

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

27 JANUARY 2022

DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Digital Strategy 2021-24 and associated projects.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Digital Strategy was approved by Policy & Finance Committee on 24 June 2021. The progress to date on delivery of the actions underpinning the Strategy are summarised in section 2.1 below with detail provided in the accompanying Digital Strategy Update Action Plan.

A Digital Transformation Board (DTB), made up of key officers from across the Council has been established. The Board undertakes a review of all digital projects and prioritises these projects in accordance with the Council's Community Plan objectives, with criteria and weightings as bulleted below. This provides Senior Leadership and Members assurance that digital projects align with the Community Plan, accurately reflect a return on investment, provide value for money and thereby ensure a benefit to our communities and service users.

Digital Transformation Board scoring matrix prioritisation criteria

- Delivery of the Community Plan
- Political
- Organisational and reputational considerations
- Number of residents that will benefit
- Number of staff that will benefit
- Full Lifetime Cost
- Legislative/compliance requirements
- Resource required (internal)
- Resource required (external including back fill -cost)
- Resource released
- Degree of difficulty in technology
- Risk
- Future proofing
- Ongoing support
- Time imperative
- Other factors

2.2 The Digital Strategy Action plan has been created with a detailed summary of strategic alignment and project detail. It should be noted that the action plan is a working document based on the business planning cycle, with priority matrices and the principles established from the local digital declaration and supported by officers on the Digital Transformation Board.

2.3 Successful key digital projects, worthy of noting between June 2021 and November 2021 are:

- The migration, redesign and publishing of the new look Council website; this increases the use of the website due to its more user friendly design; therefore providing a more accessible 24/7 on-line service, and improved customer experience.
- Further Cyber Resilience; ensuring systems are up-to-date, that risk to information and data held on the corporate network is manageable and within risk tolerances.
- The migration of land charges register to HMLR (Planning Development).
- Implementation of hybrid meeting devices; allowing officers the ability to communicate with colleagues both internally and externally of Council offices, ensuring our services continue at high standards.
- Investigation and part implementation of a new internal HR & Payroll system; increase employee self-serve functions, reduce management administration time and replace obsolete software.
- Investigation and part implementation of a new housing asset management system; removing the reliance on spreadsheets, minimise risks relating to compliance management, improved data management and analysis to support de-carbonisation requirements and investment management.
- Implementation of Customer Services call recording; to improve the quality of our customer care and the customer journey.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 The next 6 months will see the following digital projects delivered, as featured in the Digital Strategy Action Plan:

- Digital democracy; improvements to the Castle House audio visual equipment within the Civic Suite, to ensure the equipment is consistently reliable, stable and user friendly.
- Using residents' feedback to develop and implement the NSDC My Account (MyNS); to provide residents with the ability able to self-serve and to see key information about all of their accounts with the Council at any time, when it suits them, together with the ability to track existing progress.
- Implementation of Agile Devices Phase 1; improving the ability of our workforce to access information and data from any location, thereby reducing visits back to the office base.
- Delivery of digital services directly to customers to ensure digital inclusion. Reduced/low carbon initiatives. Housing Repairs, Revenues visiting officers and Planning within Phase 1.
- Delivery of exercise Natural Strength, a Cyber Resilience business continuity exercise; ensuring continuity of service during high risk event.
- Investigation stage of Website Phase 2; further improvements to customer experience. Reducing the requirement to telephone for information.
- Implementation of two internal business systems; legal case management and improved servicedesk functionality that will streamline business processes making our services more effective and efficient.
- Enabling council e-newsletters; a modern approach to communication with communities whilst reducing paper copies produced and engaging through digital channels.

- Activation of customer webchat; a modern communication channel that continues to improve our customer service options for all customers providing an additional channel of communication.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 3.1 Each project is required to specifically address equalities and access implications as they are developed. This will be captured through the Digital Transformation Board process.

5.0 Digital Implications

- 5.1 The projects proposed address a number of key areas in the digital strategy, and addresses other strategies highlighted in the action plan. Each project is evaluated within the capacity and capability of essential business units including Transformation, Communications, Customer Services and ICT & Digital Services. Furthermore, cultural change and training needs are identified across the organisation and working alongside digital champions we ensure projects are delivered effectively.

6.0 Financial Implications – FIN21-22/8171

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications of this report as it seeks to report progress on delivery of the Digital Strategy action plan. Each project has a separate budget and the financial implication for each project is monitored by the Business Manager - ICT & Digital Services with oversight by the Digital Transformation Board. .

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 7.1 Each project has its own alignment to the Community Plan, as outlined in the Digital Strategy Update Action Plan.

8.0 Comments of Director

- 8.1 This report provides an update on the significant progress made in the last 6 months in the delivery of the Digital Strategy Action Plan. The report also sets out in section 3.0, the key projects that will be developed/delivered in the next 6 months under the overall oversight of the Digital Transformation Board.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the update provided be noted.

Reason for Recommendation

To keep elected members updated of the continued development regarding the work being undertaken on the Digital Strategy, Digital Transformation board and action plan.

Background Papers - Nil

For further information please contact Dave Richardson - Business Manager - ICT & Digital Services on Ext. 5405.

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