**e-GOVERNMENT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10.30 am on 8 AUGUST 2002**

Present:-   Councillor R A Merrion – Chairman.
                   Councillors A R Thawley and R W L Stone.

Officers in attendance:-   Mrs L Bunting, Miss N Cox and J K Mercer.

EG8   **MINUTES**

The notes of the meeting held of 21 March 2002 were signed as a correct record.

EG9   **e-CHAMPIONS SEMINAR ON 26 JUNE 2002**

Councillor R A Merrion and the Principal Technical Officer had attended the e-Champions seminar on 26 June 2002. Councillor Merrion circulated copies of his report on this seminar and explained the various topics to the Group.

Rob Lloyd-Jones, of the Performance and Innovation Unit at the Cabinet Office, had given a keynote address on privacy and data sharing to the seminar. He had reported that one of the key components of e-government was the sharing of data. Many local authorities were investigating privacy issues with regard to data sharing. Pilot projects were also being set up to explore the potential for smart cards to be used to make data more accessible, whilst ensuring adequate privacy and authentication.

The Head of IT and Audit Services questioned whether the adoption of smart cards would be cost effective for Uttlesford, given the limited scope for data sharing.

Councillor Merrion then went on to describe the various workshops which he and the Principal Technical Officer had attended during the seminar.

EG10   **e-GOVERNMENT - PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a report which provided a brief update on progress with the 2002/03 e-Government work programme, the development of an e-Government Strategy and the arrangements for submitting a further Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) funding bid for 2003/04. The report also sought the Task Group's views on possible on-line development priorities for the remainder of 2002/03.

(i)   Progress to Date

Several e-Government related IT projects were currently in progress. The intention was to lay the foundations for future e-government related developments, as well as to demonstrate progress in implementing electronic government by the target date of 31 December 2005 ("the 2005 target").

The various projects were largely on schedule, although some delays had resulted from the recent failure of the Exchange (Outlook) server and the need to divert resources to sorting out the resulting problems. Set out below is a table showing the progress of the projects:

Project	Progress as at 31 July 2002	Outstanding	Budget Position	
Web Hosting	Web servers, firewalls and remote access software installed and configured. BTNet service upgraded. Web site currently being installed on new hardware.	Upgraded web site to go live on new servers in Sept 2002. Revised Members dial-up access arrangements to be installed and tested shortly.	Budget £43,410	To date £32,500
NLPG	Hardware and software purchased. Copies of Essex County Council (ECC) and District Valuer (DV) property and street databases obtained.	ECC and DV databases to be matched to Council property databases as first stage in achieving NLPG compliance status.	Budget £32,500	To date £9,502
E-Payments	Project Plan drawn up and orders placed. Negotiations taking place with banks regarding the acceptance of credit and debit card payments.	Subject to negotiations with banks, installation to commence in August or September 2002, initially at cash offices.	Budget £25,550	To date £14,270
Web Site Development	Inter-active recycling and planning pages nearing completion. Work in progress on refuse collection pages.	Upgraded web site to go live in September. Further developments planned for remainder of year.	Budget £30,000	To date £8,805

Progress in developing a formal e-Government Strategy had also been delayed, although work had now resumed. It was intended to produce an initial draft document for consideration by the Task Group by the end of August 2002. This draft would take account of the feedback received at the joint Member / Officer workshop held on 27 May 2002. It was proposed to extend consultation to a wider audience following input from the Task Group.

In additional to the production of an e-Government Strategy, the Council was required to submit an IEG Statement (IEG2) to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by 31 October 2002. Production of a satisfactory IEG2 Statement would result in the Council receiving additional funding in 2003/04 from the Government's Modernisation Fund. It was envisaged that there would be considerable overlap between the contents of the IEG2 Statement and the Council's own e-Government strategy.

(ii) On-line developments

Also included in the IT programme was a budget for on-going development of on-line services. To date, priority had been given to developing interactive pages for recycling and development control. There was however, the

possibility that sufficient funding would remain in the budget to commence developments in other areas as well.

The Head of IT and Audit Services then reported on a number of aspects of the various projects. He said that a big difference would be seen on the website when the upgrades were completed in September. He also informed the Group that work on the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) was continuing but that some aspects were proving to be very complex. Also, as part of the project, the Council was working with Essex County Council on the production of a local street gazetteer. This was likely to take several weeks and would delay the overall progress of the project.

With regard to the e-Payments project, the Head of IT and Audit Services said that negotiations with banks were progressing, albeit slowly. Councillor Thawley considered that post offices should be contacted with a view to people in rural communities being able to make their rent and council tax payments at local post offices without incurring charges. The Head of IT and Audit Services said he would look into this.

Concerning website development, the Head of IT and Audit Services reported that content management software was due to be installed shortly. This would provide a framework within which trained users would be able to update their own web pages. At present it was the responsibility of the IT Section to update all pages on the website.

A brief demonstration of the new website then took place to show Members the work which was being undertaken on the pages for development control, recycling and refuse collection.

EG11   **MEMBERS' ON-LINE SERVICES**

Members received a report providing a brief update on the redevelopment of Members' home computing services. It also sought the Task Group's views on the design and content of the Members' Intranet.

(i)   Progress to Date

One of the objectives of the Web Hosting project was to re-design and improve dial-up access for Members. The existing arrangements were somewhat unreliable and inflexible and recent technical advances enabled improvements to be made. Towards this end, the following enhancements to the technical infrastructure had already been made:

(i)   A new Microsoft Exchange server had been installed, exclusively for Members' services. As part of this installation, Members would be provided with "web mail" facilities, i.e. the ability to view and send email whilst logged onto the Internet, not necessarily from the Council laptop PC.

(ii)   Specialist remote-access security software had been installed. This software would enable Members to access secure Council services from the Internet.

(iii)   Dual web servers had been installed to improve reliability and system performance.

(iv)   The BTNet service, by which Members would connect to the Council's IT services, had been upgraded to provide faster access speeds.

The next stage in the project was to re-configure Members' IT services to enable access to be achieved via the Internet, rather than the existing Cable and Wireless service. In this connection, the following work would be required:

(i)   BT Openworld accounts to be purchased on behalf of Members. These accounts would provide Members with unlimited Internet access for a fixed monthly charge.

(ii)   Once BT Openworld accounts had been installed, laptops would be re-configured and tested, initially with a small group of Members. Once the configuration had been finalised, it would be rolled out to all Members.

(iii)   The Committee Management system (CMIS) was to be upgraded to the latest release. This release would provide a number of new facilities, including the ability to track committee decisions on-line.

(iv)   Re-training of Members on the new dial-up arrangements and the new features of CMIS.

Under the new configuration, Members would connect to a secure Members' area on the Council's web site. Although this new area of the web site could mirror the existing Intranet pages (which it would be replacing) it does afford an opportunity to extend and improve the existing content and design.

The Chairman had prepared a short report on the upgrade to Members' computing facilities. It stated that the three key reasons for the upgrade were performance, flexibility and ease of use, and also to enable Members to access the Council's online services, where possible, via the same procedures as the public. He considered that poor performance had been an annoying feature of the current system and this was thought to be attributed to the Cable and Wireless connection and in some respects the Citrix system. It was hoped that the less complicated BT Openworld connection would be more reliable and would improve average line speeds and accessibility significantly.

EG12   **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(i)   Computer Down Time

The Chairman referred to computer 'health checks' and requested that a record of systems down time be produced. The Head of IT and Audit Services said that data was being collected and would be reported to Members in due course.

(ii)   Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

The Chairman spoke on the subject of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) which he explained was basically call centre working. The Head of IT and Audit felt that a CRM system was unlikely to be cost effective for the Council, unless it was developed in partnership with other councils.

(iii)   Government Reports

Councillor Thawley requested that government reports such as those regarding Stansted Airport should be kept on the Council's website for public use. This was not considered to be in the remit of the IT Section but the Head of IT and Audit Services would look into the subject.

EG13   **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Task Group would be held on 4 September 2002 at 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm.