

Encourage and use new technology where it has been demonstrated to be of potential benefit

Do this by:

- 4.1 Not using new technology just because you feel you need to be doing what everyone else is doing.
- 4.2 Implementing new systems where they can be of greatest benefit.
- 4.3 Discussing how new technology can benefit your project with your partners/team.
- 4.4 Publishing information regarding your procurement plans on your authority's website.

The following pages explain how.

Not using new technology just because you feel you need to be doing what everyone else is doing

- There is considerable pressure to be seen to be progressing down the “e-commerce route”. However, do not think about adopting new electronic systems, unless you are clear of the benefits you will receive.
- Your authority should have an e-procurement strategy and action plan contained within its documented corporate procurement strategy. The strategy should require a structured process to be followed before any new electronic system is implemented. This should include:
 - The identification of available electronic processes; and
 - Option appraisal of the costs, benefits and risks associated with each process, together with an appraisal of the extent to which each is likely to achieve its objectives. Such appraisals should include:
 - The ease of using the system;
 - Any potential savings in administration and/or authorisation time;
 - Evaluation of purchase cost;
 - Additional/reduced cost of controls necessary to safeguard against risks.
- Get the best from your IT systems by making sure they give you the information you need. i.e. what you spend your money on, how it is spent, cost of maintenance on different types/ages of buildings etc.
- In liaison with the corporate procurement team, look at ways in which information can best be collected on current and future procurement plans. Use this to help identify where corporate or long-term agreements may best be established (See Strategic Issues 1.2 and 1.3).

Implementing new systems where they can be of greatest benefit

- Before you spend time and money on implementing any new system, be sure that the cost and time involved is going to be justified by the benefits you will receive. Therefore, make sure you carry out a cost benefit analysis of any proposed new system.
- Be clear as to the benefits you will receive, and that the new system is the best way of securing them.
- For example, preparing tender invitation documents such as specifications, bills of quantities, and draft terms of contract and distributing them to potential candidates electronically can significantly reduce administration time. Similarly, requesting tenders and priced documents to be submitted in an electronic format can aid the tender evaluation process. However, this can be achieved by simply distributing them on CDs and asking them to be returned in the same format. The required benefits can therefore be secured without changing your current tendering procedure, whereas introducing an e-mail tendering system would increase risks but not provide any further benefits.
- Similarly, there are no additional benefits obtained from inviting and receiving tenders by fax, although the risks are substantially increased.

Discussing how new technology can benefit your project with your partners/team

- Rapid and accurate forms of communication between members of the project team, together with ready access to up to date information is a vital factor in the success of a project. Therefore, establish shared systems on site to share cost information, instructions, drawings etc.
- Use Intranets to share information across geographical areas.
- Intranet-based document management systems can be bought off the shelf and can be used to draw together data and processes from various applications and databases, giving staff and partners a single view of project information.
- Data from several systems such as contacts, projects and enquiries can be stored in one consolidated corporate database.
- The Intranet allows employees, clients and partners to access data they require wherever they happen to be working.
- Other areas where new technology can help towards the success of your project include:
 - Use of hand held data capture devices to record measurements just once, avoiding the need to re-enter data later.
 - Web-cams to view the site. Suppliers to view when site is ready for delivery etc.
 - Compilation of valuations and stage payment assessments electronically;
 - Electronic payment systems such as BACS CHAPS etc.

4.4

Publishing information regarding your procurement plans on your authority's website

- Publish your five-year forward programme of key procurement projects on your website.
- Include major capital projects within your 'Selling to the Council' guide on its corporate website, together with bidding opportunities and contact details for each contract.
- Include means of access to your procurement experts, how to seek work from the authority, what contracts are coming up etc.

Further information

IT theme and case studies within the Constructing Excellence website
www.constructingexcellence.org.uk/resourcecentre/themes

BiP Vault system for secure exchange of documents over Internet.

www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge

National e-Procurement Project (NePP) which supports and advises local authorities on implementation of e-procurement as part of meeting the 2005 e-Government target.

Why do all this?

- To make significant cost savings in administration of your projects by improving efficiency.
- To support delivery and meet the target of the council's e-Government agenda.