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CABINET 6 MARCH 2002   **PORTFOLIO: FINANCE AND SUPPORT**

PROGRESS REPORT – IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE

1.   PURPOSE

1.1   This report updates the Cabinet on the work of the Electronic Governance Team.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   On 1 August 2000 a special meeting of Central Services Committee was held and Members approved the following:

Electronic Governance Strategy
Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy
Information and Communications Technology Security Policy
Electronic Governance Strategy – Home Working Pilot Scheme
Video Conferencing Pilot Project

2.2   A progress report was produced for CMT on 27th February 2001. It was agreed to update DMTs and CMT annually with progress on this important initiative. All DMTs are represented on the Electronic Governance Team.

3.   KEY PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1   The Electronic Governance strategy comprises a programme of projects aimed at providing new access channels to services and in some cases, new services. Good progress is being made on implementing this programme of projects. All projects planned for 2001/02 are well under way and are in line with allocated budgets. A summary of the key projects and achievements is set out below.

3.2   **Internet Development**

3.2.1   This project refers to the development of the Council's web site and Internet related technologies in order to enhance services. The Council's web site is being well used by members of the public for making enquiries and providing feedback on a range of issues. The Electronic Governance Team have been concentrating on providing more interactive features for users of the web site. During the year the web site was enhanced in three critical areas:

a)   The provision of comprehensive information (and electronic forms) in relation to Taxation and Benefits.

b) Establishing and maintaining information regarding planning applications on line.

c) Providing on line access to the new Choice Based Lettings scheme.

3.2.2 These three developments combined have taken the number of visitors to the Council's Web Site to over **4,000 per month**.

3.2.3 The Electronic Governance Team are planning to devolve the maintenance of web pages to authorised users in departments. An Internet user group made up of representative from each Directorate is co-ordinating the development plan for the web site. The Council's web site will be the main vehicle to enable Electronic Service Delivery. This group is updating the style and content of the web site and will be establishing standards for maintaining the information on the web site. The group are working closely with the Electronic Governance Team. A project plan for the current phase of Internet projects is attached at Appendix A.

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3.3 **Public Info Systems**

3.3.1 This pilot project refers to the deployment of information kiosks at various locations. These kiosks are currently installed in the reception areas at Appletree Court and Lymington Town Hall. There are a further six kiosks to be installed, Four of these will be installed at Recreation Centres following the installation of the Hampshire Public Services Network. One of the kiosks will be set up at St Barbe Museum and the remaining kiosk will be installed on a pilot basis in Ringwood Health Centre (under a partnership initiative with health sector colleagues).

3.3.2 The initial data based on the kiosks deployed in civic buildings shows a limited interest in using these facilities (approximately 25-40 visits per month at the two main sites). It is intended to closely monitor the use of all six kiosks (from April 2002 to October 2002) in order to ascertain the demand for on-line information and services at suitable "public" locations. A full report will be prepared for CMT and Members in November 2002.

3.4 **Video Conferencing**

3.4.1 Video conferencing facilities are installed between Appletree Court and the Town Hall at Lymington. Since the facility was introduced in September 2000 there have been **56** conferenced meetings lasting from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. Several of these meetings have been conducted with contacts outside of the council enabling long journeys (and wasted time) to be avoided.

3.4.2 Public video conferencing facilities have been in operation at Hythe Local Information Office and Ringwood Information Office since May 2001. These facilities provide a link to the Tax and Benefits department and (since October 2001) to the Housing department. The number of customers using video conferencing facilities to access

these departments is usually about four per day. The feedback from employees providing a service via this link is that the facilities are proving very useful and that they would like to see video conferencing available at other local information offices. This pilot project will be subject to a full report for CMT and Members in June 2002.

3.5 **Hampshire Public Services Network (HPSN)**

3.5.1 The Hampshire Public Services Network refers to the project to implement a new voice and data communications network. The key deliverables from this project will be a state-of-the-art digital telephone system and higher capacity network links to remote sites (e.g. local information offices and recreation centres). This joint project (partnering with Hampshire County Council) wlll provide a regional voice and data communications infrastructure enabling participating public sector organisations to be linked together as one large virtual private network. One key benefit of this network would be free telephone calls between connected partners.

3.5.2 This project has been subject to considerable delays. The County Council's chosen solution provider (Unisys) has re-worked the original technology proposal. While offering a potentially better solution, it has delayed the County Council's implementation. This has had a direct effect on New Forest District Council's project. Unisys has submitted a revised project plan. The project is now underway and scheduled for completion by mid April 2002.

3.6 **Document Imaging**

3.6.1 This project refers to the document imaging system used to scan planning applications and associated drawings onto the Council's web site and linking to the Council's planning information system. On line access to planning applications was launched in September 2001. This coincided with the provision of comprehensive information about all aspects of the Planning Service on the Council's web site. The Planning area of the Council's web site is currently attracting over **900 visitors per month**.

3.7 **Geographic Information Systems (Customer Services)**

3.7.1 During the year work began on a second phase of the new Customer Services system. This system supports the Customer Services Team operating in the Environment Services Directorate. The team deal with enquiries and complaints across a range of direct services including, abandoned vehicles, trade and bulky waste collection, grass cutting, highways maintenance and refuse collection. The new system incorporates the ability to plot incidents and schedule work using map based information through the Council's standard geographic information system (GIS). The complete Customer Services system (all modules) will be live by April 2002.

3.8 **Members ICT**

3.8.1 Enabling Members to use ICT in support of their democratic roles and for constituency business is an important part of the Electronic Governance initiative. During the year work has concentrated on improving the robustness of the remote working arrangements and identifying any further training or access requirements.

3.9 **Local Information Offices**

3.9.1 Following the best value review of Reception and Information Services, a requirement has been identified to develop an on-line information system for information officers dealing with enquiries from members of the public. Work is underway on the specification of this intranet-based system. The level of access provided to core information systems used by Housing, Planning and Tax and Benefits is also being reviewed in this project.

3.9.2 It is planned to make the new Customer Services system available to employees in the local information offices as a first step. The potential for closer working with the Customer Services Team supported by an innovative use of ICT was identified in the Best Value Reviews of both service areas.

3.10 **Home Working Project**

3.10.1 The pilot Home Working project has been underway since April 2001. The technology aspects of the project have been positive. The applications being used are performing well in users' homes. The overall experience of the home workers and the impact of this project on their office-based colleagues is being closely monitored. A full report will be prepared for CMT in April 2002

3.11 **Ad hoc Projects**

3.11.1 During the year other projects have been developed with colleagues in Directorates that were not included in the Electronic Governance Work Programme but which do have associated benefits. For example the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings scheme was designed to be accessible via the Council's web site. Since its launch in October it is the most accessed area of the Councils web site, attracting on average, **250 visitors per week**.

3.11.2 The recent launch of the *skip busters* initiative is another such example of using the internet to add value to services.

4. **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

4.1 These projects are intended to provide new ways for our customers to access services and information on services. An analysis of the anticipated benefits is set out in Appendix B.

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5. **A REVIEW OF PROGRESS SO FAR**

5.1 The implementation of the E-Governance strategy is progressing well. A number of projects have been successfully implemented, while other pilot projects are still on-going. In the case of the information kiosks the project has been delayed as a knock on effect of the delay in implementing the HPSN. This early phase of the E-Governance strategy has enabled the Council to pilot new ways of working. In some cases (e.g. home working and video conferencing) more detailed reports are due to be produced to

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determine the realisation of benefits. A table summarising progress on projects is attached as Appendix C.

6. IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT FUNDING

6.1   In March 2001 the DTLR published two documents outlining their plans for Local Government On Line and Local e-Government Targets and introduced a requirement for every Council to produce an Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statement by 31 July 2001. The Government set out the requirement for each local authority to produce an IEG Statement for two reasons:

- To evaluate progress nationally towards the objective of electronic service delivery and joined up working.

- To enable local authorities to qualify for additional funding to develop electronic service delivery.

6.2   The IEG Statement produced by the Electronic Governance Team in consultation with the sponsoring Members has successfully passed the Government's satisfaction criteria. New Forest District Council will be receiving a capital grant of £200,000 in 2002/03 with a possible further £200,000 in 2003/04 to advance E-Governance projects.

7. EXPANDING THE ELECTRONIC GOVERNANCE STRATEGY

7.1   As the Government provide more details of the national strategy and objectives for Electronic Government and as new technology developments present themselves, the scope of the Council's Electronic Governance strategy expands. Some widening of the remit has been anticipated in the IEG statement. Indeed the guidelines supporting the production of IEG statements effectively required local authorities to be developing plans for new initiatives such as those described below.

7.2   **The National Land & Property Gazetteer (NLPG)**

7.2.1   A report will be produced for CMT in March 2002 outlining a proposed approach to produce a Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) for the district. The LLPG will involve establishing a team who will work together to produce a single land and property database for the Council's area. This will be compiled from various existing data sets maintained by the Council but in a format that complies with British Standard 7666.

7.2.2   When the LLPG is submitted for incorporation within the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG), it will provide unambiguous identification of land and property for use by both the public and private sectors. Thus the LLPG is effectively the foundation stone for the delivery of a number of national initiatives such as improvements to the house buying process and a rolling register enabling electronic voting.

7.3 **Partnership Working**

7.3.1 Having established a number of technology related projects aimed at supporting Electronic Service Delivery, the Electronic Governance Team is now in a position to direct its focus towards partnership working. The main thrust of this activity will be working with Town and Parish Council's to help develop their use of the Internet and to examine the scope for integrating information about services.

7.3.2 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is another partnership initiative that could be capably supported by the use of ICT. One possible project is the development of an Extranet linking all of the partners. This would support communication and could be used to promote the work of the LSP. Initial discussions have take place with the Corporate Planning Co-ordinator and proposals will be taken forward in due course.

7.4 **E-Consultation**

7.4.1 Promoting local democracy is an important objective of the Electronic Governance strategy. In addition to enabling elected Members to exploit the use of ICT it is important to enable residents and visitors to the district to engage the Council via electronic means. The Citizens' Panel currently provides an important forum for feeding back to the Council and shaping policy. Using Internet technologies it is possible to poll large groups at low cost and to have the results processed very quickly.

7.4.2 There is evidence pointing to a significantly higher participation rate with on-line polling so providing a better basis for decision-making. It is possible to refine and repeat electronic polls and to provide such facilities to departments, business units and members for local consultation. The Electronic Governance Team is working with colleagues to evaluate an e-consultation system.

7.5 **Elections Management**

7.5.1 The current Elections Management system is scheduled for replacement. The Government is introducing changes to the processes supporting the management of Elections (e.g. introducing rolling registers and ensuring that addresses held are compliant with the local land and property gazetteer (LLPG). It will be necessary to select a system that incorporates the new requirements. A project to evaluate, select and implement a new Elections Management system began in December 2001.

7.6 **Electronic Procurement**

7.6.1 The implementation of the new Purchasing and Inventory Management system is well underway. This system (phase two of the Financial Information Systems project) will provide the technology platform to enable officers to purchase goods and services from approved suppliers via the Internet. Electronic procurement should reduce the manual paperwork involved in the requisitioning process

and so speed up the requisition to cheque production process. There will also be much closer integration between purchasing and payment systems so aiding budgetary control.

7.7 **Call/Contact Centre Feasibility Study**

7.7.1 The installation of the Hampshire Public Services Network provides a number of possible options to implement a call or contact centre. These have been fully discussed by the E-Governance team and recommendations are being finalised. A feasibility study report is being produced for consideration by DMTs, CMT and employee side representatives. The feasibility study will be completed in February 2002 and will circulated for consultation.

8. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 157 – ELECTRONIC SERVICE DELIVERY

8.1 The Electronic Governance Team has produced an initial analysis of the Council's performance against the targets set out in Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 157. The initial analysis shows New Forest District Council to be on course for 50% of interactions with the public to be supported electronically during 2002. The current estimate of compliance with BVPI 157 is **43 % of interactions with the public are supported electronically.**

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Good progress is being made on implementing the Electronic Governance Strategy. The Electronic Governance Team is confident that The Council will meet the Government's targets for 100% electronic service delivery by 2005. The Electronic Governance Team must now focus on working with (public and private sector partners to deliver more choice in the provision of services. In addition to sound project management for the implementation of the Electronic Governance Work Programme, efforts are being directed towards the process of organisational change that electronic service delivery and joined up working will require in order to deliver real benefits to the community.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the progress on implementing the Council's Electronic Governance Strategy be noted.
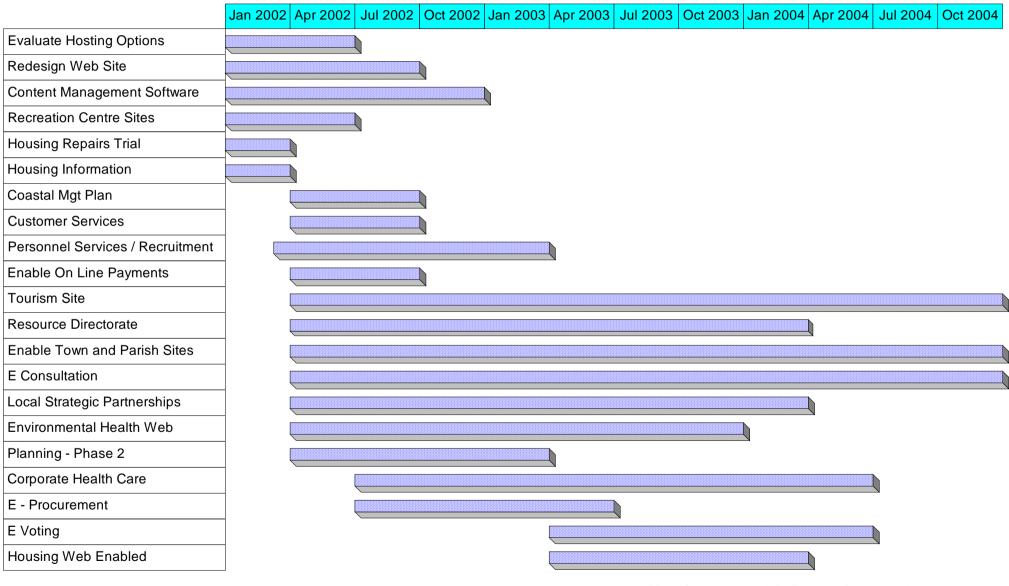
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Background:

Report to CMT on 27 February 2001
Ken Connolly

INTERNET PROJECT PLANI

	Jan 2002	Apr 2002	Jul 2002	Oct 2002	Jan 2003	Apr 2003	Jul 2003	Oct 2003	Jan 2004	Apr 2004	Jul 2004	Oct 2004
Evaluate Hosting Options												
Redesign Web Site												
Content Management Software												
Recreation Centre Sites												
Housing Repairs Trial												
Housing Information												
Coastal Mgt Plan												
Customer Services												
Personnel Services / Recruitment												
Enable On Line Payments												
Tourism Site												
Resource Directorate												
Enable Town and Parish Sites												
E Consultation												
Local Strategic Partnerships												
Environmental Health Web												
Planning - Phase 2												
Corporate Health Care												
E - Procurement												
E Voting												
Housing Web Enabled												

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ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

Projects	Benefit Type						
	Improved Services Delivery	Reduced Travelling / Journeys	Convenience for Customers	Lower Cost of Providing Service	Enable New Ways of Working	New Access Channel to Services	Helping Members
Internet Development							
Public Info Systems				To be determined			
Video Conferencing							
HPSN							
Document Imaging (Planning)							
GIS Customer Services							
Members ICT							
Local Info Offices							
Homeworking				To be determined			
Choice Based Lettings							

E Governance Work Programme 2001/02

Project	Planned Start Date	Actual Start Date	Planned Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Budget 01/02 (£)	Forecast Outurn 01/02 (£)	Projection Under/Over Spend (£)
Implement Web Forms for Revenues & Benefit Services	Jun 2001	Jun 2001	Sept 2001	Sept 2001	3000	3000	0
Implement Interactive Planning Services on the Council's Web Site (Internet Devpt)	Jun 2000	Jun 2000	Oct 2001	Sept 2001	49000	49000	0
Public Information Systems Update	Jun 2000	Sept 2000	Apr 2002	See note (1)	0	0	0
Implement *TellyTalk* Video Conferencing assisted interview from local offices (Pilot Project)	May 2001	May 2001	June 2002	See note (2)	12000	12000	0
Implement Hampshire Public Services Network	Apr 2001	Apr 2001	May 2002	On Schedule	44000	44000	0
Customer Services System including Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	July 2001	July 2001	Apr 2002	On Schedule	25000	25000	0
Local Information Offices	Apr 2000	Apr 2001	Sept 2002	See note (3)	5000	5000	0
Home Working (Pilot Project)	May 2001	May 2001	Mar 2002	On Schedule	See note (4)	12000	0
Implement new (web enabled) corporate Financial Information Systems	Apr 2001	Apr 2001	Apr 2002	On Schedule	38000	38000	0

(1)   Implementation delayed by slippage to HPSN Project - a project budget of £15,000 was allocated and spent in 2000/01

(2)   It is planned to monitor this project and report to CMT/Members in June 2002

(3)   This project was revised pending the outcome of the Best Value Review in Reception and Information Services. It has been extended to enabled the development of the LIO Info System

(4)   The estimated Ann Rev costs of this homeworking projects are £12000