DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR 2021 - 2024

1.0   Purpose of the Report

1.1   The report presents the Newark & Sherwood District Council Digital Strategy 2021-2024 (attached as an **appendix** to the report) for approval.

2.0   Background

2.1   The previous Digital Strategy ran from a period of 2015 to 2018, which made good progress on a number of areas including the moving ahead programme, improvements to infrastructure and implementing customer relationship management.   The strategy embraced digital with the main focus on council and customer, which provided a good foundation to build upon.

2.2   Due to technology improvements and digital uptake throughout, the 2015 to 2018 Digital Strategy review has acknowledged that multiple digital themes would have provided a holistic approach, embracing council, customer, community and place. The exclusion of these themes limited the progress of: accessibility and usability of the Newark & Sherwood District Council website and the enhancing of digital awareness across the community.

3.0   Strategy Creation

3.1   Throughout 2019 excellent progress was made including enhancing digital awareness through the signing of the Local Digital Declaration, inclusion of digital implications into reports and digital championing within the Council.

Nevertheless, further digital awareness across the community is necessary to reduce the digital divide and digital poverty, evidenced and amplified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with an example; the urgent plea for technology within local schools and the great response from your business units, donating laptops to ensure education within the district continues.

3.2   During 2020 digital transformation continued and further improvements progressed, therefore by no means "starting from scratch". These transformation outcomes have help shape the creation of the strategy.

In summary over the past 12 months the following digital achievements have been acknowledged:

- Digital workshops including key business stakeholders, partners, members and tenants. These identified a vision and set of key objectives that the Council evidenced as the need to deliver in become a modern digital council.
- Rapidly shifted productivity tools into the cloud, including telephony, giving boost towards achieving a fully mobile and hybrid workforce.
- Accelerated the adoption of home working, the use of virtual meetings and digital behaviour changes including computing competencies.

- Live Streaming of Council Committees on the internet for residents to view meetings online.
- Ensuring all necessary employees are equipped with digital tools and training.
- Migrated the customer facing digital technologies to the cloud, ensuring availability and scalability meets the increasing customer demand (including telephony and website).

All of which has been achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing us with a huge amount of learning and giving us a solid foundation to build from.

3.3   Therefore, the aim of the Digital Strategy is:

To provide an over-arching document that gives a clear direction of where the Council, working alongside all of our partners, wants to be in the next three years – recognising that we will continually adapt with an eye of evolving digital technologies.

3.4   This is achieved by focus on the following initiatives:

o   Digital Council
o   Digital Place
o   Digital Customer

Embracing the Digital Community that focuses the initiatives and therefore ensures the whole community is at the heart of the strategic thinking.

3.5   It is proposed that the Strategy will be reviewed annually with a focus on the priorities and the action plan. The plan can then be adapted in light of success, refocus, resources or identified need based on evolving digital trends. This approach offers the opportunity for Members to understand what has been successful, what has not and what we can do moving forward.

4.0   Proposals

4.1   The Strategy proposes a set of initiatives that when focused upon will deliver tangible outcomes aligned to the community plan throughout Newark & Sherwood. It is therefore proposed that Members agree to the Strategy and further to agree to bi-annual updates on progress.

5.0   Equalities Implications

5.1   The Digital Strategy does identify beneficial implications to those impacted by the digital divide and digital poverty. All programmes and projects supported and led by the District Council will have to consider equalities implications within the project planning development phase.

6.0   Digital Implications

6.1   Any digital implications within the inception of identified initiatives, programmes and projects which will be considered within business cases and project plans. Further the Digital Strategy will look to adhere to the commitments made in the Local Digital Declaration.

7.0   Financial Implications (FIN21-22/6012)

7.1   All deliverables outlined in the existing action plan for the Digital Strategy 2021-24 have been factored into the revenue and capital budgets for 2021-24, for example:

- Restructured ICT Business Unit to include Cyber Security and Digital Transformation staff
- ICT support to enable working from home among staff to include digital tools and training

7.2   However, where an initiative is identified that requires additional financial investment, a business case will be drafted by the Digital Transformation Board, and submitted for review as required.

8.0   Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

8.1   The Newark & Sherwood Digital Strategy is a direct intervention in delivering the Community Plan (updated 2020) objective of 'Our Vision', 'Our Purpose' and 'Our Values'. The Digital Strategy translates and evidences the delivery of this objective for the next 3 years, identifying the targeted initiatives, the role that the Council has and the way in which it will be delivered.

9.0   RECOMMENDATION

That the Newark & Sherwood Digital Strategy 2021-2024 be adopted.

Reason for Recommendation

To ensure that the Council undertakes an active role in leading and delivering an evolving digital offer.

Background Papers

Nil

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