

ICT Strategy Programme, Open Consultation Meeting, 18 May 2006

Actions for second draft ICT Strategic Plan

- Improve exec summary;
- Change route planner to graphical form and point to scenarios
- Automate the table of contents;
- Define 'local' and any other related terms;
- Define role and responsibilities for ICT Director as appendix (this was already agreed but for 1 June, I think)
- Define ToR for Architecture Group (not just deciding on software platforms, for example; extend role to 'information architecture'?)
- Define ToR for User Forum?
- Ensure that project owned by sponsoring (user) group is as clear as possible, including how ongoing evaluation of project development etc is undertaken.
- Budget for ICTF – currently rolled into Innovation Fund (which is not just ICTF) – perhaps should be separate line and class 3?
- Make it clear that Identity Management (sometimes known simply as Directory Service) is the key priority
- Expand, more robustly, on crying need for information strategy or at least process for defining data ownership, control, rights and workflows.
- Reuse text/themes from DaveP's introductory panel remarks (good, robust statements about depts not even knowing who their own students are!)
- The 'right to customise' software as part of the development project and procurement process – is this adequately addressed (revisit Sebastian's proposed text?)
- Review all the 'boxed' items – are they consistent with Plam; are most appropriate 'quotes' being used?

[Ken Peach introduction]

[PWJ presentation – sections 1-3]

Questions

Que: What is defined as local?

Ans: anything not funded by the centre, from Division or college downwards

Que: It's easy to define on paper but will there not be issues in practice? E.g. One might assume email was an enterprise service or at the very least an opt-in standards-based service.

Ans: we know there are 10 or more email servers but we need to understand why rather than opt for enterprise service. The process to define what is in each layer is starting but the new structure will need to

formulate the process.

Que: What budget might be associated with the forum?

Ans: The table in appendix illustrates it with 250K per year

Que: The principle of sign sign-on/authentication is mentioned a lot but this should be extended to a university-wide directory service. There appears to be a lack of communications between faculty and college IT staff. Duplication of effort in delivery etc should be avoided.

Ans: having a directory service is essential

PeteB: The ICTF should bring together dept and college staff, its one of the prime motivations.

Que: what about mirroring this relationship within a division where the need is almost greater?

Ans: this is difficult. Whilst reasonable and sensible to make statements about the centre, but who has the right to say what should happen within divisions/depts? One idea is that the centre should fund staff who have a responsibility to co-ordinate IT in a particular set of units. However, this won't work here, we suspect. Some sort of co-ordination structure is needed. MSD is perhaps a model.

KP: there appears to be support for the three layer model

[section 4 onwards]

(For CDM PJ mentioned that the sub-committee should be chaired by a head of house)

Questions

Que: project management – there needs to be some form of project control, e.g. For development of service by ICTF. How does one define the top tier of reporting?

Ans: the ICTF should be a repository of user requirements. Proposals will go to GPC with a supporting case. A pilot may then be proposed, funded by the GPC. The need for a project board will depend on the scale. The success of a pilot may then result in a project board etc, closely linked to the sponsoring parts of the university and not divorced from the user community. The PB would report to the sub-committee.

Que: is the user forum the same as the ICTF? So where does the ICTF forum fit?

Ans: the ICTF is not part of the governance structure. The user forum is a feedback mechanism. The ICTF will have links into the GPC and will supply people to attend such groups.

Que: ownership of the project by sponsoring organisation – would this be central admin in the case of Isidore?

Ans: no, it's those who do admissions; same with financial system.

Que: at the beginning the focus is on principles and processes but there seems to be a shift to systems-based rather than information-based. E.g. Identity management requires a sound foundation with respect to data sets and ownership. The architecture group appears to be looking at systems rather than processes. Should there not be someone responsible for defining ownership of data etc?

Ans: the tension is between an information strategy and an IT strategy. We are trying build an activity which is standalone but there will be discrepancies. Also people don't want just principles because they want their requirements addressed.

(KP: this triangle is where Oxford takes ownership of the common strategy)

Que: there are other channels of communication. Each Division will have representation on GPC from Division IT forums. Not sure how college IT will relate to user forum but colleges will be represented?

Ans: Conf of colleges will still need IT sub-committee but that is not a forum body.

KP: it is inevitable that a microscopic analysis of the triangle will reveal holes but at least agree to the principle. Again, no apparent opposition.

[section 7 onwards]

[panel]

AnneT: leading user requirements part of strategy. Neither strategy or requirements should remain static.

DavidP: taking a divisional perspective: consulting people up and down the hill. There is a lot of activity, including developing various ad hoc solutions for e.g. Group working doc management, RAE management, online student reporting, tutorials, CMS, teaching and learning tools. Conclusion: there is a feeling of isolation and difficulty in putting views to the rest of the University, especially the centre. Comes down to how we manage information. This is the issue which is repeatedly raised amongst departments. A result of this strategy has to be an opportunity to come together and for experts to contribute to taking the University forward; and to tackle the information strategy issue. Some depts don't even know who their students are. Ownership of data is important and rights of access to this data. The ICT strategy is a step in that direction by creating a framework to provide a clear opportunity for involvement in the process. There will be critical issues and many heads of dept will be looking at IT staff for guidance. We shall have to focus on the key issues of budget; co-ordinated decision making and appointment of ICT Director which may become a sensitive issue.

KP: can't really attack many of the issues until identity management issue under control. The key things to know: what is missing? What is wrong? Is the Plan a suitably robust strategy?

Questions:

Que: ICT Director – where is the role defined and its relationship to the rest of the structure described? Needs to be more than a paragraph.

Ans: (Yes, role needs further defining)

Que: One of the failings from the IT community was the moving of goal posts as projects developed. Is there plans to ensure checks and balances?

Ans: yes – in the past the University has operated perhaps too much in the commercial way of project development. The devolved model is precious but leads to complexity. Requirements tend to be gathered, package selected, and then the University obliged to change processes with minimal customisation. Cambridge have now addressed this. The sponsoring part of the University must have the right to customise if the case justifies it. This opportunity has not been apparent in the past. {these comments were partly reflected in Sebastian's software procurement input?}

Que: Have Southern Universities Management Services (SUMS) been involved?

Ans: we visited Warwick, Manchester, and had visitations from Chicago, Cornell as well as having external representation on SSG. SUMS have not been involved.

Que: ICT Director post: within the structure of the University where does the ICT Director sit? If we can't define our own information strategy, who can?

Ans: ICT director will chair GPC and report to sub-committee. On a previous occasion it was not

possible to take an IS forward. There is now a recognised need for an IS.

Que: Wording of what might result: truly seamless access to network needs careful wording

Ans: Will check what is in the boxes.

KP: that sort of issue does need to be addressed through; e.g. Visitor to Oxford who doesn't understand the structure and finds it tiresome to register for multiple systems.

Que: what is the real number of IT staff?

Ans: 600 is about right (see record for how this calculated)

Que: Risk of under-egging pudding with respect to expenditure: e.g. New buildings and research groups not included?

Ans: Some date appears in table 1, at least as indicative (for research but not new build?)

DaveP: These kind of questions highlight the problem of getting hold of high-level information.

AnneT: business planning for supercomputing centre is a cross-divisional activity but getting data and requirements is difficult.

[next steps]

The delay is to integrate business systems which means the broader consultation will take place in Michaelmas term before going to Council.

KP: one of the penalties of consultation is a lengthy process; there is a sense of urgency however to get the underpinning architecture in place. The publication of a draft plan is a milestone and the lack of bad feedback in the meeting suggests it's going in the right direction.

The role of the director needs to be perfectly clear.

[applause]