

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 15 February 2021

Report Title

Digital Strategy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

Report Author(s)

Steve Langrick, Head of Digital Services
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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The report outlines the Council's Digital Strategy. It highlights the work undertaken already and illustrates how the Council plans to exploit digital technologies to help change the way the Council works to become modern and efficient, provide self-service access to and delivery of Council services and contribute to improving outcomes for local residents and the wider Borough.

Recommendations

1. To approve the Council's Digital Strategy.
2. To note the investment already approved towards its delivery.
3. To endorse the management and governance arrangements.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Digital Strategy
Appendix 2 Digital Strategy – Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Digital Strategy Digital Strategy

1.	Background
1.1	The previous Digital Strategy covered the period 2016-2019 and is therefore overdue a refresh.
1.2	<p>Below is a summary of some of the significant achievements realised through the Digital Strategy and associated investment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of a single case management system to support the operations of both Children’s and Adult services, helping to improve consistency in professional practice. • The development, in conjunction with health colleagues, of the Rotherham Health record – a single source of data available to practitioners to support the delivery of health and care services to patients, resulting in more co-ordinated support and delivery of services and therefore improved outcomes for patients. • A refreshed website and ‘Your Account’ providing an increasing range and depth of transactional services and information through self-service means, at a reduced access cost. This has proved invaluable as part of the response to Covid-19. • Free wi-fi within a large number of Council buildings to support resident access to address some of the financial barriers to internet access. • Provision of increased internet speed, through Super-Fast South Yorkshire, in areas that would not have been reached by the commercial market without support. So far, over 23,300 premises are enjoying speeds in excess of 24mbs and over 430 with gigabit speed. • Deployment of ‘GovRoam’ to facilitate reciprocal access to Council and other public sector systems, regardless of location. Allowing staff to work from any public sector building where this is available. • Implementation of initially Skype for Business and now Microsoft Teams to facilitate unified communications, leading to new remote working and collaboration capabilities. The way the Council has been able to work through Covid-19 has been transformed as a result.
1.3	<p>The existing Digital Strategy is still largely relevant today and therefore this is more a refresh and refocus. Consequently, the key aims of the strategy are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the use of digital technology and continuously innovate to transform the way we work and improve outcomes and services for residents, business and visitors. • Working with partners, suppliers and other organisations the Council will exploit technology to join-up and integrate services and harness new opportunities to work collaboratively. • Strive towards becoming a ‘smart city’ and adopt emerging technologies to improve the quality of life and experiences of

	<p>residents, visitors and business.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To design our digital services to be accessible, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or level of skills and involve people in the design and testing of digital services to ensure they meet their expressed needs. • To promote and increase digital inclusion, working with partners and communities to secure the skills, confidence and motivation to get online and reap the benefits of doing so. 										
2.	Key Issues										
2.1	<p>The Digital Strategy is based around four inter-connected themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Collaboration • Digital Customer Services • Digital Borough • Digital Workforce <p>The strategy outlines the key focus and activities that will help to deliver against these themes.</p>										
2.2	<p>The Council has already earmarked capital investment towards realising the strategy aims, as set out below. However, the impact and prioritisation of resources in response to Covid-19 has stalled the development of the strategy and subsequent investment in the current financial year (20/21). This funding is assumed to roll-forward.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial Year</th> <th>20/21</th> <th>21/22</th> <th>22/23</th> <th>23/24</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Capital Budget (£m)</td> <td>0.650</td> <td>0.500</td> <td>0.500</td> <td>0.500</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Financial Year	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Capital Budget (£m)	0.650	0.500	0.500	0.500
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2.3	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted how essential technology has been in supporting the Council's response and ensuring the continued delivery of Council services, remotely. More than that, it has also ensured citizens have been able to continue to access services through non face-to-face channels, utilising a range of methods.</p> <p>Staff have had to rapidly adapt to and adopt new technology at a significantly increased pace, which in-turn has increased the dependency on and expectations of technology, with a renewed importance and appetite.</p> <p>The delivery of the strategy, new ways of working and realisation of the benefits to individual residents will significantly depend on this new energy and confidence and therefore it is important that it is maintained, through strong digital leadership.</p>										
2.4	<p>The Digital Strategy underpins much of the work to deliver the Council's Customer Access Strategy, providing the infrastructure, software and technology capabilities necessary to realise its aims and objectives, as well</p>										

	as exploring new and emerging technologies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the access channels used.
2.5	Management and Governance arrangements
2.5.1	The Digital Strategy is seen as an evolving document, reviewed and adjusted annually, to take account of changes in priority, emphasis and the emerging technology landscape.
2.5.2	Should it be considered necessary to make significant changes to the ambition and/or direction of travel then this will return to Cabinet for consideration and decision, otherwise it will not be required to return to Cabinet for a period of five years.
2.5.3	It is proposed that the delivery of the strategy is delegated to Officers and overseen by the Digital Council Board, made-up of senior representatives from across the Council.
3.	Options considered and recommended proposal
3.1	That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approve the Council's Digital Strategy. b) Note the investment already approved towards its delivery. c) Endorse the suggested management and governance arrangements.
4.	Consultation on proposal
4.1	An earlier draft of the strategy has been shared with Assistant Directors and health partners. Feedback received has been incorporated into the current version.
4.2	As part of the delivery of the strategy, engagement with service areas, partners and the public, where such changes are public facing, will inform the technologies chosen, approaches taken and the solution design.
5.	Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision
5.1	An annual delivery plan will be drawn-up which will outline the projects, initiatives and area of focus to be delivered across the strategy themes. It is envisaged that this plan will be approved by the Digital Council Board as part of the governance arrangements.
5.2	The Head of Digital Services, through the Digital Council Board, will be responsible for implementing the strategy.
6.	Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications
6.1	The recommendations of the report do not specifically have a financial impact attached to them, however, the improvements that the Digital Strategy will

	deliver or enable will be covered via the existing approved capital budget, £2.150m. If the costs of any proposed improvement are deemed to be revenue, the financial implications of those improvements must be covered within the existing revenue budget provision, with a review of those financial implications taken at the time of the decision.
6.2	There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report. Any procurement requirements needed to assist the delivery of the strategy must be undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.
7.	Legal Advice and Implications
7.1	There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations within this report. The legal implications associated with each project and Workstream set out within the Digital Strategy will be considered in the context of those projects.
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	The human resource implications will be considered as part of the implementation of the individual projects and actions that will form the delivery plan for the strategy. In general terms this will lead to increases in productivity, improved efficiency and will support the 'New Ways of Working' theme outlined in the Year Ahead Plan 2020/21.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	The strategy recognises both the beneficial and consequential impacts associated with being online. Not only are there convenience and financial benefits, but it is also recognised that investing in tackling the 'digital-divide' can contribute to reducing health inequalities and lead to increases in educational attainment.
9.2	In addition to the work on digital inclusion, there is also a strand of work on increasing our collaboration with Health and continuing to invest in assistive technologies to support residents to live more independently and/or supported in new ways with technology playing a wider part.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	It is widely understood that there remains a 'digital-divide' and this is much more apparent amongst those residents that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) over 75 years of age b) disabled c) from BAME communities d) living in more socially deprived communities
10.2	The strategy sets-out a clear aim and ambition of reducing this digital-divide

	in the borough and to help those residents that might struggle, due to skills, motivation and access, to overcome these barriers and to therefore enjoy the benefits that can be derived from being online and able to use digital technologies.
10.3	<p>Many of the implications are already represented and actively being worked-on through the 'customer and digital' programme which underpins the 'Access to Services' strategy. Tackling digital inclusion is a key theme for both strategies and therefore, the actions to be taken are fully aligned.</p> <p>Equally, it remains important to ensure alternative methods exist for those people who will continue to be digitally excluded, whether by choice or their personal circumstance.</p>
11.	Implications for Ward Priorities
11.1	The Digital Strategy is borough-wide and therefore has implications for all wards.
11.2	There will be a particular focus on work to support local residents and communities to gain the necessary skills, confidence and motivation to gain the benefits from using the internet and digital technologies through the programme of digital inclusion work and also in extending the availability of super-fast broadband and fibre connectivity to premises across the borough.
11.3	One of the themes – 'Digital Borough' – is focussed on ensuring Rotherham is able to leverage the investments that are available from government and the commercial sector, to extend super-fast broadband and fibre connectivity to many more premises across the borough.
12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	The strategy has been consulted-on with health partners and aligns with the Rotherham Integrated Care Partnership Digital Strategy, which supports tighter integration of health and social care and the facilitation of improved collaboration.
12.2	A programme of partnership activity is being developed to support digital inclusion across the borough with funding coming from the 'Aspirant' programme and matched through the Digital Strategy. The programme includes voluntary sector, health, customer services and the neighbourhoods team.
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1.	There are no specific risks relating to the strategy itself, however, the underlying projects and initiatives will each be assessed for risk and appropriate mitigation actions taken to limit the impact and likelihood in accordance with expected project management practices.

14.	Accountable Officers
	Steve Langrick, Head of Digital Services
	Luke Sayers, Assistant Director, Customer, Information & Digital Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	01/02/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	27/01/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	27/01/21

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