Courts Service ICT Strategy Statement

2016 – 2018

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Strategy

The key strategic themes of the ICT Strategy 2016-2018 reflect how ICT will support the achievement of the goals set out in the Courts Service Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

Strategic Plan 2014 –	ICT Strategic Themes
❖ **Goal 1:** **High Quality Service Delivery**	❖ ICT systems and services will be put in place to support the delivery of a high quality service to courts users, both internal and external
❖ **Goal 2:** **Supporting the Judiciary**	❖ We will respond effectively to the requirements of the judiciary for equipment, services and systems
❖ **Goal 3:** **Skilled and Engaged Staff**	❖ Modern ICT tools and appropriate training materials will be provided to staff to allow them to deliver the service to the highest standard
❖ **Goal 4:** **Technology**	❖ A multi year Technology Refresh Programme will be established to ensure that technology is future-proofed for the longer term.
❖ **Goal 5:** **Case Management, Collaboration and Reform**	❖ Case Management and Tracking systems will continue to evolve in response to operational and wider government and legislative requirements, with an emphasis on carrying out business online where feasible.
❖ **Goal 6:** **Provide Suitable Court Accommodation**	❖ ICT facilities, services and equipment will be provided to a high level in all existing and new buildings with particular attention to new or renovated Courthouses currently being planned under Public Private Partnership.

Introduction

The ICT Strategy for the period 2016–2018 builds on the progress made in the last ICT strategy and is closely aligned with The Courts Service Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

The key goal of ICT is to ensure the technology required to run the court system on a day to day basis, is available, maintained and supported to the highest standards. Our focus will be to ensure value for money for the Courts Service in the provision of these services. We will do this by exploring greater use of public-sector shared service arrangements and exploiting new technologies, especially in relation to online services and in particular in support of the Government's ICT Strategy 2015 based on the Build to Share model.

Investment in the Courts Service ICT estate slowed over the preceding strategy resulting in business risk due to aging technology. We will implement a technology refresh program to replace older equipment and software that has become obsolete and difficult to use with newer technologies. Given the reality of our budgetary position we will do so prudently with an ongoing objective of providing better services within the constraints of the allocated costs of the ICT budget.

Key Achievements of last strategy

Despite budgetary and resource constraints, the Courts Service Strategy achieved significant results over the last strategic plan:-

❖ We have developed an architecture which allows for the development of a civil integrated case management system. This system, Courts Service Online (CSOL) is being developed incrementally.

❖ This is a system that provides facilities for online applications to be made, including online accounts, upload of documents, dissemination of Court documents, listing of cases, payment of fees, production of court orders and other documents, such as letters and emails.

❖ CSOL provided the base for providing the first ever fully electronic case processing, Personal Insolvency, with no paper files required.

❖ A number of case types are now being processed and managed through CSOL:

  ❖ Small Claims

  ❖ Personal Insolvency

  ❖ Supreme Court

  ❖ Court of Appeal

❖ A further development of the system will see Liquor Licensing applications online including accounts being made available for firms and individuals to manage and track their applications.

❖ This has allowed a number of Legacy systems to be retired, thus saving the support and maintenance overhead.

❖ Development of a suite of statistical reports. Comprehensive statistics are being produced from all case management systems including Statistical requirements for The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

❖ District Court Appeal cases are now tracked through the Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS)

❖ A new system (ICMS) to track and manage criminal cases in the higher courts was fully rolled out to the Central Criminal Court, all Circuit Courts, the Court of Criminal Appeal (now the Court of Appeal) and the Special Criminal Court.

❖ A program was commenced to replace older PCs with a shared desktop based on Citrix. This program is continuing

❖ Introduction of smartphone and tablet technology for judicial use

❖ A judge's intranet was established as a repository of legal reference documents for the use of the judiciary

❖ A Website for the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board was established

❖ A new Voice Over IP system was rolled out to replace a series of individual telephone systems in offices. This project was undertaken in-house under a self- sufficiency drive and has produced savings over the period.

❖ Progress was made in developing the detailed and complex requirements for the changes needed to implement the Fines Act 2010 (as amended). These requirements relate to processes, further legislative changes, outsourcing of some activities as well as major changes to both the Criminal Case Tracking System (CCTS) and the Courts Accounting System (CAS).

❖ A new Managed Print Service was implemented which has led to fewer printers in some offices and a more streamlined approach to provisioning of printing facilities. This service will be reviewed over the course of this strategy.

❖ Some devices have been integrated e.g. photocopiers also used as network scanners printers, faxes.

❖ In partnership with the Bar and the Law Society, implementation of Wi-Fi in courthouses around the country.

❖ Finalisation of the Digital Audio Recording rollout to all courts and court offices, including non-networked courts.

❖ Greater and more routine use of Video Conferencing between courts and prisons for remand hearings. The majority of video sessions are now conducted over IP as video over ISDN becomes an older technology

❖ Higher bandwidth was provided across the Wide Area Network which, in addition to video, now carries:-

❖ Digital Audio Recording traffic to central storage

❖ Telephone traffic throughout the Courts Service.

❖ Courts Service Data Centre moved to Central Government Data Centre;

❖ The increase in bandwidth allowed for a consolidation of servers to the - reduced H/W support required

❖ Use of mobile devices extended to non-networked courts

❖ Provision of mixture of in-house and external services in areas such as Business Analysis, Project Management, Procurement and Report Development;

❖ ICT Governing Committee reviewed and restructured in 2012

Work Planned or in progress from last Strategy

❖ Work is ongoing on the ICT systems which will implement the provisions of the Fines Act as regards payment by instalment and appointment of receivers and plans for attachment of earnings.

❖ Planning for the extension of CAS and CCTS to higher jurisdictions and to track District Court Appeals.

❖ Implementation project for provisions relating to Road Traffic Act 2010, and other legislative changes is ongoing;

❖ As funding permits, provide for the electronic transmission of charge sheets from AGS to the Courts Service, and the transmission of higher court outcomes to AGS.

❖ Work continues on the development of CSOL to accommodate eLicensing

❖ Debt Claims Online on hold pending required legislation

❖ A project is ongoing to implement Server /Desktop Virtualisation to reduce cost of desktop estate management

❖ Some progress made in streamlining of Electoral Register data take-on for jury selection system; Further work is required

❖ The demands for more statistical information continue and work is ongoing to enhance support for Comprehensive Management Information

❖ Work on the re-design of The Irish Sentencing Committee website was carried out

Alignment with Courts Service Strategic Plan

This plan will complement and support the key areas set out within the Courts Service Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017:

❖ **High Quality Service Delivery**
❖ **Supporting the Judiciary**
❖ **Skilled and Engaged Staff**
❖ **Technology**
❖ **Case Management, Collaboration and Reform**
❖ **Provide Suitable Court Accommodation**

The same measures of success used in the Strategic Plan will be used as far as possible to measure the success of this strategy

❖ Court user satisfaction
❖ Support for the Judiciary
❖ Enhanced case flow data
❖ Competent & engaged staff
❖ Electronic services
❖ Process improvement
❖ Value for money
❖ Court accommodation

High Quality Service Delivery:

As processes continue to be streamlined or centralised as appropriate ICT systems and services will evolve to support the organisation in its aim to provide high quality services to the judiciary, staff, the legal profession and the public.

Changes will be made to implement the provisions of the Fines Act as regards payment by instalment and appointment of receivers and prepare plans for attachment of earnings. It will also involve the outsourcing of summons/fines notice.

❖ e-Filing and e-payment options, together with improved online self-service options will be made more widely available. The Courts Service Online (CSOL) architecture built during the period of the last strategy is now available to accommodate these services, once the appropriate processes, organisation, rules and legislation are in place. The Courts Service will

work to ensure that all the necessary ingredients for new services such as these are in place.

❖ *There will be electronic transfer of information to outsourced companies providing Fines Collection and Printing services in relation to the implementation of the Fines Acts 2010 and 2014.*

Support the judiciary

We will continue to determine the requirements of the judiciary through a number of channels, including attendance at committees established to deal with ICT matters, such as the Cross-Jurisdictional ICT Committee, attendance at judicial conferences, as well as face to face meetings with judges.

The highest priority is devoted to providing ICT equipment and support services to the judiciary. The service must be responsive, available and attentive to their requirements, in particular when new structures, such as the Judicial Council are being set up. We will work with the judiciary to deliver appropriate and sustainable technologies that will assist them in their work.

In the ever changing world of mobile technology we must ensure that modern equipment is available and supported and that the equipment and data is secure. Security will be achieved using such techniques as firewalls, authentication, encryption and mobile device management. Where appropriate, ICT systems will be provided to assist with case management and listing.

❖ *An internal helpdesk and deskside support service is in place for judicial requests.*

❖ *A training service will be provided specifically for the ICT requirements of judges*

❖ *ICT Services will be provided to support the proposed Judicial Council and a public website will be set up as and when required*

Skilled and Engaged Staff

The set of office tools (word processing, spreadsheets etc) used day to day will be

brought up to a modern specification. In addition the Courts Service requires a modern set of responsive Case Tracking and Management systems. More and more technology is being used in court by all parties. In order to gain maximum benefit from these tools, ICT will ensure that appropriate training material and high standard training is available to all staff that need to use the technology.

❖ *Where the Courts Service makes changes in service delivery channels (e.g. e-filing and online services) staff will be provided with high quality training and facilities to ensure the service provided to court users is of a very high standard.*

❖ *In order to counter the impact of further reduction in staff numbers and loss of knowledge we will focus on standardising our own systems and there will be a centrally controlled approach to any development changes. Minor differences between systems mean that software updates are difficult to carry out as each version essentially requires a custom approach. Without a central control we will not be able to reach the goal of a standard approach to managing cases.*

❖ *We will assist staff with maximising the use of courtroom technology such as video and Digital Audio Recording to improve efficiency and achieve cost savings with the objective of providing Courts Service staff with confidence to be self-sufficient in the use of the technology*

❖ *Carry out an eLearning pilot project in conjunction with Training Unit and ensure that a new eLearning platform is in place and in use*

❖ *The Courts Service will explore the feasibility of developing an intranet for improved internal information dissemination.*

❖ *All staff and managers will use the centrally provided PeoplePoint HR*

❖ *systems. There will be no alternative or local systems developed within the Courts Service to record or manage people issues*

as to do so cuts across the Government policy of implementing a shared service and a standardised approach to HR

Technology

Technology is recognised as a key enabler for increased efficiency and effectiveness. It is also recognised that the technology base needs to be refreshed. A longer term, 5 year Information Technology Programme, will be produced over the course of this strategy to address any shortcomings in the estate, including network, server hardware, operating systems, backup, disaster recovery, security and other services. This strategy will adhere to the current Government IT strategy "Build to Share", and will use services or systems being provided under that strategy that are suitable for use in the Courts Service environment.

New technologies very rapidly overtake and make obsolete technologies that have worked well for years. With the very wide mix of technologies being used in the Courts Service integrating them to ensure the old and the new can continue to work together is a complex task.

In addition to changes brought on by the ICT industry, the requirements of the Courts Service also changes due to both internal and external pressures. We will strike a balance between refreshing older technology and improving on the technology already in place. However, we will continue to replace older technology that is no longer fit for purpose with technologies and services that are more optimised for particular areas of the Courts Service. It is a priority to identify any unsupported software and hardware and remove or replace them with later versions or alternatives.

In particular over the course of this strategy the Wide Area Network contracts will be renewed and higher bandwidth made available. We will work with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) to optimise the use of the planned Government Cloud Network.

Courtroom Technology

We will continue to implement technology

in courtrooms where it will contribute to a more efficient use of court time and resources

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We will renew the Digital Audio Recording contract and where necessary refresh any aspect of the technology where the opportunity exists and where it will improve the service being provided.

Evidence Dissemination

The ability to display evidence electronically in the courtroom has now become an essential part of a modern court. We will continue to expand the number of courtrooms that use this technology and will consider other ways to extend the number of courtrooms where it can be used, e.g. through the use of mobile units.

Video Link & Video Conference

There is already an extensive number of courtrooms with the facility to carry out video conference sessions with remote witnesses. More use is being made of this facility by the Irish Prison Service for appearances by prisoners for very short appearances, contributing to major savings in terms of prisoner movements. New installations of this technology will be made with particular emphasis on the new PPP courthouses.

- ❖ *There will be a refresh of the desktop technology. Over the course of this strategy the Courts Service will complete the rollout of modern desktops to the judiciary and to every member of staff by providing a new version of MS Office software.*

- ❖ *We will complete the virtualisation of our existing server estate, while looking towards using Government Cloud solutions when they are provided by the OGCIO and OGP.*

- ❖ *We will continue to manage security and access control to ensure that there is a highly secure environment with a very low risk of security breaches.*

- ❖ *We will continue the roll out of Wi-Fi with an implementation in the CCJ.*

Case Management, Collaboration and Reform

As systems evolve we will continue to define and refine the definition and understanding of what eFiling means. We will use the newly developed Courts Service Online (CSOL) system to replace legacy Civil Case Management Systems and to implement Liquidated Debt Claims Online eFiling and eRegisters once appropriate legislation and rules are in place.

A key objective of this strategy is to continue to extend the Courts Service Online system. We will prioritise the litigation categories that will benefit from being online on CSOL; for instance plenary proceedings and civil cases in general.

The objective is to have a system that caters for the various litigation case types, which broadly follow three routes to disposal by court judgment or order:-

1. Summary proceedings without an immediate return date leading to

(a) judgment in default of appearance or
(b) one or more hearings, with the possibility of exchange of pleadings, ending with a trial

2. Plenary proceedings without an immediate return date followed by exchange of pleadings, ending with a trial.

3. Proceedings generating an immediate return date, followed by a court order/ judgment or directions for trial.

We will facilitate e-filing where it is required for any case types initiated in any jurisdiction and across jurisdictions.

- ❖ *The programme of development to replace legacy systems will continue and requirements for new case management systems will be provided using the CSOL architecture mainly for civil cases and CCTS for criminal cases.*

- ❖ *There will be continuous improvement in the ability to produce statistical, case-flow and disposal data through the standardised development and production of statistical reports. We will ensure that whatever data is*

required for management information and statistics is captured by our systems. We will review and where necessary enhance existing IT systems to capture the required statistical and management information

❖ *The feasibility of electronically processing Legal Aid Claims will be examined.*

❖ *It is planned that An Garda Síochána will electronically transfer Charge Sheets to the Courts Service using the existing CJIP infrastructure.*

❖ *It is planned to use the CSOL architecture to support all aspects of interoperability in relation to the third payment option including printing of summons by An Garda Síochána once this is implemented by An Garda Síochána.*

❖ *Courtroom technology in all its forms will be updated and implemented according to business needs and available resources*

Provide Suitable Court Accommodation

The Courts Service will ensure high quality ICT infrastructure and services will be available in all 7 PPP sites[1]. We will work with the PPP company to ensure the right equipment is installed on time and to specification.

In existing offices and courts we will provide a high quality maintenance and support service through our outsourced service providers, and we will work closely with the Estates Management Unit and Regional Offices to support all projects involving office moves, relocations and renovations.

❖ *The Courts Service will robustly manage outsourced support contracts and SLAs for its general ICT infrastructure including*

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[1] Cork, Anglesea St. Courthouse
Waterford Courthouse
Wexford Courthouse
Limerick Courthouse
Letterkenny Courthouse
Mullingar Courthouse
Drogheda Courthouse

o *Helpdesk*
o *Deskside Support*
o *Server Support*
o *Oracle and Unix administration*
o *Lotus Notes administration*
o *All Video related technology support and maintenance*
o *Digital Audio Recording maintenance and support*

Critical Success Factors for this Strategy

Key factors that will ensure the success of this strategy include the implementation of high performing, modern desktop technology for judiciary and staff. This means a new desktop and a modern office productivity toolset must be implemented to replace the outdated set of products currently in place. Provision of increased bandwidth across the network is also critical.

A key consideration in gauging progress is how well the organisation can react to and accommodate external requirements, in particular in relation to new or changed legislation, and central government strategies. Examples from the recent past include the provision of ICT systems for cases coming from the new Insolvency Service of Ireland and the Court of Appeal. In addition complex work was carried out in analysis, design and development in relation to the impact of the Fines Act.

We will improve our processes and procedures to aid the delivery of successful services and projects. Included will be the introduction of an ICT Change Management Board and revised project documentation standards.

Emerging Strategy

This strategy is guided by the objectives of The Courts Service Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and by the Public Service ICT Strategy 2015 whose 5 strategic objectives are:-

1. *Build to Share*
2. *Digital First*
3. *Data as an Enabler*
4. *Improve Governance*
5. *Increase Capability*

It is influenced by the ever-changing technology landscape and anticipated

changes in the general legal and government environment that will necessitate rapid reaction to new requirements and demands.

Underpinning this is to re-build the technology base following some six years of austerity and reduced investment. Change will be incremental and old and new technologies will operate side by side for a time.

All areas of technology will be reviewed and recommendations sought on the best approach to modernisation. A programme of work will be assembled and a multi-year, prioritised plan will be put in place. Changes that affect operational areas will be introduced as funding is available and when the right change management preparations are in place.

Governance

All business cases, plans, benefits, risks and budgets will be managed through the ICT Governing Committee. Procurement will be in compliance with Public Sector and EU rules and guidelines.

A number of recommendations have been made following an internal audit into ICT Governance and a revision of the governance arrangements will be considered by the Senior Management Team.

Benefits

- ❖ High performing and high quality ICT systems and services will enable staff to provide a high quality service to all court users

- ❖ Up to date, appropriate and relevant equipment and systems will assist the judiciary in carrying out their work

- ❖ Staff will be able to concentrate on higher value work as routine tasks are automated. This also enables increased mobility between offices.

- ❖ They will be trained on a single system that will decrease training time if they move offices.

- ❖ Provision of a single system for civil business will have a standardising effect on processes which will assist in providing a consistency in service

provision throughout the Courts Service.

- ❖ Where new systems or case types are introduced they will be accommodated on the CSOL system.

- ❖ Provision of a number of services online will lead to a measurable reduction in duplication and reduced data entry. Legal practitioners will have direct access to their case-load online.

- ❖ The Implementation of changes to existing systems (CCTS, CAS) to process changes emanating from the Fines Act 2013 will see the delivery of new functionality that supports

  1. Payment of Fines by Instalment
  2. Improved Enforcement
  3. It will provide for attachment orders.

- ❖ Online service delivery will reduce the number of telephone calls and public office callers to the Courts Service. Better internal communications will enable a greater sharing of knowledge. A robust ICT service desk and support will be provided.

- ❖ The establishment of centralised processing services will increase the benefits of online service delivery.

- ❖ New accommodation being prepared under PPP arrangements will have up to date, modern, fast and efficient ICT systems installed

Constraints

- ❖ The data network infrastructure needs to have sufficient bandwidth to carry new services, such as voice, video and online.

- ❖ Legislative and rule changes may be required to enable certain initiatives

- ❖ The Capital Budget for ICT for the years 2015-1017 has been fixed at €4.8m per annum. The programme of work which results from this strategy will be constrained by the available budget.

Risks
Financial

- ❖ Budget ; the single highest risk remains the extent to which the budget allocated to ICT projects can deliver this strategy

- ❖ Insufficient resources available to ICT to deliver strategy.

Staff/People

- ❖ Delivery of the strategy will rely on the availability of sufficient staffing resources.

- ❖ Success will depend on buy-in from Judges/Staff and user interaction for certain projects

- ❖ Adequate training is required for Courts Service staff within ICT and outside ICT

- ❖ Unavailability of user resources for requirements, testing etc.