Introduction

• IT Review set up by Council in summer 2011. Has worked through the academic year 2011-12.

• Chaired by Professor Keith Burnett, V-C of Sheffield. The team also comprised Alison Allden (HESA), Howard Chase, Steve Oliver, Rachael Padman and Steve Young. Jim Bellingham served as Secretary.

• The draft report has now been published for consultation. This meeting is an important part of that process.

• Based on feedback, the review Panel will make final recommendations to Council in early 2013.
Motivations and Drivers

• As a University, we spend over £40Mpa on IT. Are we getting the best possible service from that investment?

• Are our IT services adequate for us to compete on the world stage?

• Do we make the best use of the talents of our IT staff? Do we offer them the best opportunities?

• Are we organised to deliver the best possible services to meet the academic and administrative needs of the University?
This review is strategic

• It is not a detailed review of every aspect of IT provision in the University. That would be beyond both the expertise and resources of the team.

• Instead we have concentrated on structures, on governance arrangements, and on culture.

• The aim is not to specify the detailed improvements that we need to make, but to put in place the structures that we believe will make the right decisions to deliver the best services for the University.
Strengths

- Overall the University is very successful, and the IT services support that;
- Key central services such as the backbone network, e-mail, JANET, and Raven operate smoothly;
- We benefit from the services of many highly skilled and very committed IT staff;
- Local responsibility for provision supports specialist local needs, and allows innovation;
- Our information systems do meet our critical needs, and there has been real progress in improving the service they offer to Departments;
- Research Computing – the HPCS, and many other areas, deliver first class results from their investment in research computing equipment.
Challenges

- ISSS is not empowered to develop and deliver a strategy for IT services that meets the needs of users.
- While the central organisations have many strengths, there is a weakness of strategic leadership in how they plan for and deliver what users need.
- Departmental/Faculty responsibility for provision of generic services means that work is duplicated, and standards vary.
- IT staff in small teams are under great pressure to manage all elements of their institution’s provision. The result is lack of time for training, strategic planning, and even leave.
- Research computing lacks both a central focus, and the strategic oversight needed to ensure that users’ needs are met.
- Information systems do not always meet the needs of Departments.
Principles

• We need to reform governance of IT, to ensure that we have a clear strategy, we prioritise our expenditure, and we provide services that are transparently driven by the needs of users.

• Schools/Departments/Institutions remain the right level, in Cambridge, to take many decisions about provision. That leaves space for innovation, and designing services to meet local needs.

• In an era of rising tuition fees, and tough global competition, we need to ensure that we provide a high standard of service across the whole University.

• We need to attract, recruit and retain the very best IT staff.

• IT services need to be designed with the carbon impact in mind.
Summary of Key Recommendations

- ISSS to be replaced by a new Information Services and Systems Committee to be more strategic, to hold full budgetary responsibility for all central IT spend and hence better represent the needs of users.

- UCS and MISD to merge under a single leader, to create an organisation well placed to deliver the agreed IT strategy.

- Schools to take the ultimate responsibility for delivery of their own services. However, it should be made easier for Schools and Departments simply to buy in high quality standard services from the central organisation. There should be agreed minimum standards.

- There should be a review of career structures and employment arrangements of IT staff, to promote greater mobility of (and opportunities for) individuals and greater flexibility of teams.

- The oversight of large-scale high-performance computing should become a University-level responsibility.

- Information systems need to be more closely focussed on user needs.
Next steps

• This consultation will be open until November 30.

• The panel will re-convene to consider the comments, and revise its recommendations if necessary.

• The report will be put to Council and General Board in the Lent Term for formal adoption.

• If adopted, implementation should follow as soon as possible.

• Questions?
The remaining slides set out the Principles and Recommendations in full.
A1. The aim of this Review has been to make proposals to help the University obtain the best value from its considerable investment in IT, not to cut costs. There is absolutely no intention that this review will lead to redundancies.

A2. As a leading University, in the UK and the world, we should expect the quality of our information services and systems to be commensurate with our standing.

A3. Every member of staff whose role requires access to information technology should have, at minimum, access to a desktop providing an appropriate level of service.

A4. Every student should have access to the computing facilities and network services necessary to properly pursue their course.

A5. The University needs information systems that promote efficient and effective administration and support its statutory reporting requirements.

A6. The governance and organisation of information systems and services should be driven by a strategy which is based on a clear understanding of user needs. The strategy needs to respond to and exploit the opportunities provided by technological developments.
A7. In order to provide world-class information systems and services, high priority should be given to the support, development and retention of talented and committed computing support staff. The University should provide high quality career opportunities, and make the best use of their skills.

A8. In Cambridge’s devolved structure, there should be space for innovation in service provision, and different Institutional needs should drive the design and delivery of the services that are provided. Schools and Institutions must accept joint responsibility with the University for delivering the minimum levels of service referred to in A2 and A3.

A9. The governance structure should ensure that the implementation of the University’s information services and systems needs are met in a way that reduces carbon dioxide emissions as much as is practicable.
Recommendations - Governance

B1. The Information Strategy and Services Syndicate should be replaced by a strengthened Information Services and Systems Committee (ISSC) which is better equipped to shape and drive the provision of high-quality information services and systems across the University.

B2. There should be an ISSC Operations Sub-committee that takes responsibility for the delivery and day-to-day operation of the University’s information services and systems.
Recommendations – Central structures

C1. The University should appoint an Information Services and Systems Director.

C2. The UCS and MISD should be merged into a single organisation under the leadership of the new Director as soon as possible. The ISSC should examine whether other central service providers should also migrate to the new organisation.

C3. The existing central provision of services including e-mail, the backbone network, the JANET connection, and the provision of information services such as CUFS, CHRIS and CamSIS, should continue, with future priorities determined by the ISSC.

C4. There should be a central service that offers an affordable supported desktop service to Schools, Departments and Institutions.
D1. Schools and non-School Institutions should have responsibility for ensuring that their staff and students have access to the levels of service set by the ISSC and referred to in A3 and A4. Schools, Departments and other Institutions should consider whether this can most effectively be done by local provision, at School level, or by use of a centrally provided service.

D2. Each School and non-School Institution should identify or appoint one or more IT Coordinators.
E1. The University, Schools and Institutions should review the career structures and employment arrangements of its computing support staff with urgency, with the aim of improving the mobility of individuals and the flexibility of teams.
F1. An intuitive user interface is a critical component of modern systems, and Project Boards for the development and purchase of particular systems must ensure that this is considered at every stage of development.

F2. The ISSC should strengthen the involvement of Schools and Departments in decisions about strategic investment in information systems to ensure that their needs are properly considered alongside those of the central administration.

F3. The ISSC should review whether urgent action is needed to provide basic user-oriented facilities to assist with the everyday business of academic and administrative staff.

F4. A modular approach to information systems development should be adopted based on a common architecture and public, clearly documented, interfaces to accelerate delivery and stimulate innovation.
G1. The oversight of provision of large-scale high-performance computing should become a University-level responsibility.

G2. There should be an ISSC Research Computing Sub-committee that takes responsibility for the provision and coordination of high performance research computing facilities.