

Report

Report to:	Risk and Audit Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	13 June 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Audit Scotland Report on Principles for a Digital Future (Lessons Learned from Public Sector ICT Projects): Considerations for South Lanarkshire Council
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Forum with the recommendations on the Audit Scotland report on Principles for a Digital Future (Lessons learned from public sector ICT projects) (Appendix 1); and
- ◆ Detail some learnings for South Lanarkshire Council which can be incorporated into future ICT programmes

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Risk and Audit Scrutiny Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) Note the Audit Scotland report and learnings for South Lanarkshire Council

3. Background

3.1. Many improvement programmes within South Lanarkshire Council depend on the delivery of new IT technology to deliver required business outcomes. The Internal Technology service plan for 2017/18 includes over 80 IT projects, ranging from large cross-council programmes to smaller scale upgrades

3.2. To ensure that these projects deliver on time and with the desired business outcomes, it is important that best project management practices are followed. This includes constantly improving IT processes and learning lessons from projects across the public sector.

3.3. The Council's IT uses a variant of the Prince2 project management methodology which is considered as the gold standard across the UK public sector. This provides the framework for all IT change processes, including business analysis, business case development, project prioritisation, planning and scheduling, stakeholder management, software development, risk and issue management, testing and handover to production. These are overseen by governance processes including steering groups, project review boards for specific projects and Resource Management Teams (RMT), the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Programme Board and Corporate Management Team (CMT) for overall programme of work.

- 3.4. Each of these processes remains under review to ensure that ICT team continues to deliver an effective and efficient service to the Council
- 3.5. Audit Scotland published a report in May 2017, Principles for a Digital Future - Lessons Learned from public sector ICT projects which highlighted common themes identified from previous audits into public sector ICT projects, including NHS24, Police Scotland i6 and Common Agricultural Policy Futures Programme, all of which encountered major difficulties.
- 3.6. This report has been reviewed by the Council's – IT service to identify learnings for South Lanarkshire Council, and how these might be applied.
- 3.7. The report is structured into 5 high level principles for success, each of these will be considered in turn

4. Audit Scotland Report – Principle for Success 1 – Comprehensive Planning

4.1. Key learnings for the Council are:

- 4.1.1. The report states that “It is fundamental at the start of projects to understand the need and clearly define the benefits that you want”.
- 4.1.2. Although this appears to be an obvious statement, very often at the outset of a project different stakeholders have different views on what the objectives are and what they hope to achieve. As part of the Council's IT project initiation process, the scope and objectives are documented and approved by the relevant body (e.g. project review board). It is also important that, during the lifecycle of the project, changes are controlled.
- 4.1.3. On a related point, the anticipated benefits need to be realistic and an owner for those benefits requires to be assigned. Normally, it is the requesting organisation/customer who actually realise the benefits arising from the project, and not IT.
- 4.1.4. The report advises that public sector organisations are complex, and IT projects must take heed of this. If they do not, then there is a risk of project delays and failure.
- 4.1.5. Within the Council, this risk is mitigated at all stages of an IT project by assigning a dedicated project manager who involves all stakeholders to build the initial project plan, and then to closely manage the execution of that plan. Key to this is engagement with non-IT resources who may have limited availability to work on project tasks.
- 4.1.6. The report also highlights the necessity to identify any skills and capacity gaps at an early stage in a project. This is done to a certain extent, however, this can be a challenge as technical resources are rarely dedicated to a project and have many other duties (e.g. other projects, support tasks) which can result in delays. IT are investigating various tools to assist in scheduling of staff to give better visibility of availability.

5. Audit Scotland Report – Principle for Success 2 – Active Governance

5.1. Key learning for the Council is:

- 5.1.1. The report states that “An active and well thought-through governance framework...can really add value to a project”. Within the Councils, the governance of IT projects varies depending upon the size and importance, however, the intent of this principle is largely met and embedded.
- 5.1.2. One of the main challenges of a central ICT function is to manage competing priorities across multiple customers. A change for 2018/19 is that the ICT Programme Board (which is made up of senior representatives from each Resource) is included in the decision making and prioritisation process to ensure that IT resources are applied to areas of maximum value to the Council. This involvement will take the form of scrutinising the proposed project portfolio for 2018/19 prior to formal approval by CMT.
- 5.1.3. One other area of improvement that will be delivered in this area is to further raise awareness of Project Review Boards (PRBs), and customers in general, of some key aspects of the IT project management process. This will help with areas such as developing realistic project plans, understanding risks and effective management of issues, all of which are essential to successful project delivery

6. Audit Scotland Report – Principle for Success 3 – Put Users at the Heart of the Project

6.1. Key learnings for South Lanarkshire Council are:

- 6.1.1. The report states that all users should be identified and their needs understood. The Council’s IT is structured along a Demand and Supply organisational model. This is to provide a clear “line of sight” for all IT services, including projects. In practice, this means all IT projects, including internal upgrades/refreshes, have a customer. Working with the customer, all stakeholders, including users, are identified and their needs incorporated into project objectives and plans. For citizen facing services (e.g. web forms), the citizen panel, co-ordinated by the Digital team in Communications and Public Affairs, is engaged. To address user training requirements, IT work in conjunction with Training and Development to assess training needs, develop training materials and deliver the training.
- 6.1.2. Putting users, especially citizens, at the heart of projects is becoming more important as we digitally transform services. Citizen-centric applications, such as a customer portal, to access personalised services on the Council’s web-site (or an app) will become commonplace in the coming years.
- 6.1.3. There are a couple of challenges to implement this principle. A distinction requires to be made between user “needs” and “wants” as implementing an IT solution for the latter may be significantly more expensive. Also, there may be resistance from users to adopt standard solutions which are typically cheaper. Finally, users may have different, and even conflicting, requirements which require to be resolved at the appropriate level (e.g. PRB)

7. Audit Scotland Report – Principle for Success 4 – Clear Leadership that sets the tone and culture and provides accountability

7.1. Key learnings for South Lanarkshire Council are:

- 7.1.1. The report states that all senior leaders across the organisation should show a clear commitment to the project, and need to demonstrate drive to keep the project moving forward.

7.1.2. For the Council, the governance structures in place via steering groups, project review boards, CMT and, ultimately committees, ensure that projects move forward. These structures will be leveraged in future to improve on-time performance of projects by removing obstacles and empowering project teams to deliver required outcomes

8. Audit Scotland Report – Principle for Success 5 – Individual Projects set in a central framework of strategic oversight and assurance

8.1. Key learnings for South Lanarkshire Council are:

8.1.1. The report states that projects are not done in isolation, there is a wealth of knowledge on how to successfully deliver the benefits.

8.1.2. As previously mentioned, the Council's IT Service is organised on a Demand and Supply Model. This is to help ensure that there is a valid business context for all projects. In addition to this, all IT projects must align with the Council's Digital ICT Strategy 2017-2020. This strategy, which is closely aligned to 'Connect', the Council Plan, promotes cross-council solutions taking advantage of new technologies.

8.1.3. The Council also engages with many external organisations, including the Local Government Digital Transformation Partnership, the Lanarkshire Data Sharing Partnership and SOCITM, the Society of IT Managers. This not only provides benefits in shared project delivery, but also in networking and sharing of best IT and digital practices.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The Council's IT service is aware and has implemented the 5 principles noted in the Audit Scotland report. However, the findings within the report provide good inputs to the Council as it continuously improves its project management and governance processes.

10. Employee Implications

10.1. There are none associated with this report.

11. Financial Implications

11.1. There are none associated with this report

12. Other Implications

12.1. There are no implications associated with this report.

13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

13.1. There is no requirement for Equality Impact Assessments

13.2 Consultation with Resources on the Council's IT service provision and project delivery is via ICT Programme Board

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

25 April 2018

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- All council objectives

Previous References

- None

List of Background Papers

- Link to SLC Digital ICT Strategy 2017-2020
http://intranet.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/20581/delivering_a_digital_council/232/delivering_a_digital_council
- Link to Audit Scotland report on “Principles for a Digital Future - Lessons learned from public sector ICT projects”
http://audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2017/briefing_170511_digital_future.pdf

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Brian Teaz, Head of IT Services
Ext: 5648 (Tel: 01698 455648)
E-mail: brian.teaz@southlanarkshire.gov.uk