IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT

1   SUMMARY

1.1   This report contains the Implementing Electronic Government 2006 Return (IEG6) for comment and approval, prior to submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) by 10 April 2006.

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.

2.5   The IEG4.5 Mid-Term Return was approved by this Committee on 12 July 2005, and the IEG5 Return was approved on 7 December 2005.

3   DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

3.1   The ODPM now requires an IEG6 Return to be submitted. This has to be in the prescribed format and is attached at appendix A (to follow). This is the final Return that will be required for this programme.

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 IEG6 Return, 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 have been addressed by working in partnership with Essex County Council and other Essex Districts through the Essex Online Partnership (EOLP).

3.3   Since the previous report to Committee the main areas of progress towards achieving the priority outcomes are as follows:-

- an e-billing module has been implemented which will enable any business rate or Council tax payer to receive their bill electronically and a take-up campaign to promote this service will be launched in 2006/07.

- an enhancement to the parking system that allows the online appeal against a penalty charge parking notice has been introduced.

- electronic document records management (EDRM) has been implemented in Planning Services and Revenues and Benefits.

- the first online forms are available on the website; these include forms for comments, compliments and complaints; abandoned vehicles; fly posting; fly tipping; graffiti; and litter and street cleaning problems.

3.4   Section 1 of the IEG6 Return indicates those outcomes for which we have not achieved 'green' (implemented) status by the ODPM target date of 31 March 2006. In summary these are –

R1   Essex County Council responsibility.

R7   Online reporting/applications, procurement and tracking of environmental services – this is in the process of being implemented with a target date of 28 April 2006.

G7   Online Licensing Service – this system has a target date of 30 June 2006 for implementation.

G8   Single Business Account – see R27 below.

R13   Online booking of sports and leisure facilities – as previously reported to Members, Holmes Place advised there was no demand for this facility and the cost was prohibitive. Therefore, no action is being taken at the current time although the situation is being kept under review.

G15   Mobile office service to process council tax and benefit claims directly from citizens homes – we already have a system that allows the remote collection of information from a citizen's home and this is being extended to allow a full remote processing service, with a target date for implementation of 31 May 2006.

G16   Essex County Council responsibility.

G17   Essex County Council responsibility.

R27   'First Time Fix' for citizen and business enquiries – a programme of electronic document management is being introduced across all services to form a core database and link to all main applications, with

a target date of March 2007 for implementation. This can then provide a corporate 'customer relationship management' solution.

R28   Emails and web forms to have a unique reference number – a corporate automated system will be introduced as part of the development identified in R27 above.

G24   Automation of business process management – workflow solutions will be incorporated into the implementation of R27 above.

3.5   Good progress is being made towards all the ODPM targets within the remit of this Authority, with all targets being at 'amber', or implementation status, with the exception of R13 for which there is currently no business case. It is believed that this level of progress will be considered satisfactory by ODPM and that grant funding will be retained.

3.6   Section 3 of the IEG6 Return contains the result of the best value performance indicator (BVPI) 157 for e-enabled interactions. This shows that the Authority has achieved the target of 100% e-enablement.

Government Connect

3.7   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.

3.8   All authorities are expected to be using 'Government Connect' by December 2007, and Section 2 of the IEG6 Return requires us to report on progress.

3.9   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 that time the ODPM advised against pursuing the plan and suggested waiting for further guidance to be published in summer 2005.

3.10   The Government Connect team subsequently made a presentation to the Essex Chief Executive's Association, who commissioned the EOLP to develop a business case for the introduction of Government Connect across Essex.

3.11   Since the presentation, the Government Connect Team have issued a 'return on investment' model and a business case template. These are now being used by the EOLP to develop a business case for the Essex Chief Executives to consider.

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.

5   RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1   **Regulatory Risk**

        The ODPM requires the Council to submit an IEG6 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 approve the IEG6 Return for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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Background Papers:-

IS/ICT Strategy 2001/02-2005/06
'Government Connect' prospectus and briefing papers on the citizen, property, business and employee accounts

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