



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 31 October 2023
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance
 Director Lead: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy Chief Executive & Director - Resources
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Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report, Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Digital Strategy Action Plan Update
Purpose of Report	<p>To provide an update on the Digital Strategy Action Plan and provide background context.</p> <p>Every 6 months an update is provided to Senior Leadership and at least annually to elected members.</p> <p>It should be noted that ICT & Digital Services have two corporate strategies, Digital Strategy 2021-2024 presented to the Cabinet and the Cyber Security Strategy 2022-2026 presented to the Audit & Governance Committee.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) acknowledges the value of digital transformation and that the Council continues with a ‘no customer left behind’ approach to digital initiatives, therefore not closing any communication channels to the community; b) endorse the positive continuation of the final phase of the 2021-2024 Digital Strategy, that has a large focus on the digital community; and c) approve the commencement of work towards the 2024-2028 Digital Strategy.
Alternative Options Considered	<p>Closing of those more expensive channels including face-to-face, telephone and postal. This option is not a viable option and as a Council we work towards being inclusive for all of our residents and businesses in the District. Therefore, channel shifting that includes closure of non-digital communications channels would pose risk to those digitally excluded, including the most vulnerable in our communities</p> <p>Not implementing the actions in the Digital Strategy Action plan will cause:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital debt build-up in future years, officers have instances of this within business units when they have not kept the software systems up-to-date and then causing ineffective services, unsupported systems, and an increased cost to fix • Cyber security risk • Poor user experience • Potential saving would impact the MTFP <p>Overall, causing the Council to be less effective in providing services to its constituents.</p>
Reason for Recommendations	<p>To ensure that the Council provides communities with digital services and platforms that are expected, within budgets, time, and quality.</p> <p>Furthermore, ensuring the Council is more efficient and effective through the use of digital technologies including cost benefits and improvements to Council services.</p>

1.0 Background

1.1 In 2012 central government produced a digital efficiency report that highlighted how public services could provide better quality services, that drive efficiency from the use of digitalisation.

1.2 The report provided historic case study data, and it was anticipated that digital savings will primarily be made in the following areas:

- total employment costs of those providing the service, including training
- estate and accommodation
- postage, printing and telecommunications
- office equipment, including technology systems

1.3 The chart below shows a breakdown of the sources of savings based on a “time and materials” model of savings.

Percentage	Category
78%	Staff costs
12%	Accommodation
7%	Printing and postage
4%	IT and equipment

Figure 1, Time and materials

1.4 As an example, upon reviewing the Accommodation category, this Council has seen the benefits of shared accommodation with our partners at Castle House, providing a source of income and delivering a public services hub, yet without digital technologies and Agile ways of working this would not have been possible, especially during the pandemic which escalated this need with remote meetings and utilising digital tools which allows officers to work from multiple locations.

- 1.5 The Council’s approach is to ensure that no customer is left behind and that our most vulnerable residents are not impacted by digital channel shift and therefore we maintain our face to face and telephony communications. Nevertheless, digitalisation frees up officer time to focus on those most vulnerable in the district and helps us provide better quality services.
- 1.6 The most valuable insight from the report was the transactional cost per channel conducted by the LGA via SOCITM, which included face-to-face, phone call and online visits.

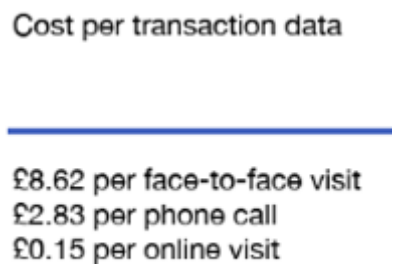


Figure 2, Socitm(2012) cost per transaction

- 1.7 It should be noted that this data is from 2012 and its expected that the human element cost including face-to-face and via phone call will have significantly increased whilst technology costs for online transactions has since reduced, further highlighting the financial benefits for increased digitalisation.
- 1.8 Therefore, this Council together with the majority of other local authorities has ensured that Digital alongside other support service areas, is prioritised in order to make efficiencies in addition to providing digital services that are expected in the modern-day Internet-Era, and local digital networks are invaluable to aid in this success for all local authorities.
- 1.9 During 2012-2019 the Council made advances in the use of digital technology. This was also an enabler for the new ways of working especially when moving from Kelham Hall to Castle House. The emphasis has since been on Housing Systems during the realignment of Housing Management back into the Council, moving to cloud based systems for resilience and staff becoming more agile in the ways of working and project management methodologies.
- 1.10 Below is a timeline of events since the IT & Digital Service had its sole corporate digital strategy.



1.11 **2019** - Digital Championing provides the Council with a digital workforce, that are positive to the change that digitalisation can bring and has representation across all business units. Furthermore, digital champions assist colleagues with basic IT needs making us all more effective and in return are at the forefront of new initiatives. Recent feedback from Digital Champions on what Digital Championing means to them:

“At the forefront of digital change as well as having the ability to affect change across the organisation. Supporting colleagues is rewarding.”

“To be able to hear about the new digital updates in the council and learn how to use it before the information gets shared with the business units, to allow me the possibility of sharing and supporting my fellow colleagues.”

“To help people when possible and be able to solve problems without escalating it to ICT services unnecessarily.”

“I think the Digital Champion group works well for asking questions and sharing information about new projects so that ironing out the kinks can be implemented before going live.”

1.12 **2020** – Investment in ICT infrastructure and equipment to better serve public during the pandemic, this included increases in bandwidth, agile working equipment and server hardware. During 2020, numerous working groups with employees, elected members and tenants was setup to create the framework of the digital strategy.

1.13 **2021** – Council signed the local digital declaration, a shared ambition for the future of local public services aligning to government digital service principles. 300 local authorities have since signed.

During 2021, the Digital Strategy was approved by Council (**Appendix A**).

1.14 The digital strategy was created with the three initiatives of Place, Customer and Council, with the community at the heart of the initiatives.



Figure 3, Digital Initiatives

- 1.15 Objectives and actions underpin those initiatives and throughout the past 2-3 years have provided value and benefit to the Council.
- 1.16 The first initiative in the digital strategy has been completed and critical success factors have been reviewed. The initiative **Digital Council - Objective 1.1** providing Digital Tools for staff and members, has offered hybrid ways of working, emphasised during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.17 This one objective alone has seen the following benefits and value to the Council and its constituents.



- Ability for staff and members to work from any UK location, with the correct piece of equipment for the role, allowing employees to work directly at the heart of the community.
 - Corporate Mobile contract renewal, providing a fully mobile workforce, increasing the mobile data and halving the existing spend and budget.
 - 2429 trees saved via a CO2 calculator, by reducing our mileage and emissions (mileage claims alone). Further carbon reductions not quantified by journeys to and from the office where mileage claims cannot not made and therefore not calculated.
 - £148,000 saved by reduction in mileage claims and officer time spent travelling, contract negotiations, new technologies and streamlining IT systems.
 - Migration of services to the Cloud. Improving resilience, security and carbon/energy efficiency.
- 1.18 The migration of these services to Microsoft Azure, can be up to 93 percent more energy efficient and up to 98 percent more carbon efficient than on-premises solutions.

In addition, by 2030, Microsoft want to remove more carbon each year than they emit. By 2050, their goal is to remove all of our historical carbon emitted—either directly or by electrical consumption—since Microsoft was founded in 1975. Utilise 100% renewable energy by 2024, be water positive by 2030 – therefore replenishing more water than they consume.

Furthermore, the energy and emissions generated by paper mail, email is certainly much better for the planet. Sending an email uses about 1.7% of the energy it takes to deliver a paper letter, adding further value and benefit not quantified in this report.

- 1.19 During the closure of this initiative, ICT & Digital Services were provided with qualitative feedback from those business units that utilised Agile working equipment:

Business Manager - Revenues & Benefits

“Revenues Business Rates Visiting officers and inspectors can update cases on the go, providing the customer with an instant response, no need to travel back to the office and allowing the officer to get home on time.

Officer wellbeing and job satisfaction will see an increase, customer satisfaction increase, reduction in mileage claims, reduction in carbon footprint from reduced travel.”

Business Manager - Planning Development

“Being able to access emails whilst on site has allowed officers to ‘pick up’ new cases that have come through whilst the officer is on site so that they have been able to undertake a site inspection whilst already close to the site thus saving time and fuel.

We have had examples where officers have been asked to undertake site inspections for new cases whilst already on site. Officers were able to undertake necessary background research in real time which has again saved time/ fuel.

When investigating a case on site we occasionally struggle to find the site if it is remote (“field at XYZ”) – the mobile devices been used to speak with the complainant to find the location of the site thus avoiding the need for repeat visits.

Cameras have been used to send instant images of unauthorised tree works to tree officers to gain advice whilst still on site – thus able to prevent more damage.

Site notes updated and photos uploaded on site. Made admin work with legal services more efficient.”

2.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, Officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality & Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime & Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications FIN23-24/7718

- 2.1 No financial implications currently, all the current budget requirements for final phase of the Digital strategy have been built within the current approved budgets.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Appendix A

Projects	Alignment with Digital Strategy Outcomes			Alignment with Community Plan							
	Digital Community			Econ Dev Strategy	Future Workforce Strategy	Customer Service Strategy	Medium-Term Financial Plan	Communications Strategy	Commercial Strategy	Information Governance Strategy	Climate Emergency Strategy
	Digital Customer	Digital Council	Digital Place								
Hybrid Workforce	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Microsoft Office 365		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Website(s) Phases 1&2	✓					✓		✓			✓
MyNS NSDC MyAccount	✓					✓			✓		✓
Connecting Systems	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓
Housing Management Review	✓	✓				✓		✓			
Asset Management Compliance		✓									✓
Electronic Signing	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓
HR Workforce Management		✓			✓		✓				✓

Legal Case Management		✓					✓			✓	✓
ICT & Digital Services Help Desk		✓				✓					✓
Digital Inclusion & Wellbeing	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓
Council E-Newsletter	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓		✓
Cyber Essentials	✓	✓								✓	
ICT Infrastructure Replacement		✓					✓				✓
AR Repairs Support	✓	✓				✓			✓		✓
Digital Democracy	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			
Omni-channel Customer Services	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓		✓
Palace e-commerce platform	✓		✓	✓					✓		
NEW! ISO Standards		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	
NEW! Income Management Review	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓			

Projects	Project Description	New Value / Expected Benefits	2021-2024				
			Start Date	Expected End Date	Current Status RAG	Budget Type	Business Owner
Agile Workforce	Improving the mobility and flexibility of service delivery with Agile devices and applications.	<p>Improve the ability of workforce to access information and data from any location, reduction in return to base visits required.</p> <p>Delivery of digital services directly to customers to ensure digital inclusion. Reduced/low carbon initiatives.</p>	06-21	11-22	😊	Capital & Revenue	ICT & Digital Services
Microsoft Office 365	Migration of existing services to Microsoft 365 cloud and utilising those for digital transformation.	Process transformation, cloud enablement, collaboration and unified services.	03-21	03-24	😊	Revenue	ICT & Digital Services
Website Phase 1 Migrate – Rebuild - Redesign	Improvement and redevelopment of the existing NSDC website to provide an accessible and modern customer experience.	<p>Reduction in people excluded from using the website due to its design and therefore providing a more accessible service.</p> <p>Improved customer experience. Reducing the requirement to telephone for information.</p>	03-21	03-22	😊	Capital & Revenue	ICT & Digital Services, Transformation & Communications

<p>Website Phase 2</p> <p>Continual improvement</p>	<p>Further improvements to the website following from Website phase 1.</p> <p>Including – further accessibility, ancillary sites and WCAG ranking improvements.</p>	<p>Further improvements to customer experience.</p> <p>Reducing the requirement to telephone for information.</p> <p>Reduction in people excluded from using the website due to its design and therefore providing a more accessible service.</p>	<p>03-22</p>	<p>03-24</p>	<p>☹️</p>	<p>Capital & Revenue</p>	<p>ICT & Digital Services, Transformation & Communications</p>
<p>MyNS an NSDC MyAccount</p>	<p>Implementation of a customer account portal, establishing a baseline for a 'tell us once' approach and unified services.</p>	<p>Enabling residents able to self-serve and to see key information about their council accounts at any time when it suits them, with the ability to track existing progress.</p>	<p>10-21</p>	<p>03-22</p>	<p>😊</p>	<p>Capital & Revenue</p>	<p>ICT & Digital Services & Customer Services</p>
<p>Connecting Systems</p>	<p>Working with existing and new systems to enable a 'tell us once' approach and unified services.</p>	<p>Utilising webservices and APIs to connect/integrate systems for a unified approach, progressing towards a tell us once process.</p>	<p>06-22</p>	<p>03-24</p>	<p>☹️</p>	<p>GF/HRA Capital & Revenue</p>	<p>ICT & Digital Services & Individual Business units</p>
<p>Housing Management System Review</p>	<p>Review of the existing Housing Management System used across the Housing Health & Wellbeing Directorate.</p>	<p>Staff access to system in an agile way, integration options with other related systems such as council wide CRM, functionality to improve tenant engagement and service improvements.</p> <p>Deliver new functionality to ensure continued compliance with legislation and regulatory responsibilities.</p>	<p>03-22</p>	<p>03-25</p>	<p>😊</p>	<p>HRA Capital & Revenue</p>	<p>ICT & Digital Services, Housing, Health & Wellbeing</p>

Asset Management and Compliance	Review and improvement of outdated and inefficient processes within Housing Asset Management and Compliance	Remove reliance on spreadsheets, minimise risks relating to compliance management, improved data management and analysis to support de-carbonisation requirements and investment management.	11-21	11-22	😊	HRA Capital & Revenue	ICT & Digital Services, Transformation, Housing Maintenance and Asset Management
Electronic Signing	Modernising the process of document signing	Reduction in cost of production and delivery of contracts, quicker resolution as signature requests can be received via email.	06-22	09-22	😞	Revenue	ICT & Digital Services & Transformation
HR Workforce Management System	Modernising and improvement of HR & Payroll business processes, records and data management	Increase employee self-serve functions, reduce management administration time and replace obsolete software.	09-21	03-23	😊	Capital & Revenue	Financial Services & HR
Legal CMS	Implementation of a case management system, utilising modern services	Enable effective case and document management. Reduce costs and save time on everyday business processes. Enable effective security and sharing of sensitive documents.	01-22	06-22	😊	Revenue	Law & Information Governance

ICT & Digital Services Help Desk	Implementation of a modern service desk system, utilising modern services	Improved support provided across multiple channels. Decrease the cost of support and save time with self-service options. Enhance productivity for council employees.	01-22	03-22	😊	Capital & Revenue	ICT & Digital Services
Digital Inclusion & Wellbeing	Supporting our communities with access and skills to enable the use of digital services.	Increasing the reach and availability of digital services to areas of digital deficit, to improve service consumption and delivery for all customers.	03-22	03-24	😞	Capital & Revenue	ICT & Digital Services, HHW
Council E-Newsletter	Implementing a modern approach to communication with our communities	Reduce paper copies produced in line with the Councils green agenda and engage through digital channels.	09-21	03-22	😊	Revenue	Communications
Cyber Essentials and information security frameworks	Continual improvement and maintenance of our digital platforms	Ensure council services are and remain safe and secure for customers and staff.	06-21	06-23	😊	Revenue	ICT & Digital Services
Infrastructure Capital Replacement	Continual improvement and maintenance of our digital platforms	Ensuring all council infrastructure is up to date and in support, with robust disaster recovery in place to ensure services are delivered and resilient.	06-21	12-23	😞	Capital	ICT & Digital Services

Repairs Online (DLUHC)	Modernising the repairs process	Investigations into Improved identification of repair need before site visit, reduction in repairs visits, and reduction in additional visits due to improved identification of resource requirements prior to visit.	09-22	09-23	😊	HRA Revenue	Housing maintenance, asset management, ICT & Digital Services
Digital Democracy	Improvements to live streaming and investigation into a modern members portal	Greater access to the Council's decision-making process. Improved connections with elected representatives.	03-22	03-23	😊	Capital & Revenue	Democratic Services, ICT & Digital Services
Digital Community	Community Centre Broadband	Providing connectivity around the district for staff, residents and tenants	06-22	03-24	😊	Revenue	HHW, ICT & Digital Services
Omni-channel Customer Services	Improving and expanding our customer communication channels (Call recording/Web chat/CRM integration)	Continue to improve customer service options for all customers with the introduction of additional channels of communication.	02-22	09-22	😊	Revenue	Customer Services, ICT & Digital Services
Palace e-commerce platform	Replacement of existing digital ticket sales offering for the palace theatre	Improved customer experience with a modern platform with the potential to increase revenue. Ability to expand marketing potential.	03-22	03-23	😊	Capital & Revenue	Heritage, ICT & Digital Services

NEW! ISO Standard	Implement information security best practices	Ensure council services are and remain safe and secure for customers and staff.	08-22	08-24	😊	Revenue	ICT & Digital Services & Information Governance
NEW! Income Management Implementation	Replace income management system	Providing a more accessible service. Improved customer experience. Reducing the requirement to telephone for information. Improving back-office processing and efficiency.	06-23	07-24	😊	Capital & Revenue	Finance, Customer Services, ICT & Digital Services
NEW! Planning & Public Protection Management Review	Review of existing Planning, premises & Public Protection Management	Providing a more accessible service. Improved customer experience. Reducing the requirement to telephone for information. Improving back-office processing and efficiency	06-22	06-25	😊	Capital & Revenue	Planning, premises & Public Protection, ICT & Digital Services
NEW! Digital Signage Review	Review of existing digital signage offer	Enable information sharing across multiple sites for internal staff information and look to provide advertising for local businesses	03-23	03-24	😊	Capital & Revenue	Communications, Heritage & Culture, Waste Services and ICT & Digital Services