

SICTS 2019-2022 Strategy Review



NOVEMBER 20 2023

Version Control

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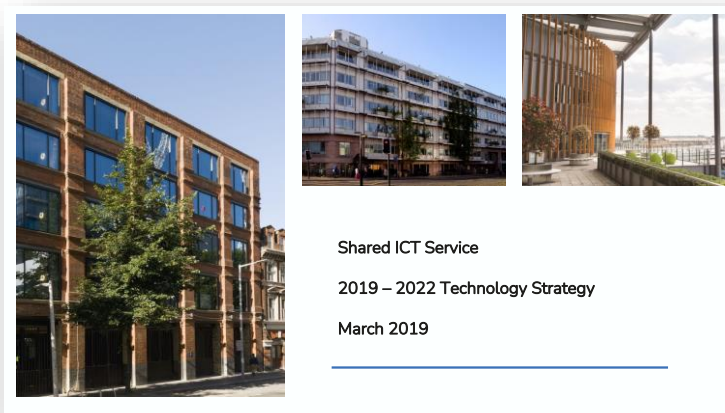
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1 Introduction

This paper reviews our progress against the original Shared ICT Service 2019-2022 Technology Strategy.



Initially drafted in March 2019, the strategy was approved at the Joint Committee in January 2020. This strategy pre-dates the current STS Senior Management Team, with it being presented at Joint Committee by Fabio Negro, current STS Managing Director, on his 2nd day in the organisation.

As the timeline of this strategy nears its end, the document aims to review our original aims, and highlights achievements and areas that still require improvement.

As this was written before the development of the STS Technology Roadmap, some of the content relates to technology transformation areas that were identified as needed in the following three years.

The overriding theme is building stability and partnership, as the shared service was still in its infancy, with Southwark having recently been onboarded.

2 Mission & Objectives

2.1 Building a Solid Platform

What we said:

ICT Service will enable its partners to have reliable networking, storage, processing and end user computing services, which are secure, robust, reliable and scalable.”

The Shared ICT Service will seek to understand the needs and requirements of its partners, providing hybrid approaches including both cloud and on premise infrastructure services, physical and virtualised servers through to software and platform as a service.”

Our offer to provide end user computing services will include role based service offerings ranging from mobile workers to fixed desk workers, which will include a range of technology options including, mobile devices, laptops, desktops and tablets.

We will build and maintain a roadmap for the delivery of these services, which will promote the effective total cost of ownership whilst taking progressive steps toward modern technology services.

Our stated objectives for building a solid platform are:

- ***Delivering a modern, common infrastructure that partners can rely on***
- ***Using sustainable technology as best we can given out constraints***

What we've done:

- To deliver this Objective, early on in 2020 we started to develop our STS Technology Roadmap to describe & estimate the investment that would be required to deliver a solid platform for the partners.
- Over that year, the roadmap evolved into an overall 5-year outline of activities and investment, which was approved at the Joint Committee in early 2021.
- Since then, major improvements have been made to our underlying infrastructure, with the work continuing on a daily basis. The investment commitment made as part of the Technology Roadmap has already made demonstrable improvement to our IT service.

2.2 Delivering a Quality Service

What we said:

The increased use of technology, in support of the delivery of each authority's business, places a premium on service and support. The ability to provide a quality service requires continued focus and organisation. The Shared ICT Service is committed to ensuring that our process improvement initiatives build and sustain a culture of service excellence.

A framework based on the industry standard, Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL), will guide the design of best practices for information technology support and service management. ITIL is a set of concepts and best practices for the management, delivery, and continuous improvement of information technology services.

The Shared ICT Service will develop and implement well-articulated service and support processes based on industry standards. We will review existing service and support procedures against frameworks such as ITIL, defining specific plans for improvement and ongoing review. We will also leverage the important partnerships with our user community to ensure that their needs are guiding continuous review and improvement.

We will focus much of our attention on allowing users to support themselves, by providing self help and self service processes and technology, we will increase the use of robotic processes automation to enable requests to be resolved without human intervention.

Our stated objectives for delivering quality services are:

- ***Providing a reliable, quality user experience***
- ***Delivering constant improvement by keeping service levels and processes under review***
- ***Supporting and developing our Shared ICT Service colleagues with the appropriate opportunities***

What we've done:

- From March 2020 to April 2021, we developed the STS Target Operating Model to reshape the teams. This introduced ITIL framework processes such as Continuous Service Improvement & Business Relationship Management & reduced our dependency on agency resources.
- Since April 2021, we have a continual service improvement backlog, which is constantly identifying, iterating and improving our services.

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- More recently, in October 2022, we merged the ITIL functions for Change, Problem and Improvement Management with the overall objective to have oversight & management of all technical and procedural problems and improvements from one team.
 - We have built several self-help guides and videos to allow our user community to self-help common problems. These are primarily offered to a user when they are attempting to log a ticket about the issue in our service management system, Hornbill.
 - Embedding the culture of continuous improvement, across all teams in STS, is now showing momentum.

2.3 Providing Value for Money & Forging a Lasting Partnership

What we said:

The increased use of technology, in support of the delivery of each authority's business, places a premium on service and support. The ability to provide a quality service requires continued focus and organisation. The Shared ICT Service is committed to ensuring that our process improvement initiatives build and sustain a culture of service excellence.

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We will focus much of our attention on allowing users to support themselves, by providing self help and self service processes and technology, we will increase the use of robotic processes automation to enable requests to be resolved without human intervention.

Our stated objectives for delivering quality services are:

- ***Providing a reliable, quality user experience***
- ***Delivering constant improvement by keeping service levels and processes under review***

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- ***Supporting and developing our Shared ICT Service colleagues with the appropriate opportunities***

What we've done:

- Over the past 3 years we have delivered over 50 improvement projects, designed to both improve user experience when logging calls and to speed up our time to resolve issues.
- We still have further to go to reach our targets, but the trend in overall call numbers has declined by greater than 400 per month during the period.
- More recently, we have automated much of the initial assessment and team allocation (called triage) to a point that 65% of all tickets raised to us are now automatically assessed and assigned to the correct resolver group without the need for intervention.
- The partnership between STS and the three partner councils continues to evolve and mature and the governance framework is reviewed on an annual basis to make sure it reflects council needs, refined role and responsibility definitions and is updated to consider new demands and technologies as they're introduced.

3 Objectives & Strategies

3.1 Delivering a modern, common infrastructure that partners can rely on

What we said:

- *Provide a hybrid, scalable, secure, flexible approach to our storage and compute function.*

What we've done:

- Implemented Azure cloud environments for all three partners, with Southwark having migrated most servers and systems to Azure
- Replaced ageing on-premises hosting technology with modern, Hyper-Converged Infrastructure.
- Implemented a new backup solution across all three partners (Rubrik)

What we said:

- *Enable every member of staff to access the services they require, in any location, at any time.*

What we've done:

- This strategy was written pre-pandemic, and the rapid implementation of laptops, Teams etc. at the start of lockdown accelerated and more than met the aim of this objective.

What we said:

- *Provide a range of devices, from which a range of options can be chosen.*

What we've done:

- We have established a standard set of devices from which the use case of the user will determine best fit, including laptops of three different variations, tablets and mobile devices.

What we said:

- *Enable every member of staff to access unified communications functionality on their device, in any location, at any time.*

What we've done:

- Again, part of the reaction to lockdown was a rapid implementation of laptops and Teams. Since then, all three partners have chosen to purchase Microsoft E5 licenses and with them, the ability to integrate telephony into Teams. This has been implemented in Southwark, with Brent migrating soon and Lewisham will follow suit. This establishes a UC capability across devices.

3.2 Using sustainable technology as best we can given our constraints

What we said:

- *Exploit appropriate, proven technology.*

What we've done:

- As an example: During the past three years, and since the writing of our STS technology roadmap, all three partner councils have taken the business decision to move to Microsoft's M365 E5 user licensing, as this unlocks business focussed productivity such as unified communications in Microsoft Teams, the use of PowerBI for management information and reporting, amongst others.
- For STS, this provided a suite of cyber security tools that we would have otherwise had to separately seek appropriate solutions for, but we have been able to utilise these tools to enhance our cyber security protections without the additional investment costs.

What we said:

- *Buy what we can rather than building ourselves.*

What we've done:

- The STS Technology roadmap purposely did not seek to define the solutions that we would implement, but the areas that would be addressed. This has allowed us to modify our plans as the technology market evolves and seek expertise from external bodies such as Gartner when making technology decisions.
- Two of the key technology decisions we made during this period are for a replacement backup solution (now fully implemented) and a replacement to our compute and storage solution, which is currently being implemented, with over half our server estate migrated at time of writing this report. Both of these selected solutions have subsequently and independently been selected by several other London Councils.

3.3 Providing a reliable, quality user experience

What we said:

- *Provide networks and devices which are intuitive, easy to use, easy to connect to and are appropriate for each role.*

What we've done:

- Key network equipment has been replaced. These have unlocked the ability to transform user connectivity into the corporate network and trials are underway now before a wider implementation.
- Wi-Fi access points have been replaced in Brent Civic Centre, bring much improved bandwidth, availability and network speeds. Site surveys for Tooley Street and Lawrence House have been completed for similar Wi-Fi access point replacement work to be undertaken in 2023.
- We have implemented additional backup connectivity to our 2nd datacentre, which has since proven itself as invaluable when there are network issues on the primary connection, resulting in no visible impact on the user community when this primary line had an issue.
- We offer a standard option of three laptop types, which have been used since 2019. This year, we will review these device types, their operating systems, user needs etc. for the planned device refreshes over the next 3 years.

What we said:

- *Review customer access routes, processes, systems and communication methods, through continual service improvement initiatives.*

What we've done:

- As part of our response to the pandemic lockdown, we quickly established a telephone service desk for out of hours support. Since then, we have opened this customer channel to be a 24x7 service, augmenting our web-based and site based service offering.
- For site-based service, we implemented a queue management solution at each of the three primary locations so that users would not have to wait around to be seen but would be given an ETA for when they could be seen.
- For our web-based service, we relaunched this in October 2021 and have subsequently iterated to improve the customer experience and the data capture. We are constantly looking to improve this web portal, which is our primary channel, and have reviewed the use of chatbot, or AI, though we are limited at present to what can be achieved by the software of our service management tool.

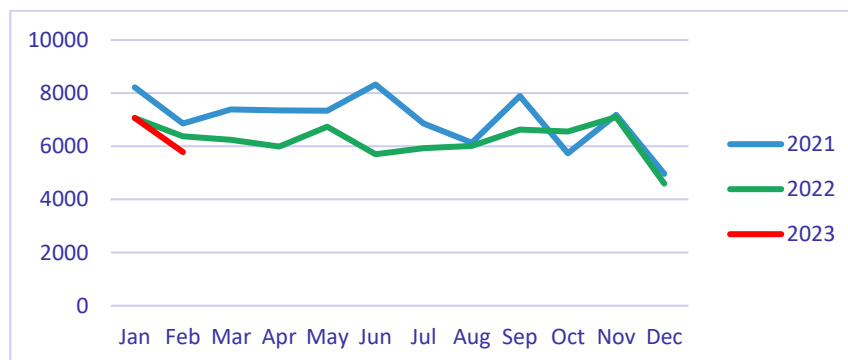
3.4 Delivering constant improvement by keeping service levels and processes under review

What we said:

- *Periodically review confirmed SLAs for appropriateness and our ability to deliver against them.*

What we've done:

- Our SLAs were reviewed and redefined during the implementation of our Target Operating Model (TOM).
- We have seen a drastic reduction of major incidents per month (Priority 1 incidents) with these falling from ~18 per month to a rolling average of <3 per month.
- The largest volume of tickets are individual users having issues or raising requests (P3 and P4 tickets). SLAs for these were increased as part of the TOM review and we still have work to do to consistently meet or exceed our SLAs for these, though just last month met our P4 SLA in one of the partners for the first time.
- We have succeeded in reducing, and continue to reduce the total volume of issues experienced per month despite growth in user base, as depicted in the chart below:



- We hold fortnightly meetings to focus on how we can further improve performance against these SLAs and it is a key focus area for the STS senior leadership team.

What we said:

- *Review all processes that are impacted when new technology the Shared ICT Service is responsible for, is introduced.*

What we've done:

- When we introduce new technology, such as our new backup solution, we have defined the processes and roles and responsibilities for operating.

3.5 Supporting and developing our Shared ICT Service Colleagues with the appropriate opportunities

What we said:

- *Create and iterate our workforce development strategy.*

What we've done:

- We have a variety of training options that are offered to the STS team, many of which are free via suppliers such as Microsoft. These are frequently utilised to skill our teams with the new technologies as we introduce them.
- We have seen many team members develop and move into more senior roles across STS, and in doing so they have been provided support, training and development to succeed in their new posts.

3.6 Ensuring the collective buying position of the partner organisations is used to achieve lower costs whilst quality remains a driver

What we said:

- *Review and assess the collective needs of the service against leading market technology.*

What we've done:

- In 2020 we chose to procure access to Gartner so that we get the best possible assessment of the market on our particular technology needs. This has been utilised to inform every major technology & investment decision.

What we said:

- *A collective agreement when buying a solution to enable the services provided is to be the rule rather than the exception.*

What we've done:

- As STS provides the underlying infrastructure upon which the partner councils run business applications, we have been able to procure solutions that can be utilised by all partners, even when there are different strategies, such as cloud vs on-premises hosting of servers.
- We have, where appropriate, standardised technologies to reduce complexity and overhead – for example replacing two backup technologies with our new Rubrik solution.

3.7 Providing services which are cost-comparable to similar providers

What we said:

- *Be in the top quartile of suppliers within our market, for low cost and high quality service provision benchmarks.*

What we've done:

- During the development of our Target Operating Model, we contacted Gartner and SOCITM in an attempt to compare our value with other similar organisations. However, they were unable to assist with this as there were no obvious directly comparative organisations
- However, during the 2019-2022 period we have reduced our "Cost per user" from £1467 in FY19/20 to £1280 in FY22/23; this highlights our drive to provide improved overall value to our partners.

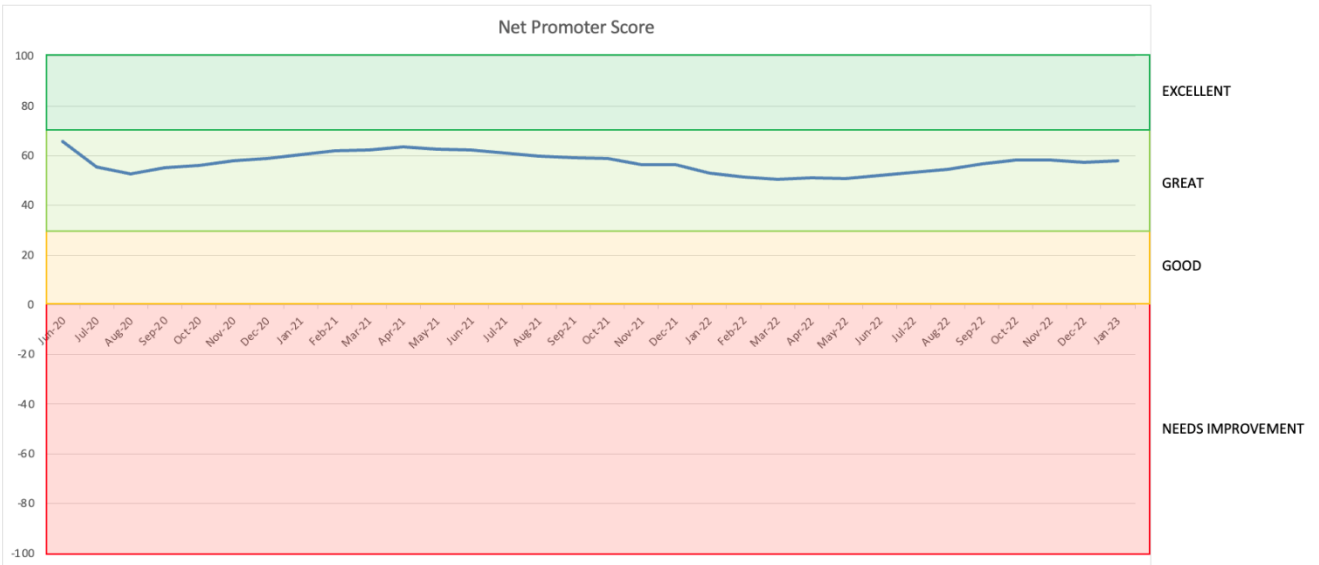
	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21	FY 2021/22	FY 2022/23 (CURRENT)
TOTAL BUDGET	£14,669,240	£14,597,314	£14,621,914	£15,035,423
TOTAL USERS	10,000	10,000	10,950	11,750
TOTAL COST PER USER	£1,467	£1,460	£1,335	£1,280

What we said:

- *Provide services which surpass our customer satisfaction targets.*

What we've done:

- We first started to report our Net Promoter Score to the Operational Management Group in June 2020, and since then our NPS has remained consistently in the "Great" band of 30%-70%, never falling below 50% during the period.
- It's worth highlighting that in February 2023 we achieved a 95% NPS in the LGA, also meeting or exceeding every SLA for that organisation during the month.



3.8 Working together and in the best interests of the Service, striving to benefit us all

What we said:

- *Enable cross site collaboration through adherence with the governance model.*

What we’ve done:

- Our Governance Model, the Inter Authority Agreement, had not been reviewed since October 2017 with the onboarding of Southwark into the partnership.
- Since then, we undertook a major revision to the agreement alongside our Target Operating Model and have implemented annual reviews of the IAA to ensure it reflects our joint arrangements and evolving clarifications on roles and responsibilities between STS and the partners. The last review was approved in October 2022.

What we said:

- *Enabling colleagues to work collaboratively through the correct tools.*

What we’ve done:

- During the period of 2020-2023, the working practice of all organisations has seen significant upheaval due to the Covid Pandemic. We’re now in an era of hybrid office & home working, which has increased the need for collaborative tools within STS.
- Early on in the pandemic, STS supported the rapid implementation of Microsoft Teams to all users; this has now become the standard toolset for collaboration, though it has only recently

become possible to collaborate more effectively between organisations, by sharing 'channels' with other organisational teams. We are in the process of enabling this, which will provide a step-change in our ability to collaborate, share documents etc.

What we said:

- *Collaborating on new solutions and using the collective service's knowledge.*

What we've done:

- To achieve this, we have established governance around the architectural decision making, allowing the different disciplines across the STS team to come together and consider solution design from a cyber, architectural, delivery and operational viewpoint.

3.9 Delivering greater resilience by sharing and mitigating risks

What we said:

- *Introduce clarity to people's roles and responsibilities across the Shared ICT Service.*

What we've done:

- The Target Operating Model redefined the teams, roles and responsibilities across STS and we took this opportunity to revise all job descriptions for all roles.
- We have recently commissioned and independent review of our Service Management operation by the Service Desk Institute, so that we can further define how to organise these teams in the most effective way.

What we said:

- *Introducing a collective risk management approach and risk register.*

What we've done:

- Early in 2020 we established the formal STS risk register, which is reviewed on a monthly basis. We report on our risks to Joint Committee, and feed into the strategic risk register for the partner councils.
- The STS Risk Register has recently been moved to a shared area to which all senior team members across STS and the three partner councils have access.

What we said:


- *Share and publish knowledge of common problems and fixes.*

What we've done:

- Within our service management user portal, we have published FAQs covering the common user based issues and enquiries, such as how to reset passwords or reset Wi-fi. These are presented to the users when they are logging an issue with us as a 'self help' suggestion.

4 The partnership principles

What we said:



Shared ICT Service

The partnership principles

Partnership means working together. It means sharing the responsibilities and the risks as well as the rewards.

In order to ensure a consistent and sustainable approach to deliver the Shared ICT Service the partners have agreed a set of partnership principles that will form the operational model of the service going forward.

These partnership principles set the collective objectives of the partnership which this strategy is based on.

What we've done:

- **The Target Operating Model** - This went live in May 2021, established the new team structure, introduced new disciplines and reduced our reliance on agency staff and required a commitment from the partners for an increase in budgetary contribution. Creating an increased permanent headcount has created more value and efficiency however, as we were able to recruit resources to replace expensive agency staff.
- **STS Technology Roadmap** – It has been recognised by all three councils that the service had inherited legacy infrastructure of differing ages and capabilities that weren't fit for the future needs of the organisations. In 2020, we developed an investment roadmap, detailing the overall investment required to consolidate the infrastructure into new, scalable, and reliable solutions. Overall, this highlighted the need for ~£34M investment over a 5-year period (2020-2025), and this was presented to Joint Committee in January 2021.

We are now well into this investment programme and have delivered many of the large infrastructure changes and improvements, procuring market-leading solutions which deliver stability, security, resilience, and availability improvements.

- **Cost per user** - As referenced in Section 3.7, our overall cost per user has sequentially decreased since 2019. Whilst this demonstrates increases in efficiency, we needed to balance this with our ability to deliver a quality service.
In 2022, we agreed on a new approach to any increase in user numbers with the partners, with a mechanism to increase our overall staffing budget with any net increase in users served.
- **Pension** - As the service is hosted by Brent, STS staff are enrolled in the Brent pension scheme which, due to a sovereign decision, has a higher employer contribution rate than either Lewisham or Southwark.
In 2022, a new agreement was reached with all partners on the apportionment to this employer contribution; this demonstrated the strength in the partnership to address issues and resolve a potential bone of contention to the future success of the shared service.
- **Branding** – The original name for the service, Shared ICT Services, was changed to Shared Technology Services in 2020 and a new branding that combines the colour themes from all three councils was created.
Our aim as a service is to be seen as belonging to, and part of, the councils and not as a separate entity or externally managed service.
Historically, as we are hosted by Brent council, our email addresses have been brent.gov.uk. However, this clearly separated the team from Lewisham and Southwark, users of which naturally assumed Brent Council ran the IT service. With the rebranding, we have created a new identity for the team which is independent of our host council.

5 How the partnership will work together


What we said:



Shared ICT Service

How the partnership will work together

In order to deliver this strategy the partners have detailed how they would like to work together, the following behaviours will represent the working approach going forward.

 <h4>Ownership</h4> <p>The Shared ICT Service will be part of each Council and will have an identity to reflect this</p>	 <h4>Procedures</h4> <p>The Councils will accommodate common alignment in our service processes and technology in relation to our infrastructure and platforms</p>
 <h4>Collaboration</h4> <p>The Councils will adopt a collaborative mind-set treating the partnership as a co-operative relationship, aiding one another</p>	 <h4>Roadmap</h4> <p>The Councils will make technology and funding decisions, which impact on the Shared ICT Service, together and in the best interests of the service</p>
 <h4>Governance</h4> <p>We will all operate in a timely, well intentioned and considerate manner, aware of each other's procedural nuances, in order to best ensure the service can deliver at pace</p>	 <h4>Priorities</h4> <p>We will work in a supportive manner recognising and accepting the collective priority</p>

What we've done:

Ownership – As mentioned in the previous section, to promote the concept of being part of each Council, particularly in Lewisham and Southwark, it was important to separate the branding of the Shared Service from Brent. In 2020 we rebranded the team as Shared Technology Services, and now use sharedtechnology.services as our email domain.

Collaboration - In Lewisham, we now have a weekly SLT meeting with all Heads of service, which can be duplicated in Brent and Southwark to promote the 'one team' ethic. We have recently been able to set up shared teams areas for collaboration, document sharing etc. which will enhance our ability to collaborate on major projects, reporting and governance papers.

Governance – The Inter Authority Agreement, in place since 2016, has been revised annually since 2021, evolving to further clarify roles and responsibilities, reflect the technology, infrastructure and applications of the year, and strengthen our governance processes.

Processes – We continue to document and improve our processes for technical architecture governance, common needs such as Starters, Movers and Leavers processes, reporting, change and problem management.

Roadmap – in 2020, we developed the Technical Roadmap for 2021-2025, which was approved by Joint Committee in early 2021. This set out our investment programme to refresh the ageing technical solutions in place and transform our infrastructure to meet the needs of the three councils.

Priorities – Our monthly Operational Management Group discuss overall activity and performance and agree the priorities to focus on, such as improvement in MI from our service management tool, so that we're able to identify common issues and improve our service level performance.