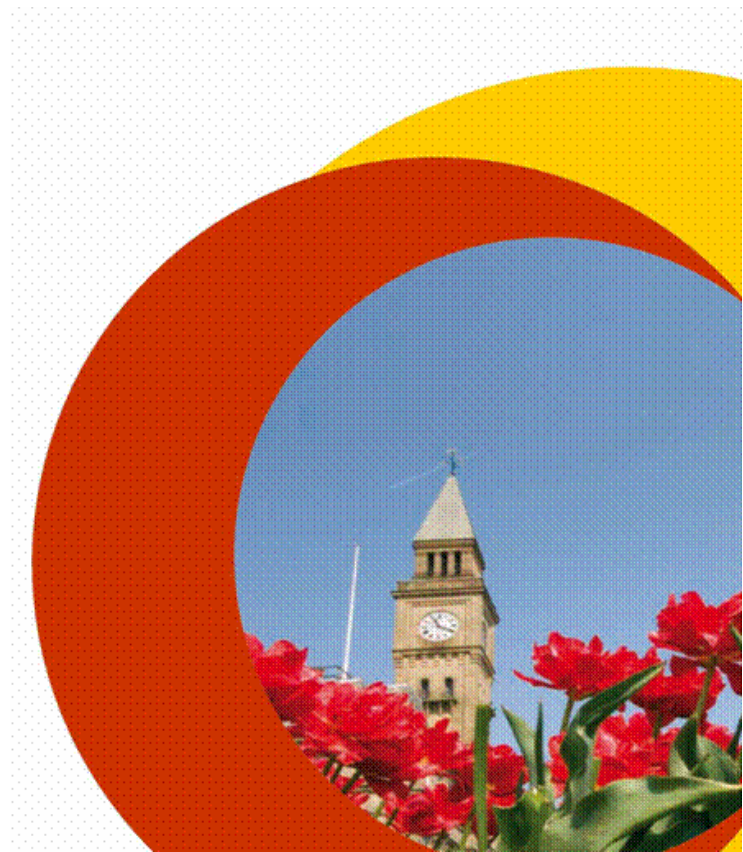**Appendix 1**

Chorley Council

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY 2006-2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

November 2006

Information & Communication Technology Strategy 2006 – 2009

Executive Summary

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Chorley
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1 FOREWORD

nformation and communication technology (ICT) is a critical element of modern service delivery. As the expectations of our customers increase, we recognise the key role technology will play in delivering the improvements in service quality and efficiency needed if we are to meet those expectations. Sustainable, high quality services do not simply stem from the visible customer interface or front office technology. They are a product of solid technological foundations and support services, effective, efficient business processes and well trained members of staff committed to excellent customer service. As a Council, we are working to deliver each piece of the customer service jigsaw and this document is an important contribution to that work.

We are rightly proud of the recent Customer Focus and Access Best Value Inspection, which assessed the Council as three stars with excellent prospects for improvement, the highest possible score. In reaching their score, the inspectors recognised that '*sophisticated technology and e-government initiatives provide high quality access and speedy response and deliver efficiency savings which are passed onto the customer in the form of improvements*'[1]. We welcome the external endorsement of our approach and the progress we have made but we recognise there is still much to do. This document aims to build upon the excellent foundations we have laid and further improve the service delivered to our customers in terms of quality and efficiency. Importantly, potential efficiencies resulting from the use of technology are not confined to the 'front office'. The Council is challenging business processes in the front office but also in the administrative heart of the organisation. A programme of work, dubbed the 'eWorkforce' programme, systematically reviewed areas of the 'back office' and contributed both significant cashable savings and on-going improvements in support service delivery. This demonstrates our commitment to using ICT as a means to both improve the 'customer experience' and the efficiency of the back-office that supports that 'experience'. This work was recognised in our recent *Use of Resources* audit, when the Audit Commission stated their view that '*the Council is making effective use of IT as a means of managing and improving Value For Money in its internal management processes, back office functions and frontline service delivery*'.[2]

Looking to the future, we note the publication of the Governments 'Transformational Government'[3] strategy paper and are delighted to see that the Council is already actively pursuing the three key transformations it describes;

- **Services….designed around the citizen or business**

- **a shared services culture**

- **professionalism in the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of IT enabled change**

This document refers to common ground shared with the Governments paper, but equally importantly it demonstrates clear links to our own local corporate objectives and through those, to the objectives of the communities we serve, embodied in the Community Strategy. In it, our citizens and businesses tell us they wish to see **improved access to public services**. We aim to deliver this through a greater understanding of our customers and their needs. We will both extend channel choice and eliminate the perceived barriers to their use.

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[1] Customer Focus and Access Best Value Inspection (Audit Commission, August 2005)

[2] Use of Resources Audit Feedback (Audit Commission, March 2006)

[3] Transformational Government – Enabled by Technology (Cabinet Office, November 2005)

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Importantly, we have recognised that to deliver real success, we must change the way we think and work. As an organisation we have anticipated the Gershon agenda. We have demonstrated a readiness to challenge the status quo in pursuance of the efficiencies that technology can deliver in the 'back office', whilst also examining the way we deliver services through the 'front office' to ensure we are delivering what is good for the customer rather than what is easy for the Council. Innovation is fundamental to transformation. Our vision is common to that detailed in the Government's Transformational Strategy which states *'..creating and retaining the capacity and capability to innovate and use technology effectively as technology itself develop....is the only way in which public services can keep up with a continually changing globalised society[2]'.* This Council will meet the challenge - a governance framework and project management methodology has been established to support effective investment decision making and subsequent implementation support that will maximise the capability and capacity of the organisation to adopt and use technology.

Central government shares our commitment to improving services through the application of technology. We have embraced the drive to enable the electronic delivery of services and met the 100% BVPI 157 target on schedule at the end of December 2005.

The next 3 years are likely to be as challenging as the last as we wrestle with the issues of the take-up of electronic services as well as extending their availability. I am confident we will meet those challenges and deliver the improved efficiency and service quality our customers deserve and we aspire to.

Councillor Alan Cullens

Executive Member for Resources

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002 Executive Cabinet approved the predecessor to this document. The years that followed saw the Council embark on a period of unprecedented change in technology terms. The One-Stop-Shop and Contact Centre were implemented, supported by a state of the art fibre-optic network. Document Management and extensive on-line facilities were introduced and, key to success, the way the Council worked was re-engineered. A Council-wide programme of training using the internationally recognised European Computer Driving Licence was used to develop the skills required by staff working in the new environment. The combination of the technological potential offered by the infrastructure and systems, and the increased level of ICT skill enabled the 'root and branch' review of key business processes. Against this backdrop of significant change, the Council surpassed efficiency targets whilst improving services to customers.

This strategy builds upon those firm foundations and continues the drive to improve the accessibility, efficiency and quality of our services. It documents our plans and objectives for the development, delivery and support of ICT with a clear corporate focus, reflecting the aspirations articulated in the Council's Corporate Strategy. It is recognised however, that the Council operates in a dynamic environment, in political, organisational and technological terms, and this strategy and its provisions must remain under continual review to ensure it always reflects the needs of the Council.

It is important to recognise that the document is business driven and has clear links to a number of strategies;

o The Community Strategy 2005-2025

o The Corporate Plan

o The eGovernment Strategy

o The Integration Strategy

o The GIS Strategy

o The Customer Focussed Access and Service Design Strategy

The provisions of the strategy contribute significantly to the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives through ICT workstreams or by supporting the work of other Directorates.

The strategy details a strong current position in technology terms and in articulating our aspirations recognises the need to maintain firm infrastructure foundations and a focused support team, motivated to deliver high quality services. Barriers to achieving our goals are acknowledged and measures to overcome them detailed in the tasks and targets section of the document. We recognise the importance of stimulating take-up and the associated security identity management issues this brings. The clear requirement to improve efficiency is a challenge as we strive to do more with less but by positioning ICT at the centre of the agenda, it is also a clear opportunity.

Although the objectives of the current strategy have been reviewed, the basic principles remain valid and, following an update, are included in the document.

Information & Communication Technology Strategy 2006 – 2009

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The core of the strategy details key objectives for the Directorate and the organisation. In the case of the latter, the contribution offered by ICT is explained. Each objective is explained in terms of a key goal and associated SMART targets. Many of the goals came as a result of workshops held to gain an understanding of the needs of other Directorates and ensure the strategy is business focused.

The support of key corporate project such as the disengagement of the Housing service, 'Contact Chorley (the Shared Services Contact Centre) and the numerous service improvement/efficiency projects that Directorates represent priorities that are in addition to the projects that centre upon the development and maintenance of an infrastructure and services that are capable of underpinning the changing organisation as we go forward. The strategy also details internally led projects that could offer real efficiencies. Thin client technology may offer a 'lower cost of ownership' alternative to our existing PC population. The review of our telephony contract to ensure the currently outsourced service still offers the best value for money when compared with an internally delivered service.

The importance of a robust support service is not overlooked. The strategy details plans to put in place a user group that will enable the Directorate to maintain an effective dialogue with our customers allowing us to maintain an understanding of their issues and work with them to deliver their priorities. We are to develop our self-service facilities, offering on-line advice to improve the quality and accessibility of the service we offer. Our success in achieving these goals will be monitored through regular staff surveys.