

Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board

Information Technology Strategy

Overview

The duties of the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer are to provide good quality public services to the citizens in the Central Scotland valuation area. These duties have to be carried out in a way that ensures that the principles of Best Value are taken into account.

The nature of the Assessor's work and the Electoral Registration Officer's work involves dealing with personal data and it is therefore important that all the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 are fully met. The aim of the Board is to ensure that all data is held securely, used for the correct purposes and held for no longer than is necessary.

For both Valuation and Electoral Registration functions the public expect us to be accurate in our work and to be able to provide answers to any questions in a timely and professional manner. The Board and the Assessor are both covered by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. It is therefore expected that the Board and Assessor hold information in a structured manner and the information is readily accessible.

The Board wishes to ensure that the systems supporting the functions of the Assessor and ERO are resilient and to that end there is a Business Continuity Plan in place. The IT services need to be able to be quickly restored in the event of an incident occurring and this is particularly critical for the Electoral data in the run up to an Election or Referendum.

Our staff are the most important asset of the organisation and it is necessary that the IT services are fit for purpose enabling them to carry out their duties quickly, smoothly and efficiently. The workplace is becoming more flexible and the IT services need to assist in developing this flexibility and to accommodate changing work practices

As indicated earlier Best Value is crucial to the operation of the Service, the IT systems need to deliver good quality products for the best price. One of the larger costs relates to property. It is important that the IT structure allows the Service to occupy property as efficiently as possible.

This document sets out the high level aims of the organisation. The aims will be achieved by ensuring that IT policies and practices are designed with these aims in mind. Given the changing environment that we work in this strategy will cover the period 01/04/2013 – 31/03/2017 and will then be reviewed.

Pete Wildman, Depute Assessor

Aims

- 1 To support our staff in the carrying out of their duties quickly, smoothly, flexibly and efficiently as possible
- 2 To provide IT systems which allow our building to be used as efficiently as possible.
- 3 Data will be held securely, can only be accessed by relevant staff and held for no longer than necessary
- 4 Data is held in a structured way that makes information retrieval and matching easy and quick
- 5 That the IT systems are resilient and can be quickly and easily recovered in the event of an incident
- 6 That IT systems and equipment are developed in a manner that ensures that a good quality product is delivered at the best possible price
- 7 That IT planning takes into account the needs of the organisation and that IT delivery is properly monitored

Aim 1

To support our staff in the carrying out of their duties quickly, easily, flexibly and efficiently as possible

Objectives

- 1.1 That the IT infrastructure and software used by the staff is designed in a way that allows for easy and quick operation
 - Tasks to be carried out with as few key strokes as possible
 - Screens are laid out in an easy to read manner
 - Duplication of tasks avoided wherever possible e.g. not having to create a hard copy as well as the IT record when updating/creating a record
 - Integrated systems to avoid duplication of work and to make access easier
 - Staff to be consulted and involved in IT infrastructure and software development
- 1.2 That the IT infrastructure and software can be accessed quickly and flexibly
 - Develop secure methods of accessing data remotely
 - Simple but secure log on facilities
 - Ability to input records from remote locations
- 1.3 Records to be held in a structured and logical manner with good reporting tools
 - Valuation reporting tools to be further developed to include contractors based valuations
 - On-Site centralised data storage accessible to all endpoints.
- 1.4 Ability to access designated systems remotely
 - Authorised staff to be able to access designated systems when working away from the building

Aim 2

To provide IT systems which allow our building to be used as efficiently as possible

Objectives

2.1 That IT Systems can be accessed from any part of the building in a way that allows flexibility of working and efficient use of space

- Staff should be able to access the systems they need from any endpoint in any part of the building
- Maintain flexible working locations throughout the building which are available to all Staff
- A phone system that allows users to work from any part of the building
- Efficient use of space so that IT hardware is specified in a manner that uses the minimum amount of floor space

2.3 IT Software and Data Storage is robust and secure enough to permit the reduction of paper records held

- Structured programme of transfer of paper records to digital records
- New records to be created only in a digital basis but with the ability to print a hard copy if necessary

Aim 3

Data will be held securely, can only be accessed by relevant staff and held for no longer than necessary

Objectives

- 3.1 That IT software and hardware ensures that data is held securely
 - Datasets should only be accessed by authorised staff
 - Sufficient IT security is in place to prevent unauthorised or malicious access
 - Security systems in place to prevent malware or viruses
- 3.2 That connections to external bodies e.g. Councils and Cabinet Office are done in a manner that does not compromise the security of our or their data
 - Correctly configured firewalls
 - Compliance with Cabinet Office Terms of Use
 - Good liaison with the IT Sections at the Councils
- 3.3 Access to systems is controlled
 - Robust and secure logons
 - Regular requirement to update passwords
 - Automatic timeouts
 - IT Software records who has accessed and amended data
 - Structured permissions linked to Job Descriptions
 - Secure network that only allows users access to the parts that they need access to
 - Data held logically to ensure it is held securely in the correct place
- 3.4 Databases and File Systems are structured in a way that allows data that is out of date or no longer needed to be quickly identified and easily removed
 - Removal of data should be simple and recordable

Aim 4

Data will be held in a structured way that makes information retrieval and matching easy and quick

Objectives

4.1 That IT software ensures structured databases

- Reporting should be quick and easy
- Use of spreadsheets to hold data is to be discouraged
- CAG UPRN to be incorporated into all property related databases
- Address structure to match CAG address structure

4.2 File and Folder Structure is reviewed

- Eradicate Data Duplication
- Remove access to local storage
- Clear file structure designed around document type rather than user folders
- Clear labelling

4.3 All document types to be easily stored & retrieved and retrieved on the network

- Investigate and evaluate Document management systems with a view to implementation
- Review archiving of all stored data

Aim 5

That the IT systems are resilient and can be quickly and easily recovered in the event of an incident

Objectives

- 5.1 Have an integrated Business Continuity Plan.
 - That backup procedures are regular, comprehensive, secure and recorded
 - Defined procedures
 - Record kept of when backups are carried out
 - Backups are stored securely onsite and offsite
 - All critical data and systems are backed up

- 5.2 Data and systems can be quickly restored
 - Defined procedures
 - Regular testing to ensure procedures are fit for purpose
 - Ability to restore services from an offsite location

Aim 6

That IT systems and equipment are developed in a manner that ensures that a good quality product is delivered at the best possible price

Objectives

- 6.1 That procurement procedures are correctly followed so Best value is achieved and statutory requirements met
 - Membership of current framework agreement or similar
- 6.2 Any new developments are properly defined and costed
 - Clear specification
 - For large projects a Project Initiation Document is completed
 - Risks analysed and monitored
 - Detailed costings provided
 - Project is properly managed
- 6.3 IT staff are aware of latest technology and products
 - Training provided where necessary
 - Private reading and research
 - Liaison with Council or other VJB IT departments
- 6.4 Supply contracts are regularly evaluated and reviewed
 - Consideration to be given as to whether an in-house solution is appropriate
 - Long term i.e. over three year contracts are only to be entered into if they offer significant savings and allow flexibility of service delivery and ideally there should be a reasonable exit clause
 - Contract expiry dates to be monitored
 - Costs to be closely monitored
- 6.5 Regular evaluation of IT hardware to ensure resilience and reliability
 - Life expectancy of equipment to be defined at implementation.

Aim 7

That IT planning takes into account the needs of the organisation and that IT delivery is properly monitored

Objectives

7.1 That IT planning is incorporated into Service planning

- Clear definition of Service objectives and priorities
- Regular reviews of strategic planning at Management Team Level
- IT Services a standing item on Management Team Agenda

7.2 Any new developments are properly defined involving users

- Users to be involved with IT developments
- Specific project user groups to be set up
- Mechanism for users to report potential developments or highlight issues

7.3 Regular Monitoring of Work

- IT Project Log to be maintained by Depute Assessor
- Project Log to be reviewed at regular weekly IT Meeting
- Routine reporting to Management Team