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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This document sets out the Council’s vision – articulated as a series of strategic objectives – for its information, communication and technology infrastructure and architecture.

The development of the document is a result of a comprehensive planning and consultation exercise involving all services across the organisation. This was guided by a number of design principles that provide a broad framework within which the strategic priorities have been developed. The aim of these principles is to ensure that the management and development of IT and systems complies with necessary standards and protocols and aligns with the wider strategic direction of the council by:

- organising information and systems around customers;
- automating processes wherever possible;
- supporting joint working and shared services; and
- reducing, as far as possible, reliance on highly technical support.

Importantly, the strategy introduces a Technical Design Authority to ensure a controlled, disciplined approach to changes to the technical architecture and infrastructure. This is designed to accommodate the demands and requirements that will inevitably arise during the lifetime of this strategy but are not currently known. The role of this body will be to manage and agree any alterations that are proposed to the agreed implementation plan that supports this strategy. The terms of reference for the group are appended to this strategy (Appendix 2), and these are designed to ensure it operates in a collaborative, agile way to mitigate against the risk of unnecessary bureaucracy and business interruption.

The strategic priorities that this strategy seeks to deliver are:

- Customer focused systems
- Integrated and joined-up systems and infrastructure
- IT that is fit for purpose now and into the future
- The ability to operate from multiple locations and devices (flexible and mobile working)
- Increased self-service
- Automation where it’s efficient and effective to do so
- Systems and infrastructure that are resilient, compliant and experience minimal downtime

All of these outcomes need to be delivered within an overarching strategic aim of **becoming a more efficient organisation and reducing operating costs.**

These high level outcomes shape and prioritise the activity set out in the supporting implementation plan for the strategy.
ABOUT THIS STRATEGY
This document sets out Merton’s vision and strategy for its Information, Communication and Technology infrastructure and systems architecture. In developing the strategy, officers have drawn on the target operating models (TOM) and associated delivery plans developed by the Council’s businesses throughout 2013/4. This ensures that Merton continues to take a business-led (and therefore customer-led) approach to the development, improvement and maintenance of its IT assets.

The strategy also reflects the more technical guiding principles and constraints that frame our IT ambitions, either because of legislative requirements or as part of our commitment to adhere to industry standards and best practice.

In striking the balance between responding to business need and managing IT assets effectively and efficiently this strategy is designed to provide a broad strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of the Council's IT and business systems. It is supported by a more detailed implementation plan that sets out the operational tasks associated with achieving the strategy. The implementation plan will be reviewed annually; the content of the plan and progress against it will be assured and managed through Corporate Services DMT and the Merton 2015 Board. The Assistant Directors of Infrastructure & Transactions and Business Improvement will be jointly accountable for its delivery.

BUSINESS CONTEXT
As a high achieving authority, Merton is single minded in its commitment to continuous improvement. The organisation recognises that this will require IT infrastructure and systems that support excellent services and – in the context of a decreasing financial envelope – greater automation and self-service.

The financial context in which we operate requires that the organisation finds ever more efficient ways to manage and improve its IT assets. Where judicious investment is required in order to transition the organisation towards more efficient ways of working on an ‘invest to save’ basis, the Council allocates funding from reserves earmarked specifically for this purpose. The Merton 2015 and Capital Programme Boards manage this process, awarding funding on the basis of sound business cases and overseeing their implementation to ensure benefits are realised.

Through the development of TOMs each business has set out its future state and the role that IT will play in enabling this. It is this information that, drawn together, forms the basis of this strategy and supporting implementation plans. The activities reflect the development, improvement and maintenance of IT and business systems needed by services in order to achieve their stated ambitions.

In addition, the strategy incorporates the activity that will be required to deliver cross-cutting transformational projects and programmes of change and improvement. The most notable of these are:

- Flexible Working – a programme of coordinated activity designed to introduce modern working practices that make the most effective and efficient use of office space and officer time.
- Customer Contact – a three-year programme that will enable and drive channel shift, the transition of customer interaction to cheaper (usually online) channels and self-service wherever possible.
- Mobile working – the integration of systems and introduction of mobile devices and mobile-enabled systems so that officers can work from any location.
- SCIS – the re-procurement of the Council’s social care information system.
- Financial systems – the re-procurement of the Council’s financial information management systems.

**STRATEGIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

As this strategy has already acknowledged, Merton must be judicious in its management and development of IT and systems – changes to our infrastructure and architecture have cost implications beyond the initial investment as they will require support and maintenance. In addition, there are a suite of technical standards and protocols with which the Council needs to comply.

To ensure that all of these factors are taken into account, the organisation has adopted an holistic approach to developing this strategy. Businesses have worked with target operating models to clarify and articulate their current and future IT needs; but to help frame their thinking and ensure development proposals are realistic a series of design principles have been applied to the process. These will continue to inform our IT development:

- IT systems must be customer centric and support the Council’s customer contact strategy.
- IT systems should consolidate information around the citizen, reduce reliance on paper and provide automated workflows wherever possible.
- IT systems must support social inclusion and be user friendly.
- IT systems must improve information use and sharing with Merton partners, where appropriate, and comply with the Information Strategy.
- IT systems will maximise use of configuration to ensure they are readily upgradable and supported by the vendor.
- IT systems and Service delivery will be designed with shared function/service in mind.
- All IT developments, improvements and technology purchases will be controlled and well managed (through the Technical Design Authority) to ensure technology compliance and maximum value is achieved.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**
Drawing on the TOMs and transformation delivery plans of the organisation, as well as developments in the world of IT, legislative requirements and industry good practice, we have developed a set of strategic priorities that clarify where scarce resources will be focused over the life of the strategy.

These are the high level outcomes this strategy aims to deliver:

- Customer focused systems
- Integrated and joined-up systems and infrastructure
- IT that is fit for purpose now and into the future
- The ability to operate from multiple locations and devices (flexible and mobile working)
- Increased self-service
- Automation where it’s efficient and effective to do so
- Systems and infrastructure that are resilient, compliant and experience minimal downtime

All of these outcomes need to be delivered within an overarching strategic aim of becoming a more efficient organisation and reducing operating costs.

These high level outcomes shape and prioritise the activity set out in the supporting implementation plan for the strategy. The following objectives set out in more detail how each will be achieved.

**Customer focused systems**

- Council systems that support the Customer Contact Strategy and programme, enabling a customer centric approach, with information consolidated around the service users.
- Support social inclusion by maximising access to IT resources by members of the community and community groups, and by providing user-friendly systems, systems that cater for a wide range of needs in support of the Digital Inclusion Strategy.
- Support the customer contact strategy by providing a consistent customer experience through a variety of channels.
- Customer data stored consistently across various systems.
- System and IT infrastructure enhancements and implementation informed by business need (which in turn articulates customer need).
- Where feasible and beneficial, maximise the benefits of mobile working by gathering multi-agency data at each interaction thereby reducing multiple contacts with customers.

**Integrated and joined-up systems and infrastructure**

- System integration wherever possible and beneficial.
- Actively consider the potential for joint working with partnering boroughs and agencies in all IT decisions.
- Improved – through IT systems/infrastructure – information use and sharing with Merton partners.
- IT infrastructure and systems that support, enable and promote shared services.
• Support business transformation through end-to-end integration of processes, consolidated customer data bases and exploiting e-enabling services and improved service delivery within the council.

• Create and maintain a ‘single version of the truth’ with appropriate arrangements in place to improve and maintain primary data sources that feed secondary sets with minimal manual intervention.

• Maximise existing investments.

**Fit for purpose now and into the future**

• Create a clear vision and target operating model for the IT infrastructure and systems architecture that is based on businesses’ plans for the future.

• Create and maintain IT infrastructure and systems that support business agility.

• Lead and promote business change through innovation and technology.

• Actively maintain good market intelligence and scan for new opportunities.

**Operating from multiple locations and devices**

• Provide business solutions and IT infrastructure that support the flexible working programme and accommodation strategy through mobile and home working.

• Documents available electronically at point of use; reduced reliance on paper.

• Telephone systems and printing follow the worker.

**Increased self service**

• Introduce and improve the functionality of web-enabled services and systems.

• Better use and quality of geospatial data.

• Support stronger clienting of the IT service by businesses by raising IT skills.

**Systems and infrastructure that are resilient, compliant and experience minimal downtime**

• Establish and maintain a programme for effective disaster recovery.

• Develop and regularly test business continuity plans.

• Achieve and maintain compliancy with PSN, N3 and CJSM regulations.

• Manage and monitor ‘downtime’ that is as close to zero as possible.

• Introduce, develop and maintain change control mechanisms.

**CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

A key factor in delivering this strategy will be the introduction and maintenance of effective change management mechanisms. As the Council increases its reliance on technology through programmes such as Customer Contact and Flexible Working but also seeks, in parallel, to reduce the cost of maintaining and supporting systems and IT infrastructure, establishing effective governance and control of IT assets will become even more important. The uncontrolled and ungoverned development of systems and IT infrastructure risks not only confusing and disrupting the system and IT architectures, but also carries a cost implication: improvements will be inefficient where technical support and maintenance
resource implications have not been correctly understood. This could, in the longer term, counteract business benefit/efficiencies if not properly planned for.

It is therefore important that explicit arrangements are put in place that guarantee that appropriate discipline will be consistently applied to the development of the organisation’s system architecture and IT infrastructure. Whilst this strategy and implementation plan provides a route map for investment over the coming four years, it cannot be expected that the requirements of the organisation will remain static over its lifetime. New business demands are likely to emerge that are not currently understood, or are driven by changes in policy or statutory frameworks. For this reason, this strategy incorporates the introduction of a **Technical Design Authority**. The role of this body will be to manage and agree any alterations that are proposed to the agreed implementation plan that supports this strategy.

It will govern and manage development of the Council’s systems and IT and ensure changes and improvements are compliant with not only necessary technical and security standards, but also Council strategy, i.e. rationalisation and integration of systems, reduction in support overheads etc. This will ensure that there is full collaboration and consultation on any significant proposal to amend the Council’s technology architecture (outside those improvements and activities already agreed as part of this strategy and implementation plan).

The terms of reference for the group are appended to this strategy (Appendix 2). The first task of this group will be to develop – in conjunction with departments – a ‘scheme of delegation’ that clarifies the practical scope of the board and define the level of change that needs to be referred to the board and that which can be dealt with locally. This will mitigate against the risk of unnecessary bureaucracy and business interruption.

**OPERATIONAL DELIVERY**

The core delivery plans for the Infrastructure and Transactions and Business Improvement divisions will incorporate activity required for the routine maintenance of the Council’s IT infrastructure and systems. This strategy and supporting implementation plan captures the activity over and above this core offer, relating to improvements outside those that are routinely expected. For each of these, a business case has been prepared to secure investment from earmarked reserves. This will enable the necessary resources to ensure timely and effective delivery to be made available.

Prioritisation and sequencing of the programme will be managed through Merton 2015 Board to ensure that it takes account of pan-organisation imperatives and priorities. Regular reports on progress and resource management will be submitted to the Merton 2015 Board, in addition to Corporate Services DMT.

A series of Service Level Agreements will sit alongside the strategy and set out agreed metrics and service standards to enable departments to assure and monitor delivery.

**BUSINESS CONTINUITY**
Business continuity will be assured through the deployment of four planned maintenance windows per year. These will allow crucial system and infrastructure updates and improvements to be made with minimum impact on service provision.

It will also be enhanced through the provision of suitable Wide Area Network (WAN) links to the designated Business Continuity centre; and we will ensure that connectivity to Business Critical systems is maintained in the event that we were no longer able to occupy the Civic Centre.

We will continue to ensure that the remote access infrastructure is available with diverse internet routes.

Business continuity plans will be routinely reviewed and tested.

**DISASTER RECOVERY**

The Council’s IT infrastructure and business systems underpin many of the Council’s critical activities. In the event that an incident occurred that interrupted the availability of IT and systems – for example a fire, or borough emergency that affected the Civic Centre – it would be essential that systems were restored as quickly as possible. This is particularly true given the potential for some systems to support civic recovery.

In order to ensure this is the case, we will complete Phase 1 Disaster Recovery arrangements, which include the identification of the Council’s core business critical IT systems and the relocation of hardware to the new Disaster Recovery facility located at London Borough of Wandsworth. We will also review departmental IT Disaster Recovery plans and provide some critical challenge to ensure that they are robust and fit for purpose.

Utilising agreed planned maintenance periods we will undertake regular testing of Disaster Recovery arrangements including operational infrastructure, hardware and emergency backup systems to ensure that they are fully operational.

We will develop phase 2 Disaster Recovery arrangements including the procurement of new Active/Active Storage Area Network equipment (SAN) and install the new infrastructure and equipment at the Civic centre and Wandsworth sites.

Finally, we will properly map and document the new Disaster Recovery processes and produce an operational maintenance manual.

All of these activities – along with timescales – are included in the Implementation Plan that supports this strategy.
APPENDICES:
1. Implementation plan
2. Technical Design Authority terms of reference

RELATED DOCUMENTS
Information Technology (IT) Policy (November 2013)
Social Media Protocol
Information Strategy
Authors
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Mark Humphries, AD Infrastructure & Transactions
Richard Warren, Head of IT Services
Clive Cooke, Head of IT Systems

Version
3.0 Final

Date Issued
June 2014

Document Status
Approved by M2015

Revision History

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<th>Version</th>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>v1</td>
<td>Original draft</td>
<td>23 April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1.1</td>
<td>First draft incorporating TOM feedback</td>
<td>5 Nov 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1.2</td>
<td>Second draft incorporating second wave of TOM analysis</td>
<td>04 Feb 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1.3</td>
<td>Draft incorporating MH additions on DR and BC</td>
<td>06.02.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>V2.0</td>
<td>Incorporating revisions raised by CS DMT</td>
<td>20.02.14</td>
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<td>Incorporating revisions raised by M2015</td>
<td>13.03.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>V2.2</td>
<td>Incorporating revisions from consultation</td>
<td>04.06.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3.0</td>
<td>Final signed off by M2015 at June meeting</td>
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</table>
Appendix 1: IT Strategy Implementation Plan
See separate spreadsheet
Appendix 2: LB Merton Technical Design Authority (TDA)

Terms of Reference

Establishment
When: July 2014
By authority of: Corporate Management Team, London Borough of Merton
For period: Review effectiveness and terms of reference in July 2015

Purpose
- To govern and manage the IT systems architecture and IT infrastructure for the London Borough of Merton and supporting policies and standards.
- To agree and manage changes to the IT Strategy implementation plan (incorporating changes and development of the systems architecture and IT infrastructure) for the Council such that it complies with the Council’s strategic objectives, relevant legislation, appropriate quality standards and good practice.
- To oversee changes to, and development of, the systems architecture and IT infrastructure for the Council set out within the IT Strategy and implementation plan in order to ensure that these are well managed and meet agreed business objectives.
- Implement and maintain a scheme of delegation that allows for effective and timely decisions on changes to the IT Strategy and implementation plan at a level proportionate to their significance and impact.

Outline of functions
The overarching objective of the TDA is to ensure that the appropriate level of discipline and control is applied to changes or improvements to the Council’s IT infrastructure and systems. The ultimate aim is to enhance IT performance and flexibility and ensure the Council’s technology is fit for purpose and that the likelihood and predictability of success is increased, whilst the likelihood and cost of non-conformance is decreased.

This is to be achieved by ensuring that all proposed significant changes are approved by the TDA prior to funding being allocated or implementation agreed.

This extends to technical aspects of wider transformation and improvement projects and programmes commissioned across the Council. Significant is defined as
- Any new system, module or service
- Any major upgrade to current infrastructure
- Any major system upgrades, enhancements or configuration

Its scope would not extend to routine maintenance and upgrades, nor any activity already agreed as part of the IT Strategy and implementation plan.

The TDA will need to operate in a way that the assurance does not introduce unnecessary and unwelcome bureaucracy to businesses, nor be perceived as a ‘blockage’ in achieving change and improvement. It will do this by working closely with the Programme Offices and businesses to ensure that it is engaged at appropriate gateways in the project/programme cycle and provides advice, guidance and support to projects, programmes and services to enable business benefits to be secured through well managed and disciplined technical improvements.
In considering proposed amendments and alterations to the systems architecture and infrastructure, the TDA will consider:

- Selection and design of technology for systems development/maintenance and production operations
- The alignment of proposals with the Council’s strategic direction – incorporating the IT and Information Strategies – and corresponding enterprise architecture principles, architectures and roadmaps.
- Guidance and advice on leading practices, industry standards and conventions and frameworks and methods.
- Technical risks and mitigation strategies.
- Integration with existing systems and infrastructure so that the overall solution meets a combined set of user requirements.
- Impacts on existing infrastructure capacity and systems.
- Software licensing impacts (where relevant).
- Data integrity and quality and, specifically, alignment with agreed master datasets.
- Future support requirements and the capacity of the Council to respond to these.
- Feasibility – in relation to costs, resources, impacts and business benefits.
- Design – that it meets technical goals in relation to compatibility, usability, security, reliability, maintainability, reusability, supportability and recoverability in operations.
- Implementation – that appropriate plans are in place to increase the likelihood of success, e.g. project/programme management that complies with MAP, user testing etc.
- Ability to meet business continuity and disaster recovery arrangements of the Council.

The TDA will also regularly review the appropriate Council’s policies and standards to ensure they are fit for purpose.

**Accountability**

The TDA will report to the Merton 2015 Board quarterly on all decisions. In addition, the TDA may escalate issues and risks to the Merton 2015 Board as required.

The TDA will work in conjunction with the other established change control mechanisms within the organisation as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance body</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Relationship to TDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Management Teams (DMT)</td>
<td>Business leadership and management; agree, prioritise and resource transformational activity.</td>
<td>Refer requests/proposals for significant system/IT changes to the TDA for advice prior to approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management Teams (SMT)</td>
<td>Manage discrete business functions, propose, prioritise and manage transformational activity</td>
<td>Consult the TDA on proposals for significant system/IT changes for advice prior to approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merton 2015</td>
<td>Oversees cross cutting transformation and secures assurance on</td>
<td>Refer requests/proposals for significant system/IT changes to the TDA for advice prior to approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance body</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Relationship to TDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Programme Board</td>
<td>Oversees, determines and directs activity (projects and programmes) undertaken as part of the Council’s Capital programme.</td>
<td>Refer requests/proposals for significant system/IT changes to the TDA for advice prior to approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carefirst Programme Board</td>
<td>Oversees and directs significant change to the Carefirst System, ensuring this is driven by and takes full account of business need.</td>
<td>Significant improvements to be referred to the TDA for consultation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults and Children’s Departmental Information Groups</td>
<td>Manages and controls change to the Carefirst system at the operational level, ensuring this is driven by and takes full account of business need.</td>
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</table>

![Diagram](image-url)
Membership

Standing Members (the administrative core):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post/postholder</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of Corporate Services</td>
<td>Chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions</td>
<td>Ensure proposals align with strategic direction of the organisation in relation to IT Infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director of Business Improvement</td>
<td>Ensure proposals align with strategic direction of the organisation in relation to transformation and change and IT systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of IT Service Delivery</td>
<td>Ensure proposals align with IT strategy in relation to operational management of IT Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of IT Systems</td>
<td>Ensure proposals align with IT strategy in relation to operational management of IT Systems Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Programme Office</td>
<td>Ensure proposals align with transformational portfolio and Merton’s Approach to Projects (MAP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business partners</td>
<td>Ensure business interests are represented in all technical decisions and that organisation-wide prioritisation of proposals takes place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the TDA will include additional members as required on the basis of areas of expertise and responsibility in relation to the proposals being considered:

- Managers from within Infrastructure and Transactions and Business Improvement divisions with detailed expertise
- Head of Information Governance
- Business leads with detailed expertise
- Web Information Manager

Frequency

Scheduled quarterly meetings for routine agenda items and non-urgent requests, along with reactive meetings to be held as required in order to respond in a timely manner to ‘urgent’ change and improvement requests that require a swifter response and cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting. In the case of such ‘urgent’ requests a meeting of the Board will be convened and a decision reached (subject to sufficient information being made available to the Board) **within seven (7) working days.**
Requests are to be submitted via eMail to the Programme Office (programmeoffice@merton.gov.uk). It is anticipated that requests will be referred via the Merton 2015 Board, the Programme Office (on behalf of individual programmes, projects and initiatives) and DMTs. DMTs will be requested to approve any proposals/requests arising from their department prior to submission to the TDA.

**Working methods**

The Programme Office will organise and service all TDA meetings. This will include scheduling meetings and circulation of documentation; maintaining an online document library; keeping a decision log and contextual minutes of all meetings; and monitoring actions arising from the meeting, including escalating issues/out of date actions to Merton 2015 Board as required.

Each meeting will adopt the following broad format:

- A representative from the relevant business area – preferably the owner of the proposed initiative/project – will present their proposal, including any options appraisal undertaken, the anticipated business benefits, and the overarching plan.
- Board members will ask questions and clarify the proposal as required.
- The Board will reach a decision on the proposal which may be to approve it to continue as currently set out; to approve it to continue subject to certain amendments or additions; to refer it for further development on the basis of guidance provided by the board; to reject the proposal altogether (clear reasons to be provided).
- The decision will be reached by consensus.

The TDA will always seek to reach a decision on any proposal through consensus and collaboration, looking to reach a conclusion that is in the best interests of the organisation as a whole as well as the service seeking to introduce change. In the event that such a decision cannot be reached then the TDA will escalate the decision to the Merton 2015 Board or CMT as appropriate, providing all necessary information to ensure a swift resolution can be achieved.