1. Executive Summary

Foresight Consulting has undertaken a review of East Cambridgeshire District Council's (ECDC) Transformation Programme and the ICT team's capacity to support it.

We began by reviewing the relevant documentation, provided by ECDC staff, and then spoke with Members, CMT, and officers both leading and supporting the Transformation Programme and ICT. We also held a meeting with representatives from West Suffolk and held a teleconference with LGSS; both who had produced written proposals related to running ECDC's ICT service.

1.1 The Transformation Programme

Our view of the transformation programme, as it stands, is that:

- Appears to be a loose collection of projects, rather than a tightly focused programme of work seeking to achieve a given outcome or outcomes.
- Is neither costed nor deliverable given the resources and skills currently available.
- May not be the best way for the Council to achieve the optimum return on any investment made.

Our recommendation would be to re-focus the aims of the programme:

- Primarily around channel shift (or channel shove – depending on the appetite of the council), with an objective of reducing on-going revenue costs and improving customer satisfaction.
- Introduce new ways of working to increase staff productivity, e.g. hot-desking, remote working.
- Transform (and restructure) the ICT Service, making it proactive and customer focused.

Within the report, we have set out estimated costs and resources (days) for the work associated with meeting these objectives.

1.2 The ICT Service

Our view of the ICT Service, as it stands, is that it appears to be largely detached from the Transformation Programme:

- Little attention has been given as to whether the ICT service can adequately resource the Transformation Programme; in our opinion it cannot.
- Staff within ICT seem to have very little knowledge of the programme, and even less confidence in the ability to deliver it.

Our overall comments about ICT are that whilst the ratio of ICT staffing to the size of the council is slightly higher than we would normally see, we attribute this to the following:

- Whilst larger authorities enjoy economies of scale, smaller authorities still have to provide broadly the same range of services, so on balance ICT staffing levels are probably correct.
- Tasks normally undertaken within the service, by system administrators, are being carried out within ICT.
- Users demands upon ICT are greater than we would normally see, because of lower levels of ICT literacy. Rather than addressing the root cause, through end-user education, ICT either hand-holds or over-polices users.
- The service desk is under-resourced so highly-paid ICT staff end up dealing with issues, rather than taking the service (and indeed the council) forward through useful project work. For example, whilst the Council has paid for the right to upgrade all of its Microsoft software, over a given and limited period, it has failed to do so.
- Under-investment, and the perception that budget is not available, has led to numerous manual workarounds, which are typically many times more expensive.

- Risk of infrastructure, DR etc. failing, so need for early investment to minimise the risk ECDC faces. The Council suffers from historic underinvestment and has become reliant on outdated and inadequate technology.
- ECDC invited proposals from West Suffolk and LGSS on how either could support the Council's ICT Team. Both were invited to make proposals based on the current set up; and although both can offer savings; neither give the opportunity to realise the improvements sought through the Transformation Programme.

Given the facts presented to us, and the needs of the Council going forward, our recommendations would be to:

- Reject the LGSS and West Suffolk proposals because we believe they will be costly (longer term), inflexible and not appropriate to the needs of the council. A good ICT service is vital to the Council and needs to remain under the control of the authority.

- Keep ICT in-house, so as to provide the capacity to assist with the delivery of the transformation programme. However, this would require a full restructure of ICT resources, investment to be made in ICT infrastructure and a training and educating programme for staff.

1.3 The Way Forward – Transformational Programme and ICT Restructure

We propose a more realistic and focused programme of work, comprising three work streams – see below.

The first two areas, Channel Shift and New Ways of Working, reflect the key priorities in the Council's Transformation Programme (i.e. projects 1.1 and 3.1). These will deliver financial savings, estimated to be around £140,000 per annum, delivered through reductions in other, more expensive customer interactions, but the level and timing will depend on the pace in which ECDC services seize the opportunities to deliver greater service delivery through the use of the web; and internally services use the intranet.

The third area, ICT Transformation, reflects the need to invest in the infrastructure to reduce risk and provide a robust platform to support the Council. This reflects the project 3.3 in the Transformation Programme. With the investment, savings will be delivered through the ICT team of around £50,000 per annum. The project will also identify the resourcing requirements in the ICT Team to meet the Council's future requirements.

ECDC Revised Programme - Early Estimated Costs

Workstream	Project	Resources FTE (days)	Capital Expenditure Estimated Cost	Minimum Cost	Maximum Cost
Channel Shift / Shove	Customer Consultation	5	£0	£0	£0
	Website redesign including mapping	20	£50,000	£25,000	£60,000
	Rapid development of Firmstep Self Service	200	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
	Marketing and promotion	30	£5,000	£3,000	£8,000
New ways of working	Review desktop delivery methods (Flexible Working)	20	£0	£0	£0
	VOIP - Mitel or Lync	50	£40,000	£25,000	£50,000
	EDRMS / Intranet	200	£0	£0	£0
	Mobile & remote working (high priority area)	20	£15,000	£12,000	£20,000
ICT transformation	Restructure (including decentralising sys-admin)	60	£0	£0	£0
	End user training	30	£0	£0	£0
	Core infrastructure - storage, virtualisation etc	100	£75,000	£60,000	£100,000
	Disaster Recovery (inc servers rooms)	40	£45,000	£30,000	£50,000
	Application review (Uniform, Agresso, GIS)	60	£0	£0	£0
	Programme Total	835	£235,000	£160,000	£293,000
	Contingency @ 30%	251	£70,500	£48,000	£87,900
	Total Including contingency	1086	£305,500	£208,000	£380,900

Notes:

1) Some projects may result in additional revenue spend, however the target is to reduce revenue budgets from year 2.

2) The application review will provide an application roadmap which in itself will identify further projects / cost.

3) Resources (Internal & External) have not been costed at this stage.

4) As ICT project work is ongoing, some commitments will already have been made before this programme commences.

5) No financial provision has been made for replacing desktops or printers, as many of these have been replaced over the past couple of years.

The resources shown above will be delivered with external support (where a cost is shown); with the vast majority of the work delivered by the existing ICT Team. The capital expenditure can be funded from the Council's ICT Reserve which has a balance of £141,000 in ICT, alongside savings being generated within the Council's revenue budget. The programme will require the team to prioritise this work above all other work.

There will be a need to provide an additional programme management resource to ensure delivery to time and budget.

At this stage, and following discussions with ECDC ICT staff, we anticipate that a number of key resources are required either for reasons of capacity or capability. Other resources may be required, but until the programme plan has been taken down a level, as the scope is honed and a review of skills and resources undertaken, it is difficult to be precise on the exact resourcing levels, or where these might be obtained – internally, or LGSS, West Suffolk or the contract/consultancy marketplace.