

## **Leicestershire County Council**

### **Response to the Cabinet Office Consultation On Transformational Government**

**1 February 2006**

#### **1. Summary**

The Transformation Government Strategy presents at high level an overall assessment of the current situation of Modern Government and its use of technology. It sets some reasonable objectives to the delivery of citizen- and business- centred, shared services. However, many of the recommendations of the report seem to apply particularly to central, rather than local, government.

#### **2. Detailed Response**

##### **Shared Services**

The document contains an ambitious vision for the future of public services which is long overdue. It is felt that local government is already ahead of central government in particular areas, such as the increased engagement of government with citizens and business to understand and then specify the transformational changes that service providers need to meet. In addition local government is already actively delivering shared services, but two-tier local government is often a barrier to the provision of shared services.

Over the last number of years, technology has helped put in place the transformational infrastructure to facilitate business change under the e-government initiative, and excellent progress has been made in Leicestershire in this respect. However, the transformational government programme should now increase the emphasis on considering the business objectives and requirements for transformation (at all levels – central and local), and in relation to this, the information content and its management.

Shared services or efficiency cannot be achieved unless the information - as well as the technology - are able to integrate. Also, long terms benefits for the customer will not be achieved unless sustainable management solutions are found for long term management of the information.

In particular, the approach to management of information should be given careful consideration. Shared Services by definition means sharing of information. The culture and attitude to sharing information at the front line - and in local government generally - is heavily influenced by the Governments approach to sharing information. A key question is whether a culture of shared information is to be promoted, and if so, what information exchange model is to be constructed. Trading fund status for any one agency can instill a sense of closure and mistrust, which does not help to promote a shared services culture. Under this, the promotion of shared standards is important. Standards must be seen in a clear business context. Transformational Government presents a clear opportunity to develop this philosophy, and the culture of careful management of information should be integrated throughout the programme, and promoted as a discipline.

One particular area where clarity from central government is required is the Single Non Emergency Number.

### **Engagement**

In addition it was also felt that government has not engaged effectively with local government on e-government issues; the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, not local government, had set the priorities for delivering e-enabled local authority services.

### **Customer Service**

In response to the point that government should appoint “customer directors” for customers in each of the high level customer groups, the County Council believes that the organisation responsible for delivering the front-line services should be responsible for customer service, thus utilising those with existing responsibility rather than creating new roles.

### **Identify Management**

There is agreement with the recommendation in the Strategy that government should devise a holistic approach towards identity management, in order that people can be identified accurately. Local government in particular provides many services where accurate identification is a prerequisite to receipt of that service. However, it was felt that mention of biometrics and ID cards was going too far at this stage.

### **Market Capacity**

The report states that the CIO Council, working with the Office of Government Commerce, should monitor supplier intelligence, taking action to ensure capacity and competition in the market – it is not clear how this would work in practice.

### **Skills Capacity**

The expectation is also that the government CIO should lead work to establish and support the IT profession in government, building capacity, culture, and identity. While this is applicable to local government, it was felt that the focus was mainly on central government.

In regard to developing professional skills, the CIO should engage the NCC, BCS and SOCITM. Also, the focus should also be on the range of professional disciplines across the information skills base. This includes IT, business analysis, information management and change management. Information management does not have strong professional representation at present, and this is a serious impediment to the development of shared services, and should be redressed.

Will local government be engaged and encouraged to build capacity when local government ICT and information management is typically underfunded?

### **Reporting and Expenditure**

The report states that annual expenditure and achievement against plans should be reported on by the Cabinet Office and the Treasury – would this mean in practice that local government would report via an intermediary, such as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Also, more clarity is required on whether the £1.4 billion is new money, and how it is intended to deploy the money.

### **Areas for Development**

The strategy should place greater emphasis on the role of information (alongside technology) in transforming services. Also, the strategy should highlight important areas for development, including, the role of business analysis within an organisation and between organisations where shared services are required; identification of where information needs to be shared for business purposes, and the roles,

responsibilities and barriers to achieving this (which are not just limited to technology); and standards for the management and exchange of information, not just technology.

### **Responsibilities and Governance**

There should be a clearer allocation of responsibilities and governance for the national development of information management standards in the public sector, to ensure they are joined up across different information disciplines, for example records management and geographical information. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on the Data Protection Act as a framework for sharing personal information.

### **3. Contributors**

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