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Local CIO Council

Planting the Flag:
a strategy for ICT-enabled local public services reform

Executive summary

May 2011

Planting the Flag is a Local CIO Council initiative led by Socitm's Futures group. It sets out how technology can enable public service reform across the whole range of local services and deliver significant savings and better outcomes for people where they live and work. It assumes commitment to the sort of value-driven, cost reducing, organisational change that we advocate.

Planting the Flag is primarily a guide for chief executives, elected members, and senior management teams in local public services. A more detailed version is available for CIOs/Heads of ICT, ICT specialists, and the private sector.

Planting the Flag is the result of open and wide consultation across the public, private, and civil society sectors, including central government colleagues and the ICT industry. It builds on work done by LG Group, SOLACE, CIPFA, and others on the future of public services. Most crucially, it offers a local dimension to the recently published national *Government ICT Strategy*.

Above all, it is a 'call to arms'. The next phase, *Planning the Route*, will involve developing detailed action plans with cross-sectoral support. This will be facilitated by Socitm's regional groups working alongside local partners.

A strategy for ICT-enabled reform

Planting the Flag embraces the full scope of local public services through the lens of local government – the constitutional source of local democratic participation and leadership.

There has never been a strategy of this kind to guide the deployment of ICT to modernise the delivery of services across the local public sector. In this first phase of the strategy, we 'stake out the territory' for ICT as an enabler of change and a key ingredient for better public service outcomes and major savings.

Implementation of public service reform at a local level must take account of local circumstances – demographics, previous investment and geography. Successive governments have mistakenly assumed that 'one size fits all' for local public services, and this has led to rigid, large-scale technology-led programmes driven from Whitehall that have struggled to deliver value.

Planting the Flag offers an alternative approach – one which assumes national standards and policies, but which allows local choice and pragmatic implementation, supported by relevant guidance. It builds on local public services' cost effective and innovative deployment of ICT, but also acknowledges that economies of scale and scope are essential for efficiency and sustainability.

Planting the Flag addresses local authorities, emergency services, health, education and civil society organisations. It assumes that services must be delivered through unprecedented collaboration across agencies, with businesses, with communities and with citizens. It draws on the strong body of evidence Socitm has gathered to show how ICT can enable collaboration, innovation and re-design of service delivery.

Crucially, *Planting the Flag* sets out how local public services can derive **significantly more value from ICT**, but also how they can **reduce the cost of ICT**. Our focus is less on technology and more on specific principles about the 'what and how' of organisational change – in particular, how to get rid of the unhelpful, technology-led cultures and practices that all too frequently have accompanied ICT procurement, deployment and management in the past.

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Three core principles

We set out three core principles for reform of local public services - collaborate, redesign and innovate:

Collaborate, share and re-use assets: Local public service organisations should join-up service delivery strategies and support them with collaboratively developed, ICT-enabled, delivery processes and communications functions. They should jointly commission ICT and other infrastructure and services, pool budgets, share staff, and measure, capture and share benefits and savings.

Redesign services to simplify, standardise and automate: Services needed to deliver priority local public service outcomes should be re-designed and ICT-enabled, using open and reusable standards to meet aspirations for 'anytime, anywhere, any device' access. The outcomes that service users value will be delivered by people, performing processes, with information, underpinned and enabled through technology.

Only when all four elements are considered together, through formal change management, will 'change' deliver value to our citizens and their public service organisations. Services, whether internal or external, should be designed as 'digital by default'. Action should be taken to improve significantly the ICT, change, and information management skills of all managers, staff and service users.

Innovate to empower citizens and communities: Social and digital inclusion should be built by shifting ownership and use of information and technology towards the service user. Service users, SMEs and the technology sector should be engaged in service design and delivery, and resources, information and skills should be used in the community to build local systems and services. Local public service organisations should act quickly and not be afraid to take considered and controlled risks.

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Six strategic capabilities

Our research identifies six strategic capabilities that need to be in place if ICT-enabled local public services reform is to be achieved in any given locality:

Leadership: Strong leadership will be needed to realise change. Politicians, managers, staff and citizens will need to be engaged and energised to address the problem of fragmented services and the legacy of paternalistic approaches. CIOs have a key role to play in building collaboration and delivering redesigned services.

Governance: Provisioning of technology to support reformed local public service should be governed and managed at a regional or sub-regional level. Formal governance processes and structures, including organisational change programme boards and project boards will be required to enable joined-up technology strategies, architectures and plans for delivery. Proper accountability and separation of policy, implementation and audit will be essential.

Organisational change: Currently services are duplicated, misaligned, and configured around the convenience of organisations. They may be housed in multiple tiers of government, or fragmented across other providers. Specific, organisational change management capability is required to implement new ICT-enabled, service-led operating models that cross traditional organisation boundaries and are focused on the needs of service users and their communities.

Strategic commissioning and supplier management: A joined-up approach to specification and commissioning of services (ICT or otherwise) will deliver increased value through aggregation and rationalisation, and a focus on outcomes. Managing risk and innovation can then be based on the needs of the citizen. Reuse of existing contracts can be maximized and input-based specifications and single organisation tenders reduced.

Shared services: ICT infrastructure (e.g. public sector networks and data centres) and associated services should be aggregated and managed by fewer organisations. Senior professionals managing and running ICT infrastructure and support desks, and technical specialists should be shared. ICT should be put in place to enable organisational change, information sharing and integration, and the joint communications and systems required for shared local public services.

Professionalism: Capability for leading and managing ICT-enabled reform and efficiency needs to be further developed. Without it, local public service leaders and managers will continue to undervalue the role of information and technology. Organisational change, information, technology and digital professionals should be accessing the same sort of accreditation schemes as legal and finance professionals do, so that organisations can be confident their skills and capabilities are fit for purpose now and in the future. [5]

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Six key issues around information and technology

Effective information management and deployment of technology within a context of fundamental organisational change are key to redesigning local public services so that they deliver better for less. There are six key issues:

Information governance: Efficient, effective, local public services depend on fast, secure access by authorised personnel to 'a single version of the truth' about people, assets, finance, service usage and performance. This requires changes to current practice in information governance, architecture and responsibilities that span local public services.

Information management, assurance and transparency: Most managers do not recognise the value of information or appreciate the importance of its quality. Failure to share and a tendency to duplicate information across local public services are endemic. There is no common, local public services security framework. Release of 'public' information (i.e. information without privacy or state security issues) is not routine. All of these issues need to be addressed with new, shared, information management policy and practice across local public services.

Digital access and inclusion: Processes and information systems should be designed assuming digital access 'by default' for citizens and employees. Local public service organisations should publish data to open standards to allow third parties, including local technology companies and community groups to use it to deliver applications and services.. Strategies and policies for exploiting social media and networking tools should be developed to support citizen engagement and service delivery. Digital literacy programmes should be joined-up across "place" and offered to both employees and citizens.

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Local public services infrastructure: Local public service organisations should converge parts of their ICT functions over time. Routemaps, supported by action plans, should be developed at a regional or sub-regional level, and wherever possible across local public services, for moving towards shared ICT infrastructure, contracts and support arrangements. This process should start with converged public sector networks, the rationalisation and sharing of data centres and other foundation infrastructure services. Technologies should be implemented to allow staff to work securely anytime, anyplace, anywhere and from most devices - including personally owned consumer devices. This would enable substantial reductions in property costs, support localised and community-based working, and improve productivity and work-life balance for employees. Sustainability and green outcomes should underpin all decisions. Business processes should be standardised and interoperable to minimise system implementation and maintenance costs. Routine processes should be automated and paper ones removed. Information systems should work to open and agreed standards and their specification should enable internal and external interoperability.

Business change: Information and technology are necessary, but not sufficient, for the scale of change required of local public services. Organisational change will need to be systemic, addressing people, process, information and technology and be delivered across organisational boundaries. Strategies and policies should be developed for designing and implementing new operating models cross local public services, that are sensitive to local circumstances and co-produced with partners and service users. New approaches to risk and value management and to multi-partner change governance should be explored and best practice shared.

ICT polices of central government departments: Efficiency of local public services is impacted by ICT policy, decision-making and practice by central government departments. We would like to see common information assurance approaches and standards, especially around health services. Mandating all public service organisations to move to the proposed Public Sector Network would usefully standardise networks and services. A single identity management and verification standard for employees and citizens to access all government services (excluding the highest levels) would also help, as would the application of appropriate levels of information assurance management for local public services delivery, based on associated threats or risks.

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Planning the Route

Planting the Flag is a 'call to arms' from the Local CIO Council.*
The next phase of the strategy, *Planning the Route*, will involve
regional and sub-regional development of more detailed action plans.

These plans will be:

• facilitated by Socitm's regional groups working alongside local partners

• aligned with the recent Government ICT Strategy and equivalent strategies for
  the devolved administrations

• enabled by common information, security and technology standards,
  brokered by the Local CIO Council with partners (including the Local
  e-Government Standards Body) across local public services

• supported by Socitm through benchmarking, case studies and guidance

• documented on the Socitm website www.socitm.net

* The Local CIO Council was set up in 2008 at the invitation of the Government's Chief Information Officer. It represents
  the views and interests of local government to the main government CIO council run by the Cabinet Office

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This document has been prepared by Socitm
Futures on behalf of Socitm and the Local CIO
Council. The full version of *Planting the Flag*
can be downloaded from www.socitm.net

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