
RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES FROM THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 APRIL 2001

INFORMATION SYSTEMS/INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

- 1.1 The Committee considered the proposed Information Systems (IS)/Information Technology (IT) strategy for the Council for the period 2001/02 to 2005/06. This strategy also includes a draft implementing electronic government statement (IEG), which the Council is required to submit to the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions by the end of July 2001.
- 1.2 The strategy aims to provide a framework for the future development of information systems and information technology within the Council. Proposed developments have been included that Heads of Service have identified as necessary to support the continued delivery of their services in the light of anticipated legislative change, changing requirements in the way services are delivered and the rigours of best value. Known requirements to replace current IT applications due to obsolescence are also included within the strategy.
- 1.3 The strategy sets out a proposed Council response to the joint Central Government and Local Government Association initiative to develop electronic access to Council services and to promote greater opportunities for residents and businesses to participate in the "information age". As well as suggesting a possible vision for electronic delivery of and access to this Council's services, the strategy sets out key actions and the resources necessary to implement these. The Committee has noted that Central Government is prepared to make available up to £250,000 per annum in 2002/03 and 2003/04 to assist the Council implement its strategy. However, this funding will be subject to the submission of an acceptable IEG by the end of July 2001.
- 1.4 Whilst identifying detailed proposals to maintain and improve Council services, all major initiatives contained within the strategy will require the preparation of a full business justification before being brought forward to Members for approval to proceed.
- 1.5 The Committee noted with concern the potential cost of improving services through the maintenance and development of information systems and IT. Without significant Central Government funding, the Committee accepted that Council is unlikely to be able to afford the additional implementation costs of the strategy anticipated at £1.063m over 5 years.

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- 1.6 The Committee noted the concerns of the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee that adopting a strategy at this stage may limit the Council's ability to undertake other future initiatives of greater priority. However it was accepted that the strategy would provide a framework on which the Council could plan its future development of services. The strategy would be subject to annual review and would form a part of the preparation of the Council's estimates as well as its Corporate and Best Value Performance Plans. There would therefore be full opportunity for Members to assess the competing priorities for the resources available each year.
- 1.7 The Committee acknowledged the need for traditional methods of service delivery to be maintained any alternative, electronic based services. The Council has already set itself a best value target to have 100% of its services capable of delivery electronically available by this method by 2005. The best value survey conducted by the Council in December 2000 also found nearly a third of Rochford residents expressing a desire to access the Council's services electronically. It is important therefore to ensure that services are provided in a manner that meets the requirements of all sections of the community.
- 1.8 The Committee noted that the consortium of Essex authorities' bid for pathfinder funding in 2001/02 (paragraph 5.96 of the strategy) had been unsuccessful and that the Strategy needs to be updated to reflect this.
- 1.9 Paragraph 5.71 of the strategy also requires amendment to emphasise the restriction that cost would place on implementation of the strategy.
- 1.10 The Council already has budgetary provision in 2001/02 for the development of information systems and supporting technology. Many of the proposals within the action plan for 2001/02 can therefore be achieved without additional cost. The Committee therefore accepted the view of the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee that these initiatives should continue to be progressed.
- 1.11 The Council is **RECOMMENDED**

To note the IS/IT Strategy, incorporating the Council's implementing electronic government statement (attached at the signed copy to the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee), and to agreed that it form the basis for a bid for Central Government funding for the introduction of electronic service delivery. (HAMS)

Andrew Smith

Head of Administrative and Member Services

For further information please contact Andrew Smith on:-

Tel:- 01702 318135
E-Mail:- andrew.smith@rochford.gov.uk