

## Information and communication technology (ICT)

## Strategy 2017 - 2020

**Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Factors shaping our ICT strategy
3. Legislative and regulatory requirements
4. Data management
5. Emerging technology
6. Digital inclusion and enablement
7. Current ICT environment
8. Risk management and security
9. Strategy review

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Co-operative has invested considerably in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) which has become an integral part of the Co-operative’s day-to-day operations. However, the ICT environment is constantly evolving, presenting both new opportunities and new threats.

1.2 An ICT strategy is essential to ensure that the Co-operative:

* + meets its legislative requirements
  + manages data effectively
  + embraces emerging technology to meet the changing needs and aspirations of tenants and staff
  + supports and enables tenants with digital technology
  + effectively reviews and maintains its ITC systems, including hard ware and software
  + preserves effective security arrangements to protect data, systems and networks from attacks and unauthorised access

1.3 In doing all of the above, the Co-operative will ensure that it continues to provide effective, high quality services that represent value for money.

**2. Factors shaping our ICT strategy**

* 1. A range of factors have influenced our ICT strategy, including:

1. **Development of cloud-based applications and software** – providing greater flexibility, reducing down time and improving secure data storage and back up arrangements.
2. **Development of smart technology** – allowing users to activate appliances remotely or communicate faults remotely, reducing costs and improving efficiency. This is likely to provide an expanding range of possibilities for housing organisations and tenants in the future.
3. **Self-service** – the increased expectancy that tenants can access services remotely using mobile applications and update their own information, choices and options via simple, secure applications.
4. **Security and cyber crime**– increased threat of data theft, fraud and ransom ware.
5. **Data protection**– appropriate measures are taken to prevent loss of personal data or unlawful processing and data is not retained for longer than is necessary.
6. **Digital agenda and access to systems**– increasing interaction with government departments, agencies and contractors is via the use of digital platforms. Welfare Reform and the future need for tenants to apply for benefits on-line is a key example.
7. **Varying degrees ICT skill & knowledge within staff team**– a range of ability and knowledge exists within the Co-operative.
8. **Mobile technology**– opportunities to embrace mobile technology to improve efficiency and accommodate greater flexibility and improved service delivery.

**3. Legislative and regulatory requirements**

3.1 Standard 4.3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator’s Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management states “the governing body identifies risks that might prevent it from achieving the RSL’s purpose and has effective strategies and systems for risk management and mitigation, internal control and audit.”

3.2 The Data Protection Act 1998 relates to the management of personal information and specifies key principles that organisations must adhere to when obtaining, holding or disclosing such information. In particular, information must be:

* 1. fairly and lawfully processed
  2. processed for limited purposes
  3. adequate, relevant and not excessive
  4. accurate and up to date
  5. not kept for longer than is necessary
  6. processed in line with the individual’s rights
  7. maintained securely

3.3 The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

**4. Data management**

4.1 Although it has expanded in recent years, the quantity of data that the Co-operative has is relatively modest. Information is stored locally and backed up on a daily basis, in accordance with disaster recovery arrangements.

4.2 The Co-operative’s data retention policy determines how long various types of information should be retained within our systems.

4.3 Data protection training is provided for all staff and the use of passwords is strictly adhered to, restricting access to files and folders in accordance with permissions.

4.4 All staff are aware of their responsibility with regards to the use of ICT and participate in the policy review process.

4.5 The development of cloud-based applications offers a secure and flexible alternative to traditional data storage solutions, providing cost effective, undisrupted access to systems and data. There has been an unprecedented move to cloud-based applications across all business areas and this reflects the future direction of ICT. The Co-operative should determine its future ICT requirements and investigate the benefits of transferring to cloud based applications, such as Microsoft Office 365.

**5. Emerging technology**

5.1 Advancements in technology have led to equipment being supplied with built in sensors or remote operating capability. For example, some applications allow you to control your central heating system from a smart phone and other appliances can inform a manufacturer when performance is sub optimal, allowing action to be taken before the appliance fails. As wi-fi becomes common place, it is likely that there will be an expansion in this sort of technology in future.

5.2 Embracing this technology at the right time will provide enhanced services to tenants and improve efficiency savings by stream lining processes and extending appliance replacement timescales.

* 1. The increased use of smart phones and social media by tenants, together with the emergence of a new generation who have grown up with technology, increases expectations in relation to communications and the way in which services are delivered. To embrace this, the Co-operative should explore opportunities to enhance its interactive communications via App development and Skype video conferencing.Opportunities also exist to create videos to assist tenants or members with simple tasks or address frequently asked questions.

5.4 The provision of light weight, mobile devices for key staff should be explored, facilitating access to the virtual office and improving effectiveness, regardless of location. This may also offer potential to provide digital inclusion for some excluded groups who are unable to access services from their home.

**6. Digital inclusion and enablement**

6.1 In accordance with the Government’s digital agenda, the majority of interaction with departments and agencies occurs on-line and more is in the pipeline, such as the roll out of Universal Credit.

6.2 It is widely recognised that are there are huge advantages to obtaining services online. Access to goods and services is vast and generally cheaper, easier and more convenient to obtain than through traditional channels. In addition, social media has exploded in popularity, becoming the medium of choice and offering a range of opportunities to communicate and reconnect with friends and family.

6.3 Whilst the digital age is welcomed and embraced by the majority of tenants, it is likely that some of the most vulnerable groups, such as tenants on low incomes, those with disabilities and or the elderly may be materially disadvantaged.

6.4 To address this, the Co-operative will engage with local partners and agencies to help ensure that tenants have access to:

* computers and broadband
* training and support to get online and stay safe
* support to set up accounts for Facebook and Skype, assisting social inclusion
* assistance with the transition to Universal Credit
* support with other digital services, such as, switching utility suppliers, maximising income and reducing fuel poverty

**7. Current ICT environment**

7.1 The following operational equipment and software is utilised by the Co-operative as part of its day-to-day business

**Network hardware and software**

1. Each year the Depute Director liaises with our ICT contractor to assess the maintenance requirements for the network, taking account of requirements included within the ICT Asset Register. This includes anti-virus software, the effectiveness of which is monitored by our ICT contractor.
2. All cost incurred in the replacement of ICT equipment or provision of services will be carried out in accordance with the Co-operative’s financial regulations and procurement policy.

**Housing management and maintenance software – SDM**

i) The SDM system is used for both housing management and maintenance functions and has a range of modules, including complaints. These are monitored and maintained by SDM. Whilst these systems are stored on the server, only SDM has permissions for remote access to rectify any issues that arise.

1. The cost for SDM is based on the number of licences and modules being used.

**Finance software – Pegasus OPERA 3**

* 1. Pegasus software is used for Finance purpose and accommodates the Co-operative’s bank accounts, purchase ledger, nominal ledger and salaries.

**Time management – Kelio**

1. Kelio is utilised for absence recording and time management.

**Copying equipment**

1. The Co-operative has a maintenance agreement for the upkeep of one of its photo copiers which is used as a network printer by the majority of staff.

**Website**

* 1. The website is hosted by Scottish Housing Connections who administer and maintain the site for an annual fee. Staff members also have access to the site and can add information and documents to ensure that it is kept up to date.

**Allpay**

* 1. This system is in place to enable residents to pay their rent at various payment outlets, on line or via an app. There was a one-off fee for the installation of the Allpay system and further fees are incurred in accordance with the number of transactions and users.

**Real asset management (RAM)**

* + This system is used for the accounting, management and maintenance of the Co-operative’s stock and incurs an annual licence fee.

**8. Risk management and security**

8.1 Security of ICT systems encompasses the protection of information, data, systems and networks from attacks and unauthorised access.

8.2 Cyber-attacks and intrusions have increased dramatically in recent years. Whilst the Co-operative is a small target and may not be worth deliberately targeting, we can easily be exposed to any number of automated attacks by malware, including ransom ware. Indeed, the Co-operative has been subject to two such attacks within recent times.

* 1. Cyber-attacks have the potential to:
  + Expose sensitive client data
  + Steal valuable data relating to tenants, the organisation or third parties
  + Disrupt the operations of the business, causing reputational damage
  + Use the Co-operative’s systems as a route to accessing data in other providers’ systems where we share access privileges

8.4 Following the previous cyber attacks, the Co-operative carried out a cyber security audit and has taken forward a range of recommendations to improve security, data backup and disaster recovery arrangements. This work will be supplemented by a cyber testing audit due to be carried out in autumn 2017.

8.5 While additional security measures can be introduced, the Co-operative cannot block every email and some form of malware could potentially get through to users, compromising the system. Education of staff therefore remains critical to ensure that the Co-operative’s systems and data is protected.

* 1. The provision of secure services requires resilient infrastructure and an organisational culture which embraces information security awareness. The Co-operative will help to achieve this by:
  + Ensuring all the basics of good technically based ICT security practice are undertaken on a regular basis
  + Installing and maintaining software that can block ransom attacks
  + Conducting regular security penetration test of our ICT environment
  + Providing regular staff training in relation to ICT security and ensure that it is made available to new staff as part of their induction

**9. Review**

9.1 The Strategy should be reviewed every three years, or earlier in line with legal, regulatory, best practice or organisational requirements. The next review will take place no later than July 2020.