

IT Strategy update**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Authority's updated IT Strategy. The key points are:

- The IT strategy has been updated to allow for current technology to be used to create a connected, secure, and inclusive workplace.
- Data collection and sharing with boroughs and other stakeholders will not be compromised.
- Artificial intelligence will be considered and implemented after thorough research and development has been carried out.
- Cyber security will be pivotal as attacks are becoming more sophisticated.
- Training will be provided to staff and policies created to ensure proper use of IT.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Authority is asked to: -

- 1) Approve the IT Strategy in Appendix 1

1. Introduction

The existing IT strategy approved in 2016 was over a 5-year period, and centred on enabling staff to be able to work from any given location with the range and quality of IT tools they require to perform their roles. In 2018, the Authority moved away from a shared IT infrastructure with L.B of Ealing and instead adopted an independent virtual server-based environment (Citrix) managed by an external IT provider. Moving away from a borough supported IT service was in line with the purchase of the West Drayton office, and the changes in Government Public Services Network requirements.

As the Authority has grown it has become evident that the existing IT strategy is now out of date and possibly limiting our potential for data driven decision-making and innovation. As technology changes rapidly, and the demand on data collection and sharing increase, there is a need to re-evaluate our IT Strategy to better align with the Authority's overarching mission and evolving strategic priorities and adapt to emerging opportunities.

We have carried out an extensive review of the Authority's IT infrastructure with the help of a specialist IT consultant. As we strive to digitalise, invest in relevant technology, and collect data to monitor our progress, our IT infrastructure needs to be robust to support on the delivery of our strategic priorities. Storage space and back-ups will be crucial as the amount of data the Authority expects to handle over time increases. It would be advisable to continue to have an external IT provider managing the crux of the Authority's IT infrastructure and providing support to facilitate key deliverables.

The vision of the IT Strategy is to establish digital transformation through agile technology integration, data driven insights and a culture of persistent innovation in partnership with Boroughs and residents for inclusive and impactful progress.

2. IT Strategy

Over the last 3 years, the Authority has evolved and developed its values and strategic priorities. It is essential that the Authority's IT infrastructure align seamlessly with our strategic priorities to enable our staff and key stakeholders to deliver these. The IT strategy underpins how the Authority will operate, collect data, and evolve as legislation changes and the demand for reuse and recycling increase.

Data driven decision-making is imperative as part of the strategy. It ensures that the collecting, managing, and sharing of data is not compromised by having a focus on cyber security and secure access between the Authority and external stakeholders with whom data is shared with.

Cyber security is a key feature to the strategy and is essential to ensure that the operations of the Authority are not compromised under the threat of a cyber-attack. With cyber-attacks increasing, and becoming more sophisticated, the Authority will provide relevant training to employees regularly, and ensure that business continuity plans updated regularly.

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) features within the strategy. This a breakthrough in the current IT landscape, allowing for operational efficiencies and reduced costs. However, to be effective, A.I. needs to be considered thoroughly, and implemented correctly to recognise the gains. Whilst A.I. is beneficial, continuous checks will need to be made to ensure that it is not being used to the Authority's detriment.

Capability to deliver the IT strategy is recognised with all employees playing a part and benefitting from infrastructure that allows them to carry out their roles to the best of their ability. A governance chart has been included to show clear lines of responsibilities and provides clarity.

The Authority will place emphasis on sustainability by ensuring responsible resource consumption and eco-friendly practises are established throughout the implementation of the strategy. This includes streamlining data centres where applicable, adopting energy efficient technologies and minimising our carbon footprint. Our commitment to sustainability within the strategy align with our mission of becoming carbon neutral.

Whilst the strategy spans over five years, an annual review of the strategy will take place to allow the Authority to amend or update as necessary. It will also ensure that the strategy does not become out of date and is adapted to meet the needs of the Authority as projects and programmes develop.

3. Financial Implications

The Authority's IT operational spend has been budgeted in 2024/25 at £140,000, which makes up 0.2% of the Authority's total levies. This is made up of all licenses, telephony, IT support, IT Apps, and the Waste Data Management System. The Authority's IT service delivery is extremely cost effective as the benchmark in commercial organisations is between 4% and 6%.

The Authority incurred capital expenditure of approximately £200,000 in 2017 when we moved away from a shared IT infrastructure with L.B of Ealing. This was to procure a comprehensive range of replacement IT infrastructure and services up to the value, as well as migrate to an independent IT provider and project manage this process.

The approved budget for 2024/25 has a capital expenditure cost of £400,000 which allows the IT strategy to be implemented effectively and securely over five years.

Whilst the costs incurred are significantly higher than the previous IT strategy implemented, this reflects the true cost of IT infrastructure in the current environment, and is an investment needed to drive the Authority forward. Thereafter, once everything is implemented and working as it should, we should see minimal capital expenditure and running costs plateau as we process all the information and data we have obtained.

To ensure IT spend remains cost effective, any new initiatives and solutions will require a business case confirming the Authority's objectives will be delivered. During the budget process, any spend around IT and solutions will have to go through the Authority's thorough budget setting process. To ensure value for money, the Authority's procurement process will be followed to ensure price competition for the service/solution.

4. Staffing Implications

The IT strategy will require external technical expertise to be implemented successfully and this will be factored within the £400,000 capital expenditure as mentioned under Financial Implications.

5. Legal Implications

The strategy incorporates legal compliance, particularly around data protection and business continuity.

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

6. Risk Management

Disaster recovery and migration of data and systems is a key component of overall risk management. By identifying potential risks and developing strategies to mitigate them before implementation, the Authority can better protect its assets and reputation.

7. Impact on Carbon Reduction

These are detailed within the report.

8. Impact on Joint Waste Management Strategy

Improvements to data, digital infrastructure and technology within the Authority will continue to ensure that the Authority addresses policies of the JMWMS.

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