



REPORT TO: Council
DATE OF MEETING: 30th March 2006
REPORT OF: Assistant Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Information Management Strategy
ITEM NUMBER: 12

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek members agreement to the council's Information Management Strategy. The Strategy is provided through three documents:
- A Summary Document (Appendix1)
 - A Background and key messages Document (Appendix 2)
 - A Model Acton Plan (Appendix3)
- 1.2 Members are recommended to adopt the strategy set out in the Appendices attached to this report.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Corporate Management Team, Service Heads and executive members have been consulted on the report and their views taken into account. The council engaged a consultant to prepare the initial Strategy and has worked closely with the Assistant Chief Executive and Head of Information Services. The Assistant Chief Executive has edited the initial document and prepared the summary document to produce the final version submitted to members in this report
- 2.2 No other consultations were considered necessary at this stage including external consultations or engagement.

3. CORPORATE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The Information Management Strategy is broadly how we hold and retrieve information within the organisation. It therefore cuts across the work for all corporate priorities. In particular it specifically relates to **Priority 1. Customer Excellence.** The Strategy also relates to a specific action point in the Corporate Plan which is to:

Achieve the national priority Service Outcomes we have identified as council priorities and work towards the achievement of others by March 2006

3.2 The development of the Strategy was a requirement of the original Improvement and Recovery Plan. The Strategy now falls within Project V1 of the IRP2.

3.3 Outside the Corporate Plan and the Improvement and Recovery Plan the Strategy principally responds to National Priority Service Outcome G19 which states;

G19 *“Adoption of ISO 15489 methodology for Electronic Document Records Management (ERDM) and identification of areas where current records management policies, procedures and systems need improvement to meet the requirements of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection legislation”*

3.4 The government know that most councils were not going to achieve this by March. They have therefore said that they only expect the council to have a plan of action in place by the end of March. This Strategy will meet this expectation.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There will be financial and human resources issues as a result of the adoption of the strategy. The intention has been to develop a transformational yet transitional strategy. The Strategy allows the council to make choices about the use of resources at different phases. The approval of the Strategy does not therefore commit the council to any specific additional resources that are not already committed. Future resource issues will be considered before the council moves onto each next phase of the Strategy. The principle focus of the Strategy is achieving National Priority Service Outcome G19. The potential benefits of a corporate Electronic Document Records Management System (ERDMS) could mean significant Gershon savings through electronically assisted document and records management. While it is not possible to be specific about likely savings at this point in time the potential areas of savings are set out in the Strategy documents and specifically in Appendix 1, section 4 and Appendix 3, section 7. Each phase of the strategy will require a business case which will establish the resources required and the savings that can be made. It is considered that the full implementation of the Strategy will have a significant impact on corporate value for Money and Use of Resources Assessments in the future. The consultant appointed to carry out the initial work was paid for by the ODPM's support grant at no cost to the council.

4.2 Legal

The adoption of the strategy will assist the council in meeting its legal obligations in respect of key areas of legislation including Freedom of Information and Data Protection. The relevant legal implications are set out in Appendix 2, Section 2

4.3 Personnel

There may be human resource issues as a result of the full implementation of the Strategy. These will be reflected in business cases when the council makes

decisions to move to further phases. A key implication would be to save officer time in terms of managing existing documents and records. The council must make a decision on whether it employs a resource to act as information/ records manager either on its own or jointly with others or whether it handles management with existing resources. The Strategy allows for this decision to be taken at a later date.

4.4 Other Services

The implementation of the full strategy will impact on all services by improving the management of documents and records.

4.5 Diversity

The Strategy will assist in improving customer care and improving the ability of the council to respond to service requests. It is not felt that the proposals will exclude any potential customer from receiving a service provided by the council.

4.6 Risk

A full risk assessment forms a specific appendix (8) in the Background and Key Messages Document of the Strategy which forms Appendix 2 of this report. The key risks of not implementing the strategy relate to failure to meet legislative and government requirements

4.7 Crime and Disorder

It is not felt there are any specific implications of the report on Crime and Disorder. The council will be meeting its duties under this act by considering the Acts implementation in this decision making process.

4.8 Other Implications

The report does not relate to a key decision. It is considered that the information can be communicated to the community by inclusion on the web –site. The report has a specific impact on e-government proposals. Procurement will be addressed within the business cases for future phases of the Strategy. In terms of communications, once the Strategy is adopted it will be placed on the council's web –site and an article about its value placed in the next available issue of District News. In addition the Strategy will be summarised in the next Corporate Plan. The report raises no other key corporate issues.

5. **BACKGROUND, POSITION STATEMENT AND OPTION APPRAISAL**

5.1 The report is the result of further improvements the council continues to make in its corporate governance and corporate health. Information Management is about having the right information at the right time at the right cost. It is about making the best use of existing resources and being able to store retrieve and use information in accord with legislation and best practice.

5.2 The Information Management Strategy is a set of proposals which will determine how the council can best store, retrieve and use its information in the future. The Strategy is designed to be a living document. It will be constantly under review. The aim is to

allow the council the highest degree of flexibility in meeting its responsibilities. This is deemed necessary in order that the council can use its scarce resources to its best advantage. This will avoid the council making up front commitments to implementing proposals in an increasingly changing technological environment. The Strategy therefore allows the council to agree a clear plan of action. It also allows the flexibility to move on to the next planned phase only after it has been able to review the situation based on its learning from the previous phase.

5.3 The Information Management Strategy seeks to address the issues the council needs to consider to meet its legal requirements and responsibilities. All departments will need to work together and with appropriate partners to achieve our objectives. The intended audience is principally Members, Chief Officers, Senior Officers and staff with information management responsibilities. Our citizens, Local Strategic Partnerships, suppliers, other Local Authorities and public agencies must be made aware of our principles, policies and intentions however.

5.4 The Strategy is split into three distinct documents:

- A summary document which sets out in simple terms what the Strategy proposes (Appendix 1)
- A Background and Key Messages Document which is the more technical document which addresses the drivers of the Strategy (Appendix 2)
- A Model Action Plan which proves in detail what needs to be done in the future (Appendix 3)

5.5 In simple term the strategy proposes:

- A phased approach to establishing a corporate Electronic Document and Records Management system by establishing the strategy and relevant policy, completing a document managements system for Revenues and Benefits , extending this to planning before considering a council wide system
- The consideration of a specific resource in the council to manage information
- Meeting other responsibilities through a 'Lines of action' approach dependent on the choices made in respect of the information management resource.

5.6 In view of the potential savings to the council consideration has been given to whether the corporate EDRMS could be brought forward from that recommended in the Strategy. The strategy itself considers this. It is felt that the council has a very busy and important year. There are significant capacity issues with the Environmental Services and Housing Service Inspections, the review of the Community Strategy, the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy the Leisure Options appraisal, and possible ballot on the transfer of the housing service. It is felt that the council would not have the capacity in the next financial year to undertake the work required against these key challenges to the organisation without detriment to its focus on them. In view of this it is felt that the phased approach as indicated in the strategy offers the council the best opportunity to meet its priorities and responsibilities in the longer term.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Members are recommended to adopt the strategy set out in the Appendices attached to this report.

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS / DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO**

- 7.1 IDeA Priority Outcomes for Practitioners 2005
- 7.2 Chester-le-Street Corporate Plan 2006/2008
- 7.3 Chester-le-Street Improvement and Recovery Plan September 2004
- 7.4 Chester-le-Street IRP2 November 2005

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Version 1.0

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