer have documented measured outcomes which have then gone on to have been realised. A new programme office will be established to monitor and make certain value-for-money criteria associated with project implementations are delivered.

The Vision is to realise value for money from IT projects by providing programme and project assurance as a key function of the Programme Support Office (PSO). The vision is to see the implementation of value for money through the adoption of rigorous business cases and the enforcement of Corporate ICT standards.

Business Continuity

ICT Systems are critical to the delivery of Council services. In the event of a major ICT problem, it is important that Council services are not disrupted. In the unlikely event that they are, disruption is kept to an absolute minimum. Best practice dictates that to effectively achieve this requires risks to be actively managed and to have an up-to-date, tried and tested Business Continuity plan. ICT Services have had this in place and have done so for a number of years through 3rd party Disaster Recovery contracts.

The Vision is to build a flexible, highly available infrastructure that is capable of sustaining unplanned outages without a detrimental effect on services to the Public.

Security

The Council is the custodian of vast amounts of public information and in doing so is bound by previously mentioned legislation in the areas of data protection and freedom of information. In addition to this legislation the Council also has a public responsibility to actively manage security and access to information and systems within the organization. Currently the Council follows security best practices, which are regularly audited. In place are security policies, procedures, equipment and software in the form of firewalls anti-virus and anti-spam applications.

The vision is to base the Council’s security policies and procedures on the British Standard BS7799. This will ensure that Council’s procedures and policies meet the highest national standards available. Having the British Standard BS7799 in place is also a prerequisite for organizations wishing to connect systems to central government bodies.

People

“The training should be what I need to do my job properly and delivered in a way that suits my learning style”

Information & Communication Technology is a fast changing industry. New applications, operating systems and technologies are coming to the market at an ever-alarming pace. Skills and knowledge within the Council needs to be in line with the adoption of these technologies to minimise any risk associated with them going wrong and also to maximise the benefits these technologies can offer. Currently the Corporate Performance & Development Scheme is used to balance individual training needs against training requirements.

Our Vision is to develop a well skilled and knowledgeable workforce. This is achieved by proper career planning and monitored through the Performance & Development scheme. It is important that this encompasses Service Manager and end user training. Service Managers need the skills to be able to develop e-Visions for their own service areas.
Help and Support

“I can depend on systems and applications being available whenever I am working”

“A reported incident is solved, if not immediately, by an agreed date/time”

It is important that when staff or Councillors have problems with IT equipment or applications somebody is available that can quickly and efficiently resolve the problem, or if it cannot be resolved immediately, it is resolved by a mutually agreed date/time. It is important that the problem is resolved within agreed timescale.

Currently a Helpdesk is in operation from 8am until 5pm. Apart from ICT Services own published criteria for Helpdesk levels of service, no Service Level Agreements (SLA’s) exist between this department and internal customers. Service Level Agreements are a way of aligning service levels with requirements of the service user. This alignment is useful to ensure a correct balance of the level of service (quality) against the cost of providing that service. Efficiencies can be gained by only carrying the services that the customer expects. These expectations are formalised and built into the SLA.

The Vision is to define the levels of service required by our Customers then build these into Service Level Agreements which can be monitored against performance criteria.

Programme & Project Management

To ensure programme and projects are aligned with corporate objectives and to minimise programme and project failure it is important that a centre of excellence is established. The purpose is to provide programme and project management leadership, advice and resources to project managers. The role of the centre of excellence is to ensure programmes and projects are carried out to the highest quality by creating a corporate understanding of what is required to successfully manage programmes and projects and to advise, inform and guide staff and managers thereafter.

To date a programme and project support office has been established for Customer Focused Services. A formal programme and project reporting structure has been agreed. This now need to be built upon and extended.

The Vision is to see the Programme Support Office (PSO) recognised and proven to be a unit constantly adding value to programme & project based activities through continuous process improvement and proactive programme problem management. The Vision is to see the PSO as integral to the way the Council operates and in support of the Council achieving it’s strategic and corporate objectives by providing first class programme and project facilities and support.

Governance & Resourcing

In addition to programme boards for specific areas of work it is important that the ICT Vision and Strategy is itself developed and modified by a corporate board sponsored by the Corporate Management Team. This could be a Member/Office group but should be composed of senior Managers and Members who ensure that the ICT Strategy and associated medium term investment is in line with the Councils’ approved general policies and strategies for service development and delivery. The group’s remit should also include resourcing strategies (in-house versus brought in).

Conclusions

Information and Communications Technology is an enabler of Business Transformation for modern electronic ways of working. Further, creation of a capability in programme management and business process management addresses the organizations needs for driving effectiveness and efficiencies across the Council.