

Member Report

Digital Strategy



Report to: Cabinet
Report from: Managing Director
Portfolio: All
Report Date: 17th September 2024
Decision Type: Executive
Council Priority: Resources

HEADLINE POSITION

1.0 Summary of report

1.1 The proposed Digital Strategy which is appended to this report sets out a series of high-level objectives that will support the council in delivering its corporate plan priorities, in particular strong and sustainable.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That Cabinet agree the Digital Strategy.

DETAILED PROPOSALS

3.0 What are the objectives of the report and how do they link to the Council's priorities

3.1 The Organisational Plan which was agreed by Cabinet in March 2024 sets out the Council's approach to delivering upon the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan, which are:

- Start life well
- Live and age well
- Prosper and flourish
- Clean and tidy
- Strong and sustainable.

3.2 The approach being to develop a suite of key strategy documents, twenty in total, which set the strategic imperative and parameters of council operations. Each strategy document will be underpinned by a plan of how it will be delivered as well as suite of performance measures. Subject to their approval, elected members will own and oversee the delivery of the strategies, with regular update reports provided.

3.3 It is important to recognise that the suite of strategies are interdependent, whilst this strategy focuses on digitalisation the work done here will impact and influence outcomes elsewhere. Equally, the work done within other areas of the organisation

will shape the outcomes for children or impact adults. It is fundamentally important to recognise that each of these strategies must align with the Finance Strategy, both in terms of realistic levels of ambition but also strive to improve outcomes whilst saving money where possible.

- 3.4 **Digital Strategy** – this strategy sets out how the Council will approach the digitalisation of services. Digitalisation will play a key role in the ongoing modernisation of council services helping to improve efficiency and provide value for money. Equally it will be an important part of the council's customer service and communications approach.
- 3.5 Reflective of the Council's financial strategy this strategy sets out an approach to delivering digitalisation within a challenging financial context, maximising use and leveraging all it can from existing systems as well as prioritising the use of resources on the areas which will have a positive financial impact.

4.0 What options have been considered

- 4.1 In agreeing the Organisational Plan members determined the approach to be taken to delivering upon Corporate Plan objectives. This strategy is a product of that approach, focussing on digitalisation, as such there were no further options to consider.

5.0 Impact Assessment

- 5.1 **Climate Emergency** – Climate is one of the key strategies of the Council, as such it is at the centre of what the organisation does. Increased digitalisation will support the climate agenda through utilising technology which improves organisational efficiency.
- 5.2 **Health and Safety** –the Digital Strategy doesn't directly impact health and safety. Cyber security is however a consideration which is aligned with digitalisation.
- 5.3 **Social Value** – the suite of strategies included in the Organisational Plan cover the key elements of council business, which collectively contribute significant social value in service delivery, commissioning and procurement.
- 5.4 **Legal** – the Digital Strategy doesn't have direct legal implications.
- 5.5 **Financial** – the Digital Strategy will, in the short term, focus on areas of council operations where there is scope for streamlining, generating efficiencies which have the potential to save money.
- 5.6 **Human Resources** – at this stage there is no direct Human Resource impact to the Digital Strategy.
- 5.7 **Equality and Diversity** – a key aspect of delivering services to residents of the borough is recognising diverse needs and responding accordingly. This will be a relevant consideration in the delivery of these strategies.

6.0 Implementation Plan

6.1 Timetable for Implementing Decision: implementation of the actions within the strategy will commence upon agreement.

6.2 Lead Officer: Assistant Director, IT and Digital.

6.3 Reporting Progress – progress reports will be provided to elected members in line with the quarterly performance reporting arrangements

6.4 Communications Plan - individual elements of this strategy will be communicated as necessary on an ongoing basis.

7.0 Consultation and Engagement

7.1 In delivering upon the strategies the Council will engage with residents and partners. In a number of instances the subject matters covered within the strategies are well known and have been the subject of extensive consultation and engagement over recent years.

8.0 Appendices and Background Papers

8.1 Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy

9.0 Contact Officer

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Digital Strategy 2024

Strategy Aims:

The key aim of this strategy is to support the delivery of the council's priorities through maximising the use of technology in order to improve organisational outcomes and efficiencies. Digital is very much an underpinning strategy, adopting affordable technological improvement across the wide array of council services. The key focus of the council's digital work in the short-term will be to improve the service offer on the website encouraging more people to transact through it, make the most out of our digital communications tools, as well as the key area of supporting the sustainability of the council through identifying efficiencies which can free up capacity and/or reduce costs.

Lead Member: Resources

Officer leading on delivery: Assistant Director IT and Digital

Alignment with Council Priorities

Start Life Well	Live and Age Well	Prosper and Flourish	Clean and Tidy	A strong and sustainable Council
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As digital underpins all of the services the council delivers, it offers the potential to generate improvements in service quality and efficiency across all of the Councils priorities.

Principles

Principle 1: Improve the council's online and digital services quality and accessibility.	Principle 2: Enhance the council's digital communications offer.	Principle 3: Improve service quality and efficiency by utilising solutions incorporating Process Automation, AI and any further appropriate technologies as they emerge through the life of the strategy.
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Actions

Principles	Actions and Timescales	Survive: Years 1 -2- Quarter to be delivered 2024/25, 2025/26	Strive – Years: 3 - 5	Thrive: Years 6 - 10
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Principle 1, 2, 3	Review the council's customer service offer, identifying areas which can be strengthened and streamlined through adopting digital technology.	Ongoing: Quarterly updates to be provided	Consider further enhancements to digital engagement with residents and service users. Consider the deployment of an RCBC APP to simplify access to new and existing digital channels	Review platform to ensure remains best of breed. Consider accelerating development with additional resources to really drive digital engagement
Principle 2	Increase use of the council's online service offer through targeted communication and awareness raising.	Ongoing: Quarterly updates to be provided	As above	As above
Principle 2	Utilise the council's social media and website audience to support council key council priorities such as increasing recycling, encouraging fostering and the recruitment and retention of staff.	Quarter 4 2024/25 quarterly updates	Look to invest in solutions that assist staff to manage Social Media channels using AI to enhance the offer without increasing manual overhead on staff resource.	No clear action as unclear what Social Media may look like at this point.
Principle 3	Undertake a technical review of home to school transport with a view to identifying any cost savings through improved efficiency.	Quarter 4 2024/25	Look to optimise these and other services with appropriate digital technology to support. This could include workflows and automation to reduce manual intervention and input.	Identify future projects to generate significant improvement is all
Principle 3	Undertake a review of the suite products available to the council through existing solutions/products implementing digital technology which improves organisational efficiency.	Ongoing: Quarterly updates to be provided	Continue to drive efficiency by optimising technology to deliver services with minimum human intervention where appropriate.	Invest to drive service quality and consistency to enable the council

Measures of Success	Performance indicator / outcome	Survive phase target– Years 1-2	Strive – Years: 3 - 5	Thrive: Years 6 - 10
Performance measure	Number of digital services available to residents.	Increase from current baseline of 80 (quarterly update)	.Look to deliver enhanced channel shift supported and underpinned by robust and easy to use technologies	Drive organisational contact to be primarily digital, with only services where this is not appropriate supported face to face or via telephone.
	Number of digital transactions through the council website.	Target to be set using baseline data from non-digital contacts of services made available via digital channels.	As above	As above
	Improved efficiency, reduced cost by better use of technology.	Assess opportunities to further deploy tools already available to RCBC to generate further efficiencies and cashable savings	Asses new technologies for delivering further efficiencies. These may be at cost, but with a robust business case to support clarity on benefits and savings	Enhance further to drive our service improvements to optimise service quality and availability. Service quality will be the primary focus as opposed to savings / efficiencies.
	Increase number of people engaging with social media platforms	Increase from current baseline (quarterly update)	Increase audience by providing active social media engagement and response, using AI to assist staff.	Unclear at this point what Social Media will be and look like. Target to be reviewed closer to the timescale of the strategy.