Cabinet report

Date	**10 MARCH 2022**
Title	**ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY 2022- 2027**
Report of	**DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY PROTECTION, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, HOUSING PROVISION AND HOUSING NEEDS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The council's current digital strategy has reached the end of its lifecycle. As a strategy that sought to re-establish a sound ICT infrastructure upon which modern technology could be exploited, together with the flexibility necessary to allow the council to adapt and keep pace with a rapidly changing digital environment, it is now necessary to set the scene for making the most of the investments made to date. This new strategy therefore sets the scene for the considerations and plans that are and will need to be put in place to meet the ambition for the council's next digital strategy for 2022 – 2027 to make digital, data and technology work for the benefit of all on the Island.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Cabinet approve the Isle of Wight Council digital strategy 2022 – 2027 and establish a programme board led by the portfolio holder for digital transformation. That board will be responsible for the establishment of the associated strategy action plan in line with stated outcomes and provide the strategic oversight of business case developments and resulting project delivery.

BACKGROUND

3. The council's current Digital Transformation Strategy 2017 – 2020 has now come to the end of its lifecycle. The focus of activity throughout that period was one of setting the scene for embracing new technology by re-building the technology infrastructure to make it fit for purpose once again following a long period of underinvestment; moving towards cloud-based software solutions where this proved more cost effective and resilient; the developing digital by default transactional services that allow for self-service wherever possible; developing skills in the use of digital technology and making better use of data and intelligence for decision making purposes.

4.   However, we know that digital technology continues to change at a rapid pace. It is necessary for us to embrace these developments for the benefit of our Island's residents, service users and customers. The complexity of on-line public sector services can also at times create challenges in the delivery of new technology solutions and we know that there are improvements to be made. We must also continue to contribute to the wider digital economy, acquisition of digital skills and access to the internet so that no-one is left behind. Most importantly, it is necessary for us to transform the experience of on-line services with service users at the heart of everything we do.

5.   Our ambition for the council's next digital strategy for 2022 – 2027 is to make digital, data and technology work for the benefit of all on the Island. The aim being to bring about continuous improvements to how we deliver our services; exploiting digital opportunities; keeping pace with technology developments and to build a resilient and sustainable future. To do this, we have identified four key priorities:

Digital Island:
- o We will exploit opportunities to influence technology developments on the Island
- o We will maximise opportunities to enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability and leadership status in digital excellence

Digital Council:
- o We will continue with a digital first approach wherever possible in the design of our customer services to provide better access to services at the times when they are needed
- o We will transform the relationship between residents and the council by providing online services that are exemplar and therefore of primary choice

Digital Citizens:
- o We will help to build the skills and confidence required to make the most of the digital services provided by us
- o We will embrace the digital customer as being at the heart of our service delivery

Digital Intelligence:
- o We will use digital tools to collaborate with organisations across all sectors for the public good
- o We will use digital tools to collaborate with partner organisations to recognise the true value of data and insights that can unlock the potential for new and innovative solutions which meet the needs of our island communities.

6.   Underpinning these ambitions are eight specific outcomes that will drive the work that we do. In doing so, it is important to recognise that digital solutions are an enabler to change and improvement and must be seen in the wider context of changing the way we live, connect and work through people and service delivery. Digital technology also continues to move at fast pace, which means that current thinking and potential solutions may become out of date very quickly. This strategy therefore must be taken as a framework through which we will move forwards, rather than it being a tablet of stone that needs to be rigidly stuck to as the marker of success. However, there are key principles that will remain as the constant in the delivery of this strategy will be:

- o Secure by design, balancing the needs of customers with information security
- o Improving our environment and securing a reduction in carbon emissions
- o Responsive customer service
- o Innovation and the art of the possible to bring about improvement
- o Continuing with the cloud first approach where this is more cost effective
- o A do it once approach to avoid manual re-keying of information
- o Agile working practices that allow staff to deliver services where needed
- o Self-service options that allow for access at the most convenient times
- o Integrated working with our public sector partners to improve service design
- o Accessibility for all
- o Business process re-design using national best practice standards
- o Securing resilience and longer-term sustainability for digital systems
- o Maintenance and investment in core technology essential for the business
- o Maximising the potential to develop business intelligence
- o Developing skills and confidence in the use of digital technology
- o Building a culture that values and incentivises digital ways of working

7.   To assist in the delivery of the strategy a council wide programme board is to be established, led by the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for digital transformation and Strategic Manager for ICT and Digital Services. The board will take the responsibility for the development of the necessary action plan that will take forward and establish the business cases where necessary for each of the identified potential activities that underpin the four key priorities. This will result in the establishment of key projects that will form the basis of regular progress reporting.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Corporate aims

8.   This strategy is fundamental to the delivery of the council's agreed corporate plan 2021 – 2025 and its stated priorities. With digital technology being an enabler of change and improvement, it has the potential to contribute to every part of the council's vision to work together openly and with our communities to support and sustain our economy, environment and people.

Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere

9.   Integral to the proposed digital strategy is the principal of an improved environment, in line with the council's climate change strategy to achieve net zero emissions in its business and delivery of services by 2030; across the school estate by 2035; and an island by 2040. The use of digital technology means that the council can continue to make a significant contribution to the reduction of carbon emissions generated by our staff in the course of their work but also reduce the environmental impact in respect of power consumption, cooling and heat dissipation in our data centre with better and more efficient green solutions now available.

10. The digital strategy will also support the ability for council staff and the community to share knowledge of the social, cultural and environmental work of the council through enhanced digital connectivity that is accessible to all the community of the bioshpere.

<u>Economic recovery and reducing poverty</u>

11.   While not affording specific strategy actions to securing improvements in the Island's economic status, the proposed digital strategy, at its heart, recognises the fundamental importance of the potential that digital developments can have in economic recovery. Priority one 'digital island' within the strategy sets out that it will be our ambition to maximise opportunities that can enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability and leadership status in digital excellence.

<u>Impact on young people and future generations</u>

12.   The decisions the council makes now not, only affect current residents, but may have long term impacts, both positive and negative, on young people and future generations. These impacts may not immediately be apparent or may not emerge for many years or decades. Impacts will be interrelated across the various domains of young people's lives from housing, employment or training, health and the environment.

13.   The United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, in particular Article 12, places a duty for children and young people to have an active voice in decision making on matters that affect them. We value the views of our young people. Incorporating coproduction and consultation with young people into our decision-making process is a robust way of ensuring young people's views are taken into consideration. Participation workers experienced in coproduction can support engagement with the Youth Council, our Island children and wider groups of young people to ensure the voice of young people is sought, heard and acted upon on important matters that will affect them.

14.   As has been set out in this report, digital technology touches and impacts on all people in our everyday lives in some way. It is considered imperative that there is engagement with and contribution by children and young people as the next generation of a digital society in the delivery of this strategy.

<u>CONSULTATION</u>

15.   This strategy is a document that has been constructed based on the council's vision and aspirations for our Island's communities and in recognition that digital technology is a major feature of our society and will continue to do so. Initial internal engagement has been undertaken to inform its development with senior staff, corporate management team, services, internal manager conference forums and Cabinet to ascertain key priorities for services and those which are essential to the delivery of the council's corporate plan. As part of our ongoing commitment to the Island's Age Friendly Charter Initiative, engagement has been taking place with the Age UK digital steering group to assist us in taking account of the specific needs of older people.

16.   The strategy will be a living document that will change and adapt as necessary to emerging needs and developments. There is no statutory requirement for consultation for this strategy, but it has been considered important that we engage with our internal and external stakeholders, representative groups and wider communities to make sure that it delivers what the Island needs. To that end, the

draft strategy has been widely shared, accompanied with a survey to ascertain feedback, with the following organisations:

- o Age UK
- o People Matter
- o Youth Council
- o Chamber of Commerce
- o Town, Parish and Community Councils
- o All councillors
- o Council service managers

17. This survey was conducted during the period 4 February to 18 February 2022 and a summary of the feedback received is shown at Appendix 2. Nine external responses were received, and 21 internal responses were received. Most respondents (in excess of 80% of those who scored agree or strongly agree) to the questions posed indicate that they believe the strategy establishes the correct direction, principles and outcomes to be achieved. Their assessments of the areas for priority attention will be built into the development of the action plan and work programme for delivery.

18. The strategy also affords ongoing opportunity for anyone who wishes to provide feedback or engage with the council on this strategy and its development.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

19. Each of the strategy priorities set out planned actions and activities that will underpin the delivery of the strategy aim and desired outcomes. Many of the activities can and will be established as work programmes within service planning that can be delivered within existing budgets and resources.   Where projects require more detailed assessment for viability and additional resourcing, these will be subject to business case development in conjunction with budget accountants for consideration and decision-making purposes.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no specific legal implications that need to be considered in the approval of the proposed digital strategy although there will be many aspects of legislation that will need to be taken account of for compliance in its delivery. This will include the Data Protection Act 2018 in respect of the council's obligations for information security and governance and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 and wider duties under the Equality Act 2010.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

21. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is considered there will be a positive impact on all the protected characteristics in determining this strategy and framework for digital

developments. However, it is recognised that it will be essential to assess equality impacts with any specific digital development projects that derive from the delivery of the strategy once approved. Engagement with representative groups will be a key factor for the consideration of any impact as will be the conducting of formal equality impact assessments as part of the business case developments.

OPTIONS

22.   Option 1:   To approve the Isle of Wight Council digital strategy 2022 – 2027 and establish a programme board led by the portfolio holder for digital transformation. That board will be responsible for the establishment of the associated strategy action plan in line with stated outcomes and provide the strategic oversight of business case developments and resulting project delivery

23.   Option 2:   To refer the digital strategy for further consideration.

RISK MANAGEMENT

24.   The current digital strategy has now reached the end of its lifecycle and it is imperative that there is a new strategy in place that is aligned to the delivery of the council's corporate plan. The proposed strategy sets out a framework for priority actions and is driven by known priorities for technology developments and improvements for service delivery and in responding to an ever-changing technology landscape. It also acknowledges the need to remain flexible to allow for emerging developments and needs that arise and for active engagement with those affected by what we do as it is impossible to prescribe everything that needs to be done. The establishment of a programme board to oversee the delivery of the strategy and provide a clear steer to the priorities and projects required will significantly contribute to success.

25.   There are capacity and financial risks associated with the approval of this strategy as much of the work programme required is yet to be determined. The preparation phase for any piece of new work cannot be underestimated. By taking a robust approach to the development of business cases where required to ascertain viability, funding and resource requirements balanced against service and environmental improvements, efficiency savings and longer-term benefits/sustainability will afford effective decision making. Robust project management using the council's determined methodology and access our organisational intelligence team support, will also provide the assurance of delivery in approved projects. Active risk registers will be maintained at programme and project board levels to ensure that risks identified are managed and opportunities exploited in line with the council's programme, project and risk management framework.

EVALUATION

26.   It is essential that the council continues to exploit available technologies to secure service improvements, efficiencies and ultimately the longer-term sustainability of public services for the Island. The proposed strategy sets out the key areas of action that will contribute to the delivery of the council's stated priorities as set out within its corporate plan. It recognises that digital technology plays an essential part of our everyday lives and that it is necessary to embrace, innovate and assist

people in their development of skills and confidence in technology so as not to be left behind.

27. The strategy also sets out a framework through which principles will be at the heart of everything we do to make sure that when designing, deciding and delivering technology solutions that they are fit for purpose and will stand us in good stead for the future. With an ever-changing world of technology that continues to evolve at speed, it cannot be a definitive list or programme of work but instead sets out the known priorities at this point in time. It is important to remember therefore that the strategy will remain flexible and adaptable to changing needs and priorities throughout its lifecycle, but which all will be based on evidence-based decision making through effective planning and full consideration of any investments required and active engagement with those affected by our work.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1:   The Isle of Wight Council Digital Strategy 2022 – 2027
Appendix 2:   Summary of internal/external stakeholder feedback

BACKGROUND PAPERS

28. [Isle of Wight Digital Strategy 2017 - 2020](#)

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