

# Falkirk Council ICT Strategy



2007

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## **2. Executive Summary**

This document outlines why a strategy is needed and how it supports the work of Falkirk Council. It highlights how ICT initiatives will be developed across all Services and what benefits these will bring to the Council, its citizens and its employees.

Sections 3 and 4 set out the corporate environment within which this Strategy has been developed and outline the challenges facing the Council.

Section 5 outlines the current role of ICT in the support of the Council's objectives and priorities, providing a summary of what is currently provided and under development.

Section 6 sets out what has been achieved since the previous ICT Strategy was approved in 2001.

Section 7 sets out the objectives and principles of governance on which the ICT strategy has been developed.

Section 9 sets out how these objectives will be achieved.



### 3. Vision

The vision for the Falkirk Council area is one of protecting the legacy of the past and the potential of the future, of making this one of the most culturally diverse yet distinct areas at the centre of Scottish life, of ensuring investment in jobs, learning, homes and leisure for all, thus making this area *the place to be in the third millennium*.

This document sets out how the ICT strategy aligns with and supports Council's corporate goals of:

- increasing jobs, income and enterprise for all our citizens;
- enabling our citizens to live healthily and safely;
- tackling disadvantage and discrimination in all its forms;
- creating and sustaining an environment in which people want to live work and visit; and
- stimulating working partnerships amongst agencies, organizations, citizens and communities.

These goals are underpinned by values of:

PUBLIC SERVICE, which means:

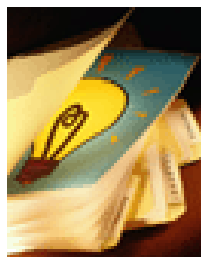
- fairness,
- listening and responding being accessible

PERFORMANCE, which means:

- providing quality
- achieving value for money
- promoting innovation
- seeking continuous improvement

PARTNERSHIP, which means:

- effective communication
- sharing decision making
- encouraging participation



#### 4. Introduction

The Council is committed to maximising the benefit of its investment in ICT to support the delivery of the highest quality services that are reliable, effective and efficient. To achieve this, there are a number of opportunities and challenges to be addressed. These include:

- providing straightforward, reliable and effective user access to information and services using a multi-channelled approach;
- ‘joining up’ of Council, other government and partner service information e.g. social work/NHS/ voluntary sector to provide a seamless service to and about Council customers;
- integrating systems and processes to improve efficiency, effectiveness and achieve stronger customer focus;
- assisting the involvement of key stakeholders and customers in helping to shape and improve services and in ensuring there are no barriers to inclusion or access;
- supporting the delivery of staff training and development programmes that result in highly motivated, customer focused employees working in partnership with others and sharing learning experiences across the wider public sector to ensure best value for the public pound;
- facilitating the adoption of innovation in the way Council services are delivered whilst promoting sustainability; and
- supporting the Council’s activities to raise the profile of the Council area, the Council and its Services.

The ICT Strategy cannot exist or be developed in isolation. It has to be flexible enough to respond to the emerging needs of central government, the changing requirements of the Council and the increasing expectations of customers and citizens. The strategy has to fit alongside other plans and strategies such as the Strategic Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Service Improvement Plans, and encompasses:

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Action Plan
- Acceptable Use Policy for email and Internet
- Information Security Policy
- Software Security and Licensing Policy
- Data Protection Guidelines
- Server consolidation strategy



## **5. Current Situation**

Every service provided by Falkirk Council is becoming increasingly dependent on ICT. The Council's success as service provider both now and in the future depends on its ability to strategically manage, develop and apply ICT. That means making optimal use of existing resources and ensuring investment in ICT delivers best value.

### **5.1 ICT Resources**

There are 60 full time staff employed in the Council's ICT Service, supplemented by 8 school based technicians and a number of non-ICT staff in Services who provide support to the users of specialist systems. These staff ensure that the Council's 6,000 computer users and 20,000 school pupils have access to the information they need where and when they need it from any one of 176 locations connected to the Council's data network. A diagram of the current network is provided as an Appendix to illustrate its scale and complexity. This network is currently being upgraded to improve performance and reliability in order to offer faster access to information and services.

The ICT Help Desk deals with over 40,000 enquiries each year in the form of telephone calls, emails, faxes and visits. The Help Desk does not just resolve problems but also takes care of orders for new equipment, manages password security, monitors customer satisfaction with the ICT service, reports on ICT performance and manages recycling and disposal of technology.

The Council depends on a number of major systems. In particular:

Email – provides a vital communications mechanism between staff and customers, among staff and partners providing services and between citizens and their elected representatives.

The availability of office systems – word processing, spreadsheet, database, presentation – mean that staff do not have to depend on ICT specialist knowledge and systems but can collect, share and process information effectively at their own desk.

Specialist business systems support the decision making process. Examples of these are: Integra financial system, Resourcelink payroll and personnel system, Civica revenues and benefits system, Uniform planning and building standards system, Phoenix pupil administration system, Procon repairs and costing system, Civica housing management system and SWIS social work information system.

The Council provides online access to information and services through:

Falkirkonline – a community portal that provides information about the Community Planning Partners and the services they provide,

Falkirk Council website – providing access to information and services from Falkirk Council

iFalkirk – the Falkirk Council Intranet that provides information to Council staff school websites and Virtual Teachers' Centre



## 5.2 ICT Project Summary

Currently the Council is undertaking a number of ICT initiatives:

<p>Modernising Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for the Contact Centre as part of the Customer First initiative</li> <li>• Implementation of a Council-wide booking system to expand services offered by the Customer First initiative</li> <li>• Completion of eCare single shared assessment to enable Council and NHS staff to offer a more client/patient focused approach to dealing with care needs</li> <li>• Extension of use of entitlement cards to include concessions for young people and older citizens</li> <li>• Implementation of Falkirk online and new website to improve availability and range of online services</li> <li>• Integration of Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) with other address based systems</li> <li>• ePlanning project to provide for online submission/interrogation of planning applications and appeals; consultation on applications; a planning expert advice system; and interactive access to the Local Plan</li> </ul>
<p>Technical strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade of the Council's wide area network (WAN) to provide the reliable and robust infrastructure needed to support online delivery of Council services and to meet the demands of GLOW – the national Education network</li> <li>• Technology provision – a sustainable investment programme to ensure the lifecycle of Council computers is appropriately managed</li> <li>• Business consolidation and standardisation to improve system reliability, reduce ICT support overheads and cut hardware replacement costs</li> <li>• Improvement of the current email system as an interim measure pending system replacement</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilots of mobile and remote technology to assess their usefulness in supporting delivery of Council services</li> <li>• Implementation of home working facilities to encourage and support the use of more flexible working</li> </ul>
<p>Systems development and implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development of HR Online forms/ payroll/ personnel/ recruitment systems to improve the availability of management information</li> <li>• Capacity planning of Procon to allow use of the system to be extended</li> <li>• Upgrades of key business systems (e.g. WDM, Profess, Civica) to meet service delivery requirements</li> <li>• Implementation of Phoenix central – to improve the availability of management information across Education Services</li> <li>• Development and implementation of an infectious diseases database to record and monitor the reporting of communicable diseases in the Forth Valley area</li> <li>• Expansion of the truancy management system to help schools manage unauthorised absence</li> <li>• Specification of requirements and tender for an Integrated Housing Management System (IHMS) to provide a comprehensive system to support all aspects of the Housing service.</li> <li>• Specification of requirements for a Youth Justice system to support the changing approach to anti-social behaviour in young people</li> <li>• Ongoing support for a range of in house and third party systems used by Council Services</li> <li>• Transport and travel plan databases and online surveys</li> </ul>
<p>ICT governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of ICT ‘fit for purpose’ review recommendations</li> <li>• Business continuity planning and testing</li> </ul>

### 5.3 ICT Expenditure

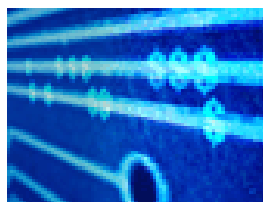
The Council spends over £4m on ICT each year. This breaks down as:

<b>ICT staff costs</b>	1,994,000*
<b>Outside services</b>	160,000
<b>Hardware</b>	504,000
<b>Software</b>	132,000
<b>Telecommunications</b>	1,174,000
<b>Repairs</b>	2,000
<b>Leases</b>	150,000 (schools)
<b>Training</b>	29,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,145,000

\*not including school-based technicians

This expenditure is allocated to maintain current systems. It does not include provision for new projects or systems, nor for assessing the potential benefits of technological innovation. Research is carried out through pilot projects funded by individual Services.

In addition, over the next 3 years, £300,000 will be spent on improving the Council's network on a 'spend to save' basis, through the replacement of leased lines with Council owned fibre and microwave connections.



## **6. Progress**

The development of the Strategic Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Service Plans has improved the understanding of the Council's strategy and direction. This is reflected in this revised ICT Strategy.

Since the previous ICT Strategy was approved in 2001, a number of major projects have been completed. Key systems have been replaced or upgraded to improve the flow of information within and beyond the Council and to support the demands for improved Council services.

Online services have been developed, the ICT facilities supporting One Stop Shops have been upgraded and a Council Contact Centre has been established to improve access to information and services either by phone, via the web or through face to face contact.

The Council has adopted ICT industry standards wherever possible. This ensures that the systems in use are based on tried and tested technology and lay the foundations for closer collaboration with partners at a technical level (e.g. through Shared Services).

The availability of computers in schools, libraries and an Internet café mean that school children become IT-literate at an early age and access to computers is free to all.

Since 2004 the process of server consolidation has seen the Council achieve performance benefits through rationalisation of hardware and provision of improved facilities while at the same time making cost savings of £200,000. The technology provision programme has ensured the timely replacement of computers through better management of the technology lifecycle. As a result, the computer systems on which the Council depends have become more robust, reliable and cost effective.

ICT industry standard project planning and management procedures have been adopted to improve the Council's approach to ICT projects by better aligning ICT resources to corporate priorities.

A number of policies and guidelines have been developed covering: acceptable use of Internet and email (AUP), data protection, information security and software security and licensing. These are kept under review and are updated as necessary.

The 'Fit for Purpose' review of the Council's ICT function has identified a number of areas for improvement and implementation of the Action Plan will continue as a key component of the Council's ICT Strategy.

The Council's ongoing commitment to achieving Best Value in everything it does is supported by effective use of information systems.

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## 7. Objectives of the Strategy

This strategy sets out how effective use of ICT will support the corporate direction and goals of the Council. The objectives are to:

Maximise value of Council held **information** through:

- integration of systems to reduce duplication of data
- use of interoperability standards and common platforms to enable sharing of information and experience, subject to constraints of confidentiality, security and data protection
- delivering the benefits of Modernising Government

Ensure the Council benefits from **technological innovation** through:

- use of feasibility studies and pilot projects
- advice on and support of Service specific projects
- improved voice and data networks
- sustainable technology replacement plans

Use appropriate **systems** to improve productivity and efficiency through:

- rationalisation of standard software packages
- replacement of outdated systems and introduction of systems to meet new business demands
- supporting and advising Services to develop proposals for projects to effect improvement of services

Develop the skills of the **people** using the Council's ICT facilities through:

- ensuring appropriate ICT training is provided to all users of Council computers to enable them to use information systems effectively

### 7.1 Principles of governance

The ICTSG will ensure that this happens through appropriate **communication** and **governance** arrangements underpinned by a range of principles. These principles of governance will guide strategic ICT decision making.

- The Council will achieve and be able to demonstrate first class performance not just in ICT but in the services it supports
- Service benefits will be maximized while ICT-related risks will be reduced through regular assessment of the delivery of real improvements from ICT projects
- The return on investment in ICT will be monitored and managed effectively to achieve continuous improvement at optimal spend levels
- Sustainable development and solutions will be built into everyday business practice
- The Council's approach to the use of ICT will be business driven, not technology led

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## 8. Priorities and Actions

**Strategic Objective:** Maximise value of Council held information

**Key Actions:**

The email system will be replaced. While this will require capital investment of £200,000, the return on that investment in terms of improved services will justify the expenditure.

The potential offered by Shared Services with partners within the public sector or beyond will be investigated. Investment in such services will be considered and recommendations made based on the business case and alignment to the Council's priorities.

The management of electronic records and documents will be improved and the benefits of implementing a Council-wide Electronic Document and Records Management System will be investigated.

The improvement of information systems, particularly management information systems, will be pursued to support better service delivery both within the Council and through Data Sharing Partnership arrangements

**Strategic Objective:** Ensure the Council benefits from technological innovation

**Key Actions:**

The Council's wide area network will be improved to deliver the levels of capacity and resilience required to support high quality service delivery both now and in the foreseeable future

The creation of a corporate ICT budget will provide for a strategic approach to sustainable investment in the technology used to support Council service delivery.

The use of mobile and wireless technology, including facilities for entitlement cards, will be developed and online services will be enhanced to allow the Council to respond more effectively to the needs of its citizens wherever and whenever required. Effective and innovative use of ICT will continue to play a key role in the modernising of Council services and delivery of e-government.

The development of a print strategy based on consolidation to multi-functional devices that print, scan, copy and fax.

**Strategic Objective:** Use appropriate systems to improve productivity and efficiency

**Key Actions:**

The projects identified in section 5 will be followed through to completion. Further projects will be considered on the merits of a business case and prioritised in line with the objectives and principles of governance within this strategy.

The agreement of Council wide standards for software, hardware and data will not only reduce the cost of support overheads but will also improve the Council's preparedness for shared services and information sharing partnerships.

**Strategic Objective:** Develop the skills of the people using the Council's ICT facilities

**Key Actions:**

The restructuring of the ICT function and introduction of best practice standards will improve the effectiveness and reliability of the ICT service

As the Council's dependence on ICT continues to grow, with services increasingly underpinned by systems and technology, skills development needs will be recognised and addressed in all Services



## **9. Contact Information**

For further information, please contact:

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Falkirk Council  
Municipal Buildings  
West Bridge Street  
Falkirk Council FK1 5RS

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Tel: 01324 501580

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## 10. Appendices

### **ICT Strategy Group**

The Information, Communication and Technology Strategy Group (ICTSG) oversees the delivery of the aims and objectives of the ICT Strategy, ensuring that progress is communicated to all levels of the Council. This group also oversees the information technology investment for Falkirk Council and ensures that new challenges are identified and addressed as they arise.

Members of the ICTSG are nominated by Directors and are accountable to them and to the Corporate Management Team (CMT). All Services are represented at a senior level on the group, which:

- Provides strategic leadership for ICT operations of Falkirk Council through the alignment of ICT strategic objectives and activities with corporate strategic goals and processes.
- Considers and makes recommendations on proposals for investment based on a project prioritization framework that reflects the priorities of the Council.
- Ensures co-ordination between Council Services so as to promote collaborative planning.
- Communicates challenges and priorities arising beyond the Council and influencing corporate decision-making

**ICT Strategy Group membership**

Name	Title	Service	Phone Number
Ian Rennie	Infrastructure Manager	Corporate & Commercial	50 1580
Jane Clark	Senior Policy & Planning Officer	Community	59 0909
Irene McIntyre	Libraries Manager	Community	59 0943
Fiona Campbell	Head of Policy & Performance Review	Corporate & Commercial	50 6004
Glen Binnie	Policy Development & Performance Co- ordinator	Development	50 4722
Roy Robotham	Quality Improvement Officer	Education	50 6648
David Cunningham	Head of Payroll & Pensions	Finance	50 6333
Colin Gray	Head of Service (Strategic Support)	Housing & Social Work	50 4004
Philip Morgan- Klein	Service Manager	Housing & Social Work	50 4049
Gillian McIntyre	Customer & Development Manager	Law & Administration	50 6104