



Board Meeting: 22 February 2013

AGENDA ITEM: 3

Title of paper:	Advancing ICT
Purpose of paper:	<p>The Board meeting held on 30 November 2012 asked that consideration be given as to how best to advance issues in 2013, including whether an ICT Sub-Committee should be established.</p> <p>This paper is the response to that request.</p>
Action required by the Board:	<p>To note the issues surrounding the ICT Outage, service and training improvements, and a Board Sub Group;</p> <p>to resolve whether to establish an ICT Sub Committee of the Board;</p> <p>to note and agree the proposed programme for the Year of ICT.</p>
Official presenting the paper:	Crispin O'Connell, Deputy Director, Places & Services.
Paper prepared by:	Crispin O'Connell, Deputy Director, Places & Services Evan Jones, ICT Technology Strategy.

Background

- 1.1 This report is designed to cover a number of issues. Originally commissioned to examine the issue of managing ICT advancement, with specific reference to whether a Board sub-committee is an appropriate vehicle for this aim, it has since been expanded to include reference to the December ICT outage, the People Survey, and some specific feature improvements.
- 1.2 People, Places & Corporate Services' (PPCS) commitment to the Welsh Government is that we will:
 - reduce the direct cost of ICT;
 - increase productivity in the organisation; and
 - improve organisational agility and responsiveness to Ministerial requirements.

December ICT Outage

- 1.3 The major ICT outage in December resulted from a general power grid failure in central Cardiff. Welsh Government ICT services are primarily hosted across two datacentres, Cardiff and Caldicot and, in normal operation, ICT systems are provided simultaneously from both datacentres. In the event of disruption to either of the datacentres, as experienced in December, ICT services hosted at that location should automatically transfer to the non-affected centre with little or no disruption to service. The non-impacted datacentre then should provide all ICT services. In the December incident, this automatic transfer of services did not operate as designed and the main data storage system entered an unstable state at both datacentres. The issue was resolved and systems made available during the next day. Following an urgent review we have made power changes to the Cardiff centre and are in the process of moving some services to the Caldicot datacentre, which has full on-site power generation.
- 1.4 These actions will reduce the risk of future system outages, however our longer term strategy agreed by the Board is to move towards 'Cloud' delivery which will remove dependency upon maintaining datacentres and remove the risks associated with system failure.

People Survey / ICT feature improvement

- 1.5 Work is ongoing to understand the precise nature of the results of the People Survey in relation to ICT feedback. However feedback from other surveys would highlight a general theme of improving the desktop experience for users, specifically in relation to remote access and mobility.
- 1.6 Additional ICT business will commence as a response to the "Simplify, Streamline and invest in ICT" strand of the Permanent Secretary's review. Under the theme of "Year of ICT" a programme of ICT related activities and improvement has been prepared. The proposed programme is at Annex 1.

- 1.7 As part of the Rapid Reviews, meetings are taking place with PSMW to develop options for improving general digital skills. The discussion is focussing on learning from the current personal health and wellbeing campaign of the NHS, which may be the model on which to address an approach for digital skills. In effect, placing an emphasis on improving personal digital wellbeing that will translate to the workplace. Reference to this activity is included as part of the proposed programme for the Year of ICT.

ICT Board Sub Group

- 1.8 At November's Board meeting PPCS were asked to consider whether an ICT Sub-Committee [of the Board] should be established.
- 1.9 The Board also agreed the Governance structure proposed in the ICT Strategy paper, which has now been implemented and established. In this structure Welsh Government expert groups advise the technical standards authority which in turn is guided by a strategic leads forum primarily consisting of each department's senior ICT decision-maker. This forum reports to Operations Group, which in turn reports to the Board.
- 1.10 An ICT sub-committee of the Board could consider such ICT issues as it pleased and report to the Board with decisions then made cascading to relevant departments through the normal arrangements. However, this could be seen as introducing a further layer of process alongside the function already provided by Operations Group.
- 1.11 WG's ICT infrastructure has recently commenced a significant change programme in line with the policies agreed at Board in November 2012. There are currently 24 workstreams resolving issues from technical standards through to major ICT Infrastructure change. Over the next year a number of these workstreams may generate Board-level decisions.

2 Issues for consideration

- 2.1 In addition to the above, the Board's decision on a reconfigured ICT Services contract; the People Survey results, and a programme of ICT feature improvement are all likely to generate some level of Board interest.
- 2.2 Whether a sub-committee is the most appropriate means of establishing coherence of strategic direction is however another issue. The Board may well consider that filtering ICT issues through Operations Group is a more appropriate means of focussing on the strategic objectives. In light of the priority given to ICT by the Permanent Secretary, it has been agreed that Crispin O'Connell should attend each Operations Group meeting going forward. Unless a sub-committee specifically reports to Board with the instruction mechanism

returning through Operations Group, there is potential for Operations Group to be sidelined.

- 2.3 Board is asked to resolve whether it wishes to acquire additional policy-making ability at Board level or whether it is content that the current arrangements are sufficient.

3 Resource implications

- 3.1 The resource implications of the ICT Strategies are intended to produce a significant net-positive result in both costs and operational efficiency. The additional costs associated with the management of an ICT Sub-Committee of the Board are minimal.

4 Risks

- 4.1 At this stage the risks are limited. Further work is being undertaken on the specific risks raised by proposed developments to the overall ICT Strategy.

5 Communication

- 5.1 There are no immediate plans for Welsh Government-wide communication. As plans progress, staff communications will be issued as necessary.

6 General Compliance issues

- 6.1 In deploying new technologies, PPCS Places & Services Division will ensure that accessibility and usability are maintained and, where possible, improved. Places & Services Division has cognisance of the Welsh Government's commitment to mainstreaming Welsh language considerations into all its work and will factor this approach into future software recommendations.
- 6.2 PPCS Places & Services Division is aware of the mainstreaming of the sustainability agenda. In aspiring to reduce the number of devices operated and power consumed by the Welsh Government's ICT activities, PPCS Places & Services Division is also aiming to reduce the carbon footprint of our ICT operations. PPCS is further examining the environmental impact of other activities such as equipment disposal.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Board:
- 7.1.1 **note** the issues surrounding the ICT outage, service and training improvements and a Board Sub Group;
 - 7.1.2 **resolve** whether to establish an ICT Sub Committee of the Board;
 - 7.1.3 **note** and **agree** the proposed programme for the Year of ICT.

Publication: This paper should be published in full.

Date submitted to Secretariat: 8th February 2013