

Committee: E-Government Task Group
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Agenda Item No: 5
Title: Progress Report
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Summary

- 1 This report provides a brief update on the outcome of the various projects within the 2003/04 IT Programme.

Progress to Date

- 2 A large programme of development work was carried out during 2003/04, including a number of e-Government related projects. A summary of each project is included in the attached appendix. The majority of projects were completed on time and within budget. Some residual work, relating to Intranet development and Citrix, will be completed shortly. Two other projects, the replacement of the Financial Information System (FIS) and the upgrade of the housing system to iWorld, will be completed later this financial year. A verbal update on progress with the FIS project will be given at the meeting.
- 3 By 31 March 2004, 62% of services were available electronically, compared to an original target of 60%. This leaves the Council well placed to meet the Government target of having all services available electronically by 31 March 2005. It is anticipated that 90% to 95% of all services will be available electronically by 31 March 2005.

Funding Applications

- 4 Members will recall that at the Task Group meeting on 15 January 2004 approval was given to submit applications for additional funding to the E-Innovations fund and Housing Benefits Performance Standards fund.
- 5 The E-Innovations Fund is part of a new programme of 'Support for e-Innovations'. Its purpose is to 'challenge and develop thinking about local e-government by seeking new and innovative approaches to joined up working, effective service delivery and community engagement'. A bid was submitted to provide advisers at local Citizens Advice Bureaux with access to the Council's back-office systems. The bid had the backing of both the local and national CAB offices and was also supported by Harlow, Epping Forest and Braintree District Councils and Colchester Borough Council. A sum of £78,000 was requested.

- 6 The Council has recently been advised that the bid was successful and the full sum of £78,000 will be provided. The fund received over 100 bids, of which 34 were successful. Of these, only seven, including Uttlesford, were from district councils. The project will help CAB advisors access much of the council-related information needed to provide an effective service and ensure that its clients, some of the most vulnerable in society, are not excluded from the benefits of e-government.
- 7 The Housing Benefits Performance Standards Fund was set up in 2003 by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) to help local authorities tackle the barriers to improved performance in the assessment and payment of housing benefit. The following IT-related bids were submitted:
- Installation of workflow and upgrades to document imaging ~ to enable certain routine tasks to be automated, deadlines more closely monitored & problems escalated.
 - Home Working – funding to enable up to 10 benefits staff to work from home, either on a rota basis or for part of a week, depending upon the requirements of the post. The purpose of home working is to aid staff retention and recruitment and improve productivity.
 - Purchase and installation of a replacement Unix server – the existing server is unable to cope adequately with the requirements of iWorld, the latest version of the SX3 Council Tax, Housing Benefits and Business Rates system.
- 8 To strengthen the bids, the Council worked in partnership with Bromsgrove District Council in Worcestershire. Bromsgrove's performance in processing benefit claims falls within the bottom quartile. The bids therefore contained an element of 'peer support' for Bromsgrove. Such support is one of the key criteria by which the DWP assess eligibility for funding.
- 9 Again, the Council has been successful in securing funding. The Council will receive £93,434 out of the £103,430 requested. Only the contingency sums included in the bids were not funded.

FOR INFORMATION

Background Papers:

E-Innovations Funding Application
Housing Benefits Performance Standards Fund funding applications.

Appendix – Progress Report – IT Projects

Project	Position at 31 March 2004	Budget Position	
		Budget £	To Date £
E-Payments	Project completed. Citizens can now pay for a range of council services & charges, including Council Tax & Business Rates, via both the website and telephone. Currently, around £8,000 is being collected via the system each month. The range of services accepting online payments will be extended over the next two years. Also, measures will be taken to increase the take-up of online payment facilities.	2002/3 Project	2002/3 Project

E-Services Development	<p>Various projects completed, including the development of a new website, using Microsoft Content Management software. Various sections have been added to the website during the year, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism, including What's On, Sights to See, Where to Stay and Food & Drink. Each of the facilities are linked by a 'what's nearby' feature. • Family history, including searchable, online access to internment records at Saffron Walden cemetery. • Planning, including online access to planning applications and supporting documentation. The Council's planning website has been ranked 4th equal in the East Anglia region. • Bridge End Gardens. • Saffron Walden Museum ~ a system to search online the museum catalogues has been developed and will go live shortly. • Change of address ~ UDC, Braintree & Colchester, working in partnership, have linked to the national change of address service. • Revenues ~ Online access to Council Tax & Business Rates has been developed & is due to go live shortly. <p>A demonstration of some of the latest developments will be given at the meeting.</p> <p>In addition, around 90 online forms have been developed and are being incorporated into the website.</p> <p>The project also included the installation of additional firewalls and servers to improve the reliability & performance of online services.</p>	50,000	53,121
Disaster Recovery Infrastructure	Project completed. A centralised back-up system installed and fully operational. Tape library device moved into Lodge House for added resilience.	40,000	41,200

<p>Intranet Development</p>	<p>A new Intranet, utilising Microsoft Content Management Server software, has been developed. Some final technical difficulties need to be overcome, which are expected to be resolved shortly. The system will then be made available to users for final approval.</p> <p>An improved Members Intranet has been developed. A demonstration will be given at this meeting.</p> <p>A Citrix 'Nfuse' server has been installed to facilitate home working. The system is working, and is being tested by housing staff. However, the system requires the remaining Citrix servers to be upgraded (to the XP version) before it can be made available to other departments.</p>	<p>17,000</p>	<p>17,034</p>
<p>E-Services – GIS Online</p>	<p>Project completed. E-GGP software successfully installed and live on website. A number of geospatial datasets are now available online including all planning applications dating back to 1948, listed buildings, conservation areas, TPOs, ancient monuments and Saffron Walden cemetery. Over the next two years, other online data sets will identified & added to the website. Uttlesford is one of the first councils in the country to provide GIS information online.</p>	<p>25,000</p>	<p>24,067</p>
<p>National E-Government Projects, incl NLPG</p>	<p>UDC linked to national NLPG hub.</p> <p>UDC linked to the National Planning Portal at level 1. Level 2 integration is due shortly.</p> <p>UDC is participating in pathfinder project to review local government transaction security levels. Also working with ODPM on linking Essex councils to the Government Gateway.</p>	<p>32,500</p>	<p>28,860</p>
<p>Essex Online (EOL) Projects</p>	<p>UDC leading a study into registration and authentication. The draft of the final project report has just been produced and has been circulated to partners in Essex for consideration.</p> <p>UDC has connected to the Essexnet, providing opportunities for secure transactions with other councils in Essex.</p>	<p>20,000</p>	<p>19,037</p>

Replacement Financial Information System	Project in progress. Hardware installed & software loaded. Project teams currently building system, including new coding structures etc. Phase One of project due for completion by 30 June 2004. A verbal update on progress will be given at the meeting.	210,000	69,044
Completion of upgrade to operating system and messaging platforms	Project partially completed. The main element of the project, to upgrade the primary operating domain to Windows 2000, has been completed. The Citrix system is being upgraded to the latest XP version on a server-by-server basis. This work is expected to be completed over the next few weeks. The Microsoft Exchange server will be upgraded to the 2003 version shortly thereafter.	29,170	29,951
Upgrade to Housing system	Project postponed until 2004/05. Supplier has postponed all customer upgrades due to problems with the new release. Work now scheduled for summer 2004.	67,990	0
Replacement server programme	Project completed. A number of older servers have been replaced, some of which have been used to build a test network environment.	15,000	14,605