
IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report contains the Implementing Electronic Government 2005 Mid Term Return (IEG4.5) for comment and approval, prior to submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) by 18 July 2005.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council's information technology strategy 2001/02 to 2005/06 was considered at Council on 24 April 2001. Section 5 of the strategy was submitted to the then Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions as the Council's first IEG Statement in May 2002. As a result of the satisfactory assessment, a £200,000 capital grant for e-government projects was received for 2002/03.
- 2.2 The IEG2 Statement was approved by Council on 29 October 2002. This was also assessed as satisfactory by the ODPM and a grant of £200,000 awarded for 2003/04.
- 2.3 The IEG3 Statement was approved by Council on 30 October 2003. This was assessed as satisfactory and a grant of £350,000 awarded for 2004/05.
- 2.4 The IEG4 Statement was approved by this Committee on 7 December 2004. This was assessed as satisfactory and a grant of £150,000 awarded for 2005/06. (This satisfactory assessment was achieved despite the return making it clear that this Council would not be able to achieve all the ODPM requirements by the specified dates).

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The ODPM now requires a mid-term IEG4.5 to be submitted. This has to be in the prescribed format and is attached at appendix A.
- 3.2 During 2004/05 the ODPM issued its "e-government priority outcome" requirements. This specified 54 outcomes to be achieved either by December 2005 or March 2006. These are set out in Section 1 of the IEG4.5 Statement, and it is against progress on these specific outcomes that the recent allocation of capital funding has been assessed. Some of these priority outcomes are issues that will be addressed by working in partnership with Essex County Council and other Essex Districts through the Essex Online Partnership (EOLP).

3.3 Since the previous IEG4 Statement was reported to Committee in December 2005 the main areas of progress towards achieving the priority outcomes are as follows:-

- all Councillors have the option to have web pages maintained for them as part of the Committee Management Information System (CMIS)
- building control applications can be made online
- electronic ordering (e-procurement) has been implemented throughout the organisation
- online payments is fully implemented
- an e-billing module is scheduled to go live in August 2005 which will enable any business rate or Council tax payer to receive their bill electronically
- an enhancement to the parking system, anticipated in October 2005, will allow the online appeal against a penalty charge parking notice.
- the use of a telephone contact centre has enabled 89% of housing and Council tax benefit enquiries to be resolved at first point of contact
- electronic document records management (EDRM) has been implemented in Planning Services and is now being rolled out to Revenues and Benefits.

3.4 Projects planned for the remainder of 2005/06 include:-

- the introduction of online forms
- online booking of sports and leisure facilities; an initial meeting has been held with Homes Place and their detailed proposal is awaited
- online reporting, procurement and tracking of environmental services; alternative software suppliers have been assessed and a preferred solution identified.

Government Connect

3.5 In March 2005 the government issued a prospectus for 'Government Connect'. The prospectus states 'Government Connect helps local authorities to address the fundamental challenge involved in joining up to deliver better and more effective services ... It will enable customers, should they wish, to have one set of personal details to enable secure transactions across (all)

government even though the information they require is held by a number of organisations'. It will also enable the replacement of paper returns with the automatic transfer of data between Councils and government, thereby removing delay and inefficiency caused by unnecessary paperwork.

- 3.6 All authorities are expected to be using 'Government Connect' by December 2007, and Section 2 of the IEG4.5 Statement requires us to report on progress.
- 3.7 On the basis of the prospectus, the EOLP developed an Essex-wide solution, that would have considerably reduced the costs of implementation and produced a joined-up Essex approach. However, at the Essex e-government conference on 3 June 2005 attended by Councillor C Hungate and the Head of Administrative and Member Services, the ODPM advised against pursuing the plan, and suggested waiting for further guidance to be published in summer 2005.
- 3.8 On 20 June 2005 some of this guidance started to appear. 5 separate online accounts for information relating to citizens, businesses, properties, Council employees and voluntary/community organisations will be required. The property account, for example, will allow any user, once authenticated, to check for details on any property in England online, gaining access to information such as building regulations, school catchment areas or planning constraints. The citizen account will allow users to access Council services through an individual authenticated account and a single sign-on process. This new guidance suggests that each Council needs to carry out a 'state of readiness' assessment to show where they need to begin the process of implementation, and an assessment tool will be made available to assist. The guidance also suggests that a project team needs to be set up to manage the whole process, using formal project methodology.
- 3.9 The EOLP is working with the Government Connect team and solution providers to develop an Essex-wide approach. As the information is still being released, it is difficult at this stage to make a full assessment of the impact on this authority in resource terms, but there will be implications in terms both of the connection of IT systems to these new accounts via a customer relationship management solution, and staff to undertake the work.
- 3.10 In 2005/06 as well as submitting this IEG4.5 return, further reports will be required to ODPM in December 2005 and April 2006 to show progress on achieving the 54 priority outcomes by the set deadlines.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The development of e-government has been greatly assisted by the £900,000 total grant from the ODPM from 2002/03 to 2005/06. However, 2005/06 is the final year that government funding is available for e-government initiatives, and future progress will be dependent on identifying alternative sources of funding.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT**5.1 Regulatory Risk**

The ODPM requires the Council to submit an IEG4.5 Mid Term Return. Failure to submit a satisfactory return could potentially lead to the ODPM taking back funding already provided.

6 RECOMMENDATION

6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to

(1) Approve the IEG4.5 Mid Term Return for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

(2) Approve work to implement the 'Government Connect' programme through a partnership approach with the Essex Online Partnership.

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Background Papers:-

IS/ICT Strategy 2001/02-2005/06

IDeA Guidance Notes for IEG4

'Government Connect' prospectus and briefing papers on the citizen, property, business and employee accounts

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