

To: **Executive**
26 January 2021

Digital & ICT Strategy 2021 - 2024
Executive Director of Delivery

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To approve the Council's new four-year Strategy for Digital and ICT.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the Executive approve the Digital & ICT Strategy 2021 – 2024 (attached)

2.2 That the Executive agree the outline work programme included in the Strategy

2.3 That the Executive agree the governance arrangements proposed in paragraph 3.3

3 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.1 A clear direction for Digital and ICT is important for the Council, to ensure the work of the Digital and ICT teams continues to contribute effectively to the strategic objectives of the Council, and delivers the levels of functionality and security required to support effective and efficient operation.

3.2 The work programme is reasonably detailed for the first year of delivery. However, beyond that timeframe, it is difficult to predict exactly what projects will be needed, as this is a fast-changing environment.

3.3 Governance of the Strategy will be managed through existing structures. Progress on the delivery of the Strategy will be managed through the Digital & ICT Steering Group, which meets six-weekly. Half-yearly progress reports will be taken to CMT, and annual reports to the Executive. The annual review by the Executive will also approve the work programme for the following year.

4 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Continue operating "business as usual" but without any review of the strategic direction. This approach risks missing opportunities, or the work of the Digital and ICT teams being focused in areas that do not meet the Council's strategic objectives.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Background

The previous strategy ran from 2017 to December 2020, and has helped to deliver many benefits, including:

- Mobile and flexible working using "soft" phones, laptops, mobiles with data, MS Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint and Outlook

- A new structure, with the creation of Business Partners and closer working between ICT and Digital
- A top-class website
- A new intranet - twice
- Improved resilience and cyber security
- Applications in the cloud
- First steps in automation

It is now time to build on that legacy, and adopt a new strategy that takes us further, delivering a modern experience for both external customers and internal stakeholders.

- 5.2 To develop this new strategy, we have undertaken consultation and engagement workshops with a range of stakeholders. Online workshops took place with Elected Members through Executive Briefing and Overview and Scrutiny meetings, and with CMT and DMTs.

As part of the development of the Ways of Working programme, a number of workshops were held with staff from across the organisation. The principles of how we work coming out of these workshops have also informed the content of the Digital & ICT Strategy.

- 5.3 The new strategy is focused around 11 themes, which emerged through the workshops and the full details of which are covered in the strategy. In summary, these are:

- 5.3.1 Robust and reliable ICT – ensuring our hardware, software and networks offer high levels of security, availability and performance.
- 5.3.2 The next phase of cloud computing – moving applications and infrastructure to the cloud wherever possible. Making use of Software as a Service where appropriate.
- 5.3.3 Information assets and data management – maintaining quality, confidentiality, integrity and availability of data; enabling improved data analysis and intelligence.
- 5.3.4 Location-independent working – ensuring work is what you do, not a place you go.
- 5.3.5 Collaborative working - enabling better collaboration within the council and with partners.
- 5.3.6 Increasing digital skills – enhancing the digital skills of the workforce; building digital leadership skills of senior managers.
- 5.3.7 Digital customer engagement – expanding the use of digital channels; applying digital principles to all service design; ensuring accessibility.
- 5.3.8 Cloud-based telephone system – simplifying multi-channel access for residents; enhancing resilience and business continuity.
- 5.3.9 Internet of Things – automating asset management; investigating opportunities for using our connected environment.

- 5.3.10 Low-code development and automation – using simplified platforms to build applications; using Robotic Process Automation to replace manual processes.
- 5.3.11 Continuous improvement – reviewing the systems, structure, and processes in place to provide ICT support to the organisation, rationalising the application estate where possible.
- 5.4 The work programme emerging from the strategy is still in development. The first year's workload is reasonably well defined, with a focus on migrating applications to the cloud, maximising the investment in the Office 365 licensing, beginning the cloud telephony project and launching low-code platform developments.

Further projects will emerge during the year and will inform the work programme for future years. It is important that the strategy is sufficiently flexible to allow the organisation to trial new technologies as new needs emerge, and opportunities are identified.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report or its recommendations

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications for the projects in year one have already been reviewed and agreed. This strategy maps the direction of travel within the organisation for Digital and ICT and when future projects are approaching commencement, any relevant funding requirements will be reviewed, and the appropriate approval sought.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Each project established under the Digital & ICT Strategy will undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment as part of its initiation phase.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5

Background Papers

ICT & Digital Strategy 2017 – 2020

Contact for further information

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