

ICT STRATEGY

APPROVED BY HHP BOARD:

EFFECTIVE DATE:
November 2024



hebridean housing
partnership

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Our Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy addresses the issues associated with identifying, providing and maintaining the technological infrastructure and applications that enable an organisation to fulfil its vision and goals.
- 1.2 This infrastructure supports the needs of our Business Plan and provides a platform for the implementation of our Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS).
- 1.3 This Strategy is also set against a continuing period of rapid change within the IT world. This is particularly evident post pandemic, where a number of trends and technologies have come to the fore. These impact the way that we continue to deliver, support and improve the infrastructure required in an efficient and value for money manner.
- 1.4 The trends most relevant to us currently are:
 - a) the move to products and applications on a subscription basis rather than one-off perpetual licensing, together with the reduction in support periods, and reduced product version support;
 - b) Virtual, cloud and edge computing, and cloud migration - where digital resources and information are put in a designated virtual location that can be rapidly scaled up and down to meet business needs, and can provide increased business resilience – however, with the potential for an increased reliance on a single supplier here, or on a single point of delivery;
 - c) Data and Analytics – the need for ‘better’ data - to process our information better, and to make business critical data more readily available, and presented in a way that assists with decision making. This is particularly relevant in relation to large datasets and the increasing power and availability of AI tools;
 - d) Automation – of processes to streamline and speed up critical business functions, also supporting the idea of a single point of data input;
 - e) Bandwidth and latency – with increasing amounts of data being collected, processed and moved around, the need for fast and effective network links becomes increasingly important. This also applies to mobile connectivity (4G and 5G) and also in the context of home working;

- f) Communications – with the switch off of 3G and landline networks planned for 2025, we need to continue to explore solutions to integrate and unify our telephony needs, as well as ensuring that our networks and connectivity will successfully underpin the needs of mobile working;
 - g) Cyber Security - With the growth of digital mediums and technology, the potential threats that people and organisations can face are rising. Cybersecurity measures have had to grow extensively over the past few years simply to stay in touch with the developing threats and risks.
- 1.5 The planning and developments carried out to date have left us well placed to meet these new challenges, but we need further work to ensure that we continue to meet business needs in a way that is resilient and secure, as well as relevant and affordable.
- 1.6 Our current ICT infrastructure was purchased in 2018/19, with headroom for growth and flexibility.
- 1.7 This was an innovative solution, where rather than our infrastructure being held locally in an HHP office, or held on 3rd party equipment, either in a datacentre or in the 'cloud', we run on our own equipment, but within a datacentre environment. Essentially, this is a private cloud.
- 1.8 This gave us the benefits of the setup, support and security of the datacentre, but also allowed us to control, manage and fix the associated licensing costs, as well as providing resilience and business continuity. This resulted in significant savings for the Partnership.
- 1.9 Potential downsides of this approach are that it is not easy to scale the resources available without significant costs. This can be overcome by planning and sizing appropriately from the outset.
- 1.10 The HHP infrastructure is currently located in a datacentre in Edinburgh and maintained and a third party support providers, both for the infrastructure itself and for various software systems.
- 1.11 Our current ICT support contract was awarded in October 2018, on a 4 + 2 + 2 year basis, and we have recently triggered the final two year extension of this contract.

- 1.12 Based on the hardware lifespan above, we will require to consider extended hardware support options or hardware replacement by early 2025.

STRATEGY OVERVIEW

- 2.1 It is proposed therefore that this current ICT strategy will principally focus on the following development areas:



DATA HOSTING

- 2.2 Data hosting relates to the provision of IT equipment - servers and resources, in a secure and stable and accessible environment. This platform then allows for the hosting of our critical software and data.
- 2.3 While there is no standard arrangement for a data hosting solution, developing one represents a significant commitment that requires dedicated, long-term planning, capacity and support.
- 2.4 We have over the last 12 months reviewed our Data Hosting environment along with a review of the hardware and software that will help us deliver our business needs over the next four to five years.
- 2.5 After due consideration, we have concluded that the CO-LO option continues to be the best fit and value for money for us at this time.

FILESERVER & DATA MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 Over eighteen years, we have collected significant amounts of data that needs to be managed. We need new tools to store/share/retain/archive files as required by the business, and Data management legislation.
- 3.2 As part of this strategy we will aim to move all HHP data to a curated Sharepoint platform, allowing for AI management and reporting.
- 3.3 Data backup and retrieval protocols will also be enhanced, to ensure independent offsite storage to protect against cyberattack.

SECURITY & ACCESS

- 4.1 We will need to ensure that any changes to our data hosting set-up are done so in a way that ensures compliance with our ICT Security policy.
- 4.2 Currently we have physical firewalls and VPN's (Virtual Private Networks) to control system access, as well as two products – Citrix and RDS to provide remote delivery and management of specific applications.
- 4.3 These physical firewalls are due for replacement in 2025, and we will review whether Citrix is still relevant to our application access needs.
- 4.4 MFA, encryption and other security measures will continue to be developed and implemented so that we ensure our networks and data are secure.
- 4.5 We will seek CyberEssentials accreditation in 2025/26;
- 4.6 Physical security measures will also be reviewed to ensure we operate within a safe and secure office environment. E.g., Panic Alarms / Intruder Alarms / Safe Interview Rooms.

DATA WAREHOUSING

- 5.1 With the move to a new housing system and the digitization of supporting documents, how do we access these legacy systems (these currently include Dynamics and ActiveH). These systems will become unsupported within our network as Microsoft remove support for the relevant operating system.
- 5.2 We aim to move all legacy systems to a standalone VMWare solution in 2024/25

COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1 The requirement and delivery for landline, mobile and web based telephony are currently being reviewed.

- 6.2 We will reprocure our VOIP telephony and mobile contracts in 2025/26.
- 6.3 Our Internet/Data services contracts are due for renewal in 2027 and we are monitoring useage so as to determine our needs and requirements in this area.
- 6.4 Analogue landlines will not be available from 2025, and, coupled with the 3G networks being switched off, we will require to review any remaining landlines and mobile devices which rely on these networks.

DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

- 7.1 We will undertake the following to ensure we are providing solutions for the delivery of services and facilities that best meet our needs:
 - a) Planning and Best Practice guidance;
 - b) knowledge sharing with other Housing Associations and other similar organisations;
 - c) discussion and collaboration – in conjunction with our Tenant Participation Strategy and particularly with those groups and individuals (both internal and external) that are direct recipients of the services provided.
- 7.2 Our processes, services and business needs are reviewed and updated regularly, and so the underlying development and technology needed to deliver these requirements changes too. This underlying technology is itself constantly changing,
- 7.3 As these processes, services and business needs cut across departments and areas, it is essential that any changes that require new ICT resources are co-ordinated. This is to ensure that no opportunities arising from this new software or technology are missed, that duplication is avoided, and that the drivers for change relate closely to the objectives defined in our key planning documents.
- 7.4 Procurement and Strategy delivery will be undertaken in line with our VFM strategy.

THREATS TO IMPLEMENTATION

- 8.1 The Strategy supports the priorities identified in our Business Plan, but the delivery of the strategy may be influenced or adjusted in the short to medium term by a number of factors, including:
- a) Unexpected changes to 3rd party products and support;
 - b) Cyberattacks, or new vectors for cyberattacks to gain access and control of our networks;
 - c) Changes to legislation – for example, in relation to welfare reform or data protection;
 - d) Available finance to purchase/implement development.
- 8.2 These risks are listed in our ICT Risk Register and reviewed regularly.
- 8.3 Ensuring day-to-day delivery of the ICT Strategy, as approved, will be the responsibility of the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources, supported by the Corporate Resources Manager; Digital Transformation Manager; the IT Officer; and the Business Support Officer.

PROCUREMENT & DISPOSAL

HARDWARE/SOFTWARE PROCUREMENT

- 9.1 All ICT Procurement should be in line with HHP's Procurement Policy and Procurement
- 9.2 Replacement of ICT hardware should follow the general timescales set out at appendix A, although the expected lifespan of items may be overtaken by changing requirements and specifications driven by business needs or those mandated by other stakeholders. Any significant deviations to policy will be referred back to the Executive Team for approval.
- 9.3 When disposing of assets we will look to offer these to tenants in the first instance to supplement our Digital Transformation strategy. Failing that, we will look to maximise disposal proceeds to reinvest into tenant welfare/support programmes.

PARTNERSHIP PROCUREMENT

- 10.1 Opportunities for partnership procurement are being explored with other organisations, and as a Public Body, HHP has access to a number of Scotland and UK wide Framework agreements for the provision of ICT services.

STRATEGY REVIEW AND UPDATE

- 11.1 This is a four-year strategy covering the period to November 2028.

INTERPRETATIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

The following interpretation and abbreviations are used in this policy:

WORD	INTERPRETATION
<i>HHP or Partnership</i>	Hebridean Housing Partnership
<i>Board</i>	Means the Board of the Hebridean Housing Partnership
<i>Board Members</i>	All Members of the Board including co-opted Members
<i>Portable USB Storage</i>	USB devices (also known as memory sticks, flash drives) or any other external device on which data can be transferred to and stored on.
<i>ICT</i>	Information & Communication Technology
<i>Stakeholders</i>	HHP Staff, Board Members and Contracted 3rd Parties with access to HHP systems
<i>Corporate Resources</i>	The Corporate Resources Manager or IT Officer
<i>RDS</i>	Remote Desktop Services – Microsoft tools for remote system access.
<i>MFA</i>	Multi Factor Authentication – selection from two of, fingerprint; face recognition; password; pin; or other.
All references to the masculine gender in this policy shall read as equally applicable to the feminine gender	



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APPENDIX A – STANDARD HARDWARE REPLACEMENT SCHEDULES

Hardware	Replacement After (Years)	
Laptops	4	
Printers	10	
Photocopiers	10	(or 1 million copies)
Monitors	10	
Tablets	4	
Security Cameras	10	
Information Screens	7	
Mobile Telephony	2	
Firewalls	6	
Servers	6	
Headsets	2	

*Estimated cycles, which may however be overtaken by other events.