

Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 9 September 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Sanjiv Kohli, Deputy CEO and Director of Resources

Lead Officer(s): Dave Richardson, Business Manager - ICT & Digital Services  
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Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report / Non-key decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Digital Strategy 2025-2028
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To update Cabinet on the outcome of the Members Digital Strategy Working Group, survey results of stakeholders and to present the new digital strategy for 2025.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) approve the digital strategy (attached as an appendix) for 2025-2028; and</li> <li>b) note the findings of the working group and stakeholder surveys.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	<p>Extend the existing digital strategy. There is a need to do more than simply extend the existing strategy. The existing strategy is not current and will not sufficiently address community needs or align with central government directives. The expectations of the internal and external stakeholders together with rapid developments in digital technologies enable greater understanding and use of data. This necessitates a fresh strategy.</p> <p>Take no action and therefore no digital strategy. This is not considered to be an acceptable option.</p>
<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	The proposed recommendation is to adopt the new digital strategy, which will offer clear strategic direction for our digital initiatives. This approach aims to minimise resourcing and financial risks, ensure alignment with other authorities involved in local government reorganisation, and provide our communities with assurance that their needs are central to the development of our digital initiatives.

## 1.0 Background

1.1 Digital initiatives are increasingly vital to the wellbeing and progress of our communities, shaping how our residents' access essential services, engage with local

government, and participate in the digital economy. The rapid evolution of technology has redefined expectations; people now seek seamless, efficient, and secure digital experiences that reflect their daily needs and aspirations. Embracing digital transformation ensures our services remain relevant, responsive, and accessible to all.

- 1.2 A strong digital foundation promotes inclusion by making services available to a diverse population, regardless of location, background, or ability. Through initiatives such as digital inclusion strategies, new service channels, and tailored support, no one is left behind—every resident can participate and benefit. This approach aligns with our “no customer left behind” ethos, ensuring equity in access and fostering a sense of belonging across our community and ensures we are not removing any non-digital channels.
- 1.3 Digital empowers individuals, enabling them to connect, learn, and grow. By equipping employees and residents with digital skills, we prepare our community for the opportunities and challenges of the future—particularly as new technologies like artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making become more prominent. This digital readiness enhances economic resilience, supports innovation, and opens doors to employment, education, and social engagement.
- 1.4 Moreover, digital transformation streamlines processes, drives efficiency, and delivers financial savings, allowing for reinvestment into community priorities. It enhances transparency, accountability, and collaboration between local government and our citizens, strengthening trust and enabling meaningful engagement on issues that matter most.
- 1.5 Ultimately, digital is important to our communities because it underpins a modern, inclusive, and forward-looking council—one that listens, adapts, and champions the wellbeing of every resident in an increasingly connected world.
- 1.6 Therefore, it should be noted that the previous digital strategy, which spanned from 2021 to 2024, was developed during a period marked by significant uncertainty, including the pandemic, cost of living challenges, Brexit, and various other external factors. This was reflected in the strategy and is now not the current position, with technology moving at a rapid pace and expectations evolving.
- 1.7 Nevertheless, the previous strategy yielded notable results and positive impacts, including the development of a complementary cyber security strategy, financial savings that have been reinvested into digital initiatives, substantial growth in digital service usage, and the introduction of new channels tailored to customer needs. Additionally, these efforts have ensured that all customers remain included in our digital initiatives, providing a no customer left behind ethos across the Council.
- 1.8 Within ICT & Digital Services, the team includes several professionals, two of whom have achieved Chartered status. The team was nominated for a UK IT Award for our housing repairs online platform; they successfully led a MHCLG digital initiative as product owners and earned recognition from peers as a strong digital council during the hosting of LocalGovCamps (Digital peer network).

- 1.9 Our employees have established a solid foundation of digital skills and experience. Nevertheless, we recognise that ongoing training and new initiatives will be essential in the coming years to further reskill and upskill our workforce in preparation for the next industrial revolution expected with Artificial Intelligence and the transformational change with local government reorganisation.
- 1.10 We have established a solid foundation for the future, as recognised by our elected Members during the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) working group session on Digital Strategy. The working group highlighted several key themes: Digital Customer: where a recognised national local authority digital leader informed the group on best practices in designing and implementing effective digital solutions; Digital Place: with representatives from Nottinghamshire County Council presented their Digital Inclusivity plans; and Digital Council: where ICT & Digital colleagues outlined initiatives in Cyber Security and the internal IT Technology strategy. Additionally, the session featured presentations on other relevant strategies, central government reports, and Data and AI platforms.
- 1.11 Following discussions within the working group, it was recognised that further consultation and comprehensive surveying was necessary. Accordingly, the Council has conducted surveys with the resident panel, tenant engagement panel, elected Members, and employees across the workforce on various digital topics encompassing people, processes, and technology. For residents and tenants, the survey included questions regarding digital inclusion and provided open comment fields to gather insights on how we might enhance our digital services.
- 1.12 The new digital strategy for 2025–2028 incorporates the survey results, which have been analysed and consolidated into profiles for each respondent group. The strategy also references relevant government strategies, reports, and papers, which, together with our guiding principles, identified gaps from government best practice, survey insights, and future ambitions, form the foundation of our strategic framework and outline our vision for the future.

## **2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered**

- 2.1 The proposed recommendation is to adopt the new digital strategy, which will offer clear strategic direction for our digital initiatives which is current and forward thinking. This approach aims to minimise resourcing and financial risks, ensure alignment with other authorities involved in local government reorganisation, and provide our communities with assurance that their needs are central to the development of our digital initiatives.
- 2.2 Alternative options under consideration include extending our current strategy. However, it is recognised that the previous strategy is not current and will not sufficiently address community needs or align with central government directives.
- 2.3 The option of taking no action has also been considered; however, it presents significant challenges and risks. These include a probable rise in shadow IT and digital activities, potential resourcing and financial impacts, and an overall lack of strategic direction for adapting to future change.

- 2.4 Therefore, the implementation of the new digital strategy is intrinsically aligned with the ambitions and priorities set out in the community plan. By placing residents' needs and aspirations at the heart of digital transformation, the strategy ensures that technological advancements translate into tangible improvements in service delivery, accessibility, and inclusion. This alignment is evident in the commitment to digital inclusion—ensuring all residents, regardless of background or ability, have equal access to online services and resources, thereby supporting the community plan's message of equity and fairness.
- 2.5 Furthermore, the strategy fosters active engagement and collaboration, empowering residents, local businesses, and community organisations to participate in shaping our digital services that reflect shared values and local priorities. Through engagement, transparent communication, and adaptive digital solutions, the council strengthens community resilience and wellbeing, underpinning sustainable growth and social cohesion. In this way, the digital strategy directly reinforces the message within the community plan for Newark and Sherwood District to be a thriving, connected, and forward-looking community.

### **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.

#### Financial Implications FIN25-26/6640

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### Legal Implications LEG2526/8220

- 3.2 Cabinet is the appropriate body to consider this report. The report contains the required information to update Cabinet and to seek approval for the digital strategy 2025 – 2028 to address community needs and align with central government directives.

#### Human Resources Implications - HR2526/2364 SL

- 3.3 The ICT & Digital environment moves fast and keeping employees up to date is a continuous process, with employees in some business units requiring more investment than others.
- 3.4 We have recently moved to an online learning management system, Ambition Academy which can help to facilitate some of the learning content and keep records of completed content and support evidence of compliance where necessary.
- 3.5 We will need to look wider than e-learning and identify other means of developing the necessary skills within our workforce, the recent trial cohort of the AI and Data Apprenticeships is an exciting step in a new direction and refreshing the Digital Champions will also be beneficial in bringing some of the changes to life within individual business units.

- 3.6 HR & Training look forward to supporting the ICT & Digital team in the development of their action plan where it relates to employee skills to create a long-term training plan and give consideration to the amount of time that is needed to develop the required skills, a variety of learning styles and ensuring inclusion for those who have additional needs.
- 3.7 HR & Training will also support the ICT & Digital team in the development of their action plan where it relates to resourcing and help to identify alternative routes to employment for new talent and development programmes for existing employees to reduce the risk of resourcing or talent gaps within the team.

#### Data Protection Implications

- 3.8 Information Governance will continue to support the ICT & Digital Team to ensure that initiatives emerging from this strategy comply with data protection legislation.

#### **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