

## **Transformational Government – Enabled by Technology**

### Response from the South Yorkshire e-Forum

The South Yorkshire e-Forum welcomes this strategy and the three key transformations identified within it:

- services designed around the citizen or business
- the efficient, joined-up deliver of services
- government's professionalism in terms of the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of ITenabled change.

We believe as a sub-region that we are well placed to support the delivery of this strategy as:

1. Local service providers are ideally placed, as the major providers of public services to citizens and communities, to ensure that those services are designed to meet the needs of the people they serve.
2. South Yorkshire has a recognised position as a leader in the provision of joined up services, through partnership across the public sector and with the private and voluntary sectors.
3. The innovative use of IT to support radical change and new means of accessing services is exemplified by the South Yorkshire Broadband Project and e@SYConnects TV.

Paragraph 4 states"Technology alone does not transform government, but government cannot transform to meet modern citizens' expectations without it". The implementing electronic government work undertaken by councils has made a difference but the true impact, for citizens and in efficiency terms, will only come with a concerted push to increase take-up. The recognition that e-Government to date has, and cannot, deliver the full benefits of electronic service delivery without transformational change moves the agenda on but the real test for this strategy will be the ability to translate it into an action plan which will drive through that change.

There are encouraging signs that the words will be backed up by meaningful actions:

- The establishment of 'Customer Group Directors', to ensure the strategy is delivered, demonstrates the desire within Government for both thinking and action to be refocused around the individual and collective needs of citizens and businesses. It is not clear, however, how this will engage

and support joining up at the local level. Importantly paragraph 23 refers to the 'devolution of delivery'. **The South Yorkshire e-Forum would welcome the opportunity to be involved in this process**, through representation on one of the Customer Group Teams or some other method if felt appropriate.

- The creation of the Service Transformation Board will provide the high level leadership required to drive this agenda forward, though again it is not clear how this will play into the local delivery arena.
- The push to rationalise and innovate in the use of modern access channels, an area where South Yorkshire already has acknowledged experience.
- The announcement of 'a new Ministerial focus' on data sharing is welcomed and required. This has become a vexed issue providing a barrier to joined-up services for many years. It is an issue which crosses all government departments and needs central leadership, possibly from the Cabinet Office.
- The opportunities provided by standardisation around common infrastructure, data sharing, information management and technology standards and the criticality of Government Connect and other core infrastructure projects to ensuring the strategy is deliverable at national and local level. In South Yorkshire we recognise that leadership from the centre is key to the success of these projects, as well as the overall strategy.

Equally there are areas within the strategy that we would fully support but are keen to understand the implications, opportunities and benefits at the local level when plans are more fully developed, such as portfolio management, IT professionalism and supplier management.

Other essentials in the forward planning and implementation process are:

- to ensure that initiatives such as the Single Non Emergency Number are handled in a clear and co-ordinated way with local government and other key agencies having a say in the practicality of proposals.
- Local government is on the front line of service delivery and needs to be engaged in a joined-up way, rather than suffering from a plethora of separate initiatives. The use of Local Area Agreement principles would provide a good starting point to enable this.

### **3. Summary**

The South Yorkshire e-Forum fully supports this strategy and the direction it provides in moving the e-Government agenda to a citizen focussed, joined-up, efficient and professional transformation of public service delivery. We believe that our own strategy and many of our current projects and initiatives fully

support the strategy but will be looking to build on this foundation through our response to Transformational Government and the Digital Challenge.

The paper provides an insight into the actions being put in place to deliver the strategy, but these are largely top down currently with limited emphasis on the role and value of local service delivery. How citizens will be engaged in determining future models of service provision, and how the strategy will enable and support transformation, through radical organisational change, taking place at the local level are issues that we will take great interest in as plans for implementation are further developed. Indeed we are willing to assist in determining the way forward in these key areas e.g. by representation on a Customer Group Team, if this would be of value.

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