

Information Systems Strategy

Scope

The Information Systems Strategy covers all information systems used by the Fire Authority and Fire and Rescue Service, including central corporate information systems, devolved corporate information systems and the website (both intranet and Internet). In this strategy *systems* are the software applications, their associated processes and paper or microfiche based processes used to handle information.

Objectives

1. To provide effective and efficient, responsive and flexible information systems and information systems services to meet current and future business and legislative requirements.
2. To support processes rather than merely record data
3. To focus information systems staff resources on development and support, project management, business analysis, interface and added-value developments, and day-to-day user support
4. To ensure that staff are enabled to manage and administer information systems, and are aware of their responsibilities relating to those systems
5. To provide support for the development and implementation of the Authority's Information Management Strategy and Information Technology Strategy.

Strategy

The Authority will:

- adopt information systems that are effective, efficient, usable, responsive, flexible and represent good value for money. It will seek to achieve such adoption by means of the analysis, review, improvement and, where appropriate, the replacement of existing systems;
- introduce systems which recognise that administration is an integral part of the Service's business, and which support business processes;
- seek to enhance the transparency, seamlessness and customer service of its business processes by introducing appropriate information systems
- seek to assure the integrity and security of the information it holds within its systems by means of maintaining effective access control and risk management mechanisms.

In Practice

Information systems acquisition

The Authority will:

- wherever possible and practicable, acquire packages which:
 - meet an acceptable proportion of requirements;
 - are supplied by professional software data companies with the ability to provide long-term support
 - have already been proven in UK Fire Services
 - are certified as able to use SQL Server as their database;
 - may be implemented without recourse to a third party;
 - provide flexible reporting facilities

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- reserve its information systems development resource for the purpose of adding value, and will develop systems in-house only when no suitable package is available, or to provide interfaces between, or overviews of, systems

The corporate database

The Authority recognises that its corporate data should be held once only within a corporate, centrally-managed database, and has adopted SQL Server as its first-choice database management system. It will therefore:

- discourage the acquisition and creation of local and different databases;
- seek to introduce corporate information systems which, by meeting a greater percentage of users' requirements, reduce the need to download data to local PC-based databases and spreadsheets.

Corporate IT infrastructure

The Authority recognises the desirability of web deployment and will increasingly seek to use web deployment to deliver its systems. It further recognises that full web deployment is unlikely to prove practicable in the near future and will therefore:

- align its information systems acquisitions/developments with the Authority's desktop standard(s) and expect users of corporate information systems to adopt such standard(s);
- prioritise web deployment:
 - for simple business processes;
 - for systems the user has a real need to access over the Internet;
 - for minor users of systems.

The Authority recognises that cost benefits are to be derived from adopting more general information technology infrastructural standards and will seek to align its system acquisitions and system developments with those standards.

Project management

The Authority will:

- develop and implement a project management methodology modelled on Prince 2, which includes setting objectives, scoping projects, identifying responsibilities, monitoring progress, and reviewing projects after system implementation;
- apply that methodology to the management of all corporate information systems projects;
- not guarantee central support to users who choose to develop their own local systems,

Fire and Rescue Service staff

The Authority expects Fire and Rescue Service staff to use the information systems it provides, and will ensure that:

- appropriate equipment and training are provided to enable all staff to use appropriate information systems effectively and efficiently;

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- access to systems is the same across the Service for users in similar categories;
- staff know and exercise their responsibilities towards information systems.