![Newark & Sherwood District Council logo]

Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee:1 September 2025

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development

Lead Officer: Mark Randle, Transformation & Service Improvement Officer

Report Summary	
Report Title	Digital Strategy Refresh Working Group Outcomes
Purpose of Report	To update Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) on the work of the member working group on Digital Strategy and bring to PPIC recommendations from the working group.
Recommendations	That the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee note: a) the work of the members of the Working Group; and b) the approach and results of the stakeholder surveys conducted used to provide insight for the 2025-2028 Digital Strategy

1.0   Background

1.1   This Working Group was created after a submission of a Topic Request Form at Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) on 24 June 2024, titled:

"Digital Strategy Refresh 2024-2028"

Cllr Lee Brazier proposed the 'Topic Request' and it was seconded by Cllr Paul Peacock.

It is recommended that the Newark & Sherwood District Council has a digital strategy, and it is also an expectation of the Local Government Association (LGA). The existing digital strategy ended in 2024. Therefore, it was considered ideal timing to refresh the strategy, alongside the next industrial revolution with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning. Without a digital strategy the direction of travel could be too vague and cause misdirection of precious council resources.

The working group aims to gather councillors' insights into the forthcoming digital strategy refresh, ensuring that it effectively supports both councillors and their constituents over the next four years.

1.2   The working group looked at some of the many areas that need to be considered within the next digital strategy using the four pillars of Digital Council, Digital Customer, Digital Place and Digital Community, these include:

- Emerging technology
- Post covid customer expectations

- Amazon like services
- Digital poverty

2.0 **The Working Group**

2.1 The group met five times between September 2024 and March 2025 with input from the following working group elected councillors:
- Cllr Ross(chair)
- Cllr Shakeshaft
- Cllr Freeman
- Cllr Harris

2.2 The working group was supported by a team of officers who, considering the direction given by elected councillors, gathered information and data to inform the sessions.

2.3 The agreed objectives of the working group were:
1. Understand what councillors and their constituents need from a Digital Strategy that will help them over the next 4 years.
2. Discover what are the emerging technologies and how they will impact residents, including Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
3. Understand what the barriers are to lifting residents out of digital poverty, and how we can help to overcome them.

2.0 **Conclusions and Recommendations of the Working Group**

2.1 The working group discussed areas that will influence the refresh of the digital strategy including the 'Digital Council,' particularly around cyber and IT strategy and digital training & champions.

2.2 The group discussed Local Government reform, The 'AI' Government action plan and digital infrastructure, receiving presentations from a number of key guest speakers within the digital field, including Dave Briggs Chair of 'LocalGovDigital,' NCC Digital Connectivity Team, Cllr Lee Brazier ICT Member Digital Champion.

2.3 The group commissioned a survey to ensure that the voice of elected members, employees, tenants, and residents are heard and to help shape the refresh of the Digital Strategy. This would help understand any barriers to accessing NSDC digitally, both internally and externally and how we can help to overcome them.

2.4 There were four separate survey groups, each survey group had a series of generic questions and then questions which were appropriate for the different groups. The survey was launched between May and June 2025. The four groups were employees of NSDC, Elected Members, tenants, and residents. The staff and member surveys were sent digital only.

2.5   Residents and tenants were a mixture of digital and in person completion. The residents panel was used, and Customer Services staff spoke with residents and tenants attending Castle House reception and over the phone, the Tenant Engagement Board was also used for tenants.

2.6   The survey response rate was:
1.   Employees   111
2.   Elected Members   17
3.   Tenants   25
4.   Residents   170

2.7   The insight and information gained from the working groups sessions and the results from the surveys has helped influence the strategic direction of NSDC Digital Strategy 2025-2028.

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

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