

**POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**24 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**THE DIGITAL DECLARATION**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To endorse Newark & Sherwood District Council signing the 'Local Digital Declaration' committing Newark & Sherwood District Council to work towards being a Digital Council.

**2.0 Background Information**

2.1 The Local Digital Declaration is a joint initiative by MHCLG and the Government Digital Service (GDS) and it was first published in July 2018. The Local Digital Declaration is a shared ambition for better local public services through digital means and seeks to commit to design services that:

- Best meet the needs of the resident,
- Challenge the technology market to offer flexible tools and services that public sector bodies require,
- protect the privacy and security of residents, and
- Deliver better value for money.

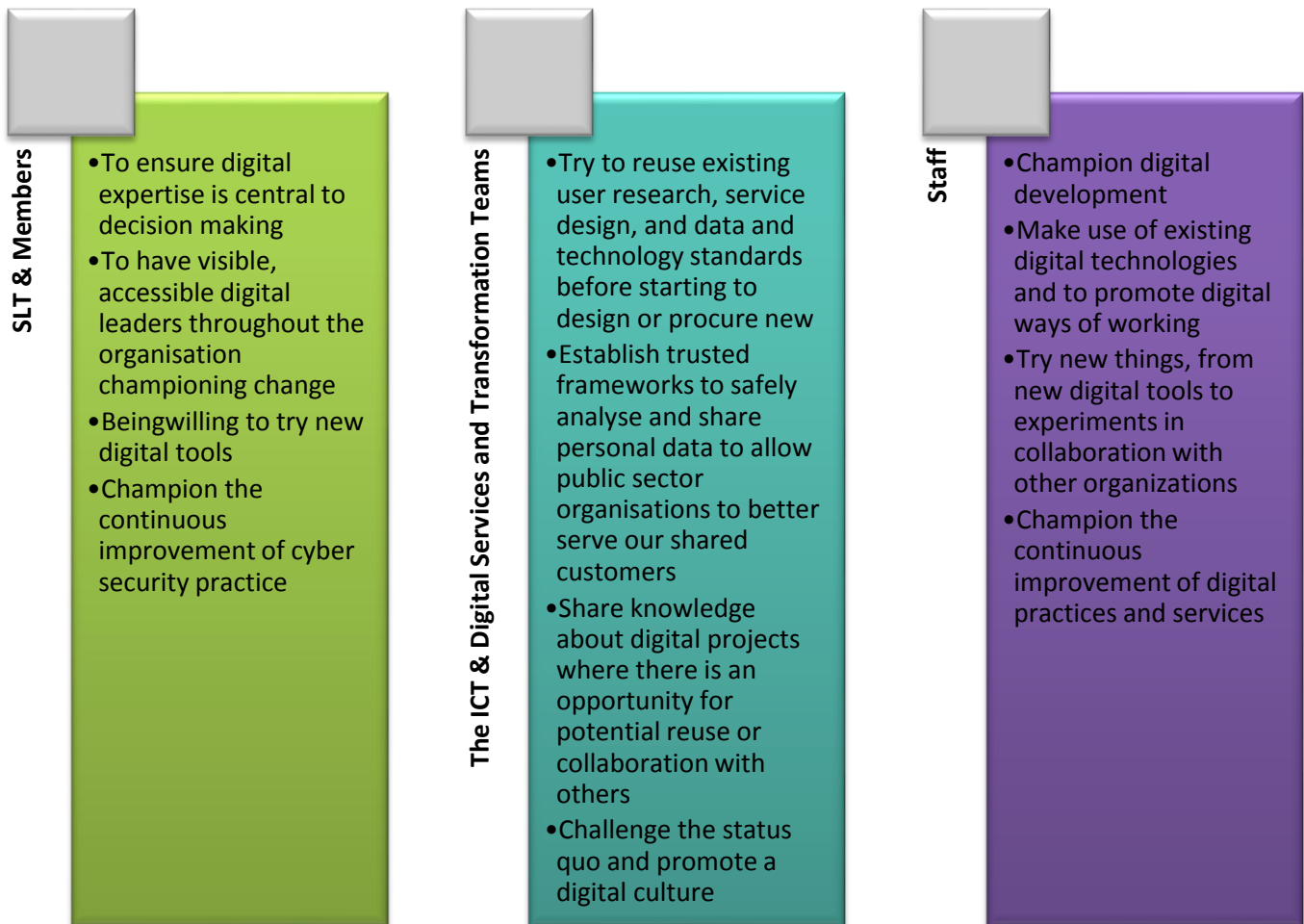
2.2 This diagram highlights what these commitments would mean for residents;



2.3 Local authorities are invited to collaborate on this initiative by signing the declaration and committing to deliver a first action. In turn, MHCLG will support co-signatories and advocate to central government on the digital agenda. To date 45 local government authorities have signed up including; Ashfield DC, Mansfield DC and Nottingham City Council.

### 3.0 Proposals

3.1 In signing up to the local digital declaration, attached as an **Appendix A**, the Council are required to undertake the following actions;



3.2 Signing up to the local digital declaration would mean all Members making the following commitments;

- To consider digital expertise centrally in the decision making process
  - By introducing a digital implications prompt into committee reports
- To have visible and accessible digital leaders throughout the organisation championing change
  - By continuing the roll out of the Digital Champions scheme
- Being willing to try new digital tools
  - By championing change and being open to new things
- Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice
  - Being cyber aware and advocating for the importance of security online

3.3 The declaration would be owned by the IT and Digital Services Business Unit with the close support of the Transformation team. The declaration would be rolled out to the organisation utilising the 'Digital Champions' a group of staff who advocate for digital transformation. This group was first created in 2019 and since then they have been integral to the rollout of Microsoft Teams and Office 365. The aim is for the digital champion scheme to be rolled out to Members as well so that there is a digital champion in every area of the Council.

- 3.4 To sign up to the declaration, the Council must commit to a delivery of a project. This project must contain
- An issue the organisation is trying to resolve,
  - Partnership working with other groups or organisations,
  - A understanding of what will be delivered with this project (within a year of signing the Declaration), and
  - The benefits of the project to specific users.
- 3.5 The Council want to launch the Declaration commitment with a community focused project that works towards digital inclusivity. Despite the transformative impact of technology on society, many people in the UK remain digitally excluded. This is important as residents who are excluded digitally are also more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged, and the digital divide exacerbates this inequality.
- 3.6 The aim is for the first digital declaration project to work to combat this inequality. The IT a IT and Digital Services and Transformation Business Units will be working with members and residents to develop this project.
- 3.7 There is the potential for this project to receive funding through The Local Digital Fund. This fund was announced in July 2018 by Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It aims to help local authorities implement the Local Digital Declaration by funding digital skills training and projects that address common local service challenges in common, reusable ways. £7.5 million was assigned for 2018/19 and 2019/20. One of the current projects is digital skills training to all signatories of the Local Digital Declaration, delivered by GDS Academy, for both leaders and delivery teams.

#### **4.0 Equalities Implications**

- 4.1 Despite the transformative impact of technology on society, many people in the UK remain digitally excluded. This matters as those who are excluded digitally are also far more likely to be disadvantaged according to many other social and economic measures. The digital divide exacerbates inequality. A digital declaration project could aim to tackle this inequality by upskilling residents and consulting with residents on how the Council can shape its digital services to customer need.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications (FIN20-21/8953)**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications will be considered through the Council's Senior Leadership Team and relevant committees for each project.

#### **6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives**

- 6.1 This Digital Declaration commitment works towards the objective to “generate more income, improve value for money and increase residents’ satisfaction with the Council.”

## **7.0 Homes & Communities Committee**

7.1 This report was considered by the Homes & Communities Committee at their meeting held on 14 September 2020, at which they recommended the signing of the Digital Declaration.

### **7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS that:**

- a) **the signing of the Local Digital Declaration be approved; and**
- b) **the introduction of a digital implications Committee report header be approved.**

### **Reason for Recommendations**

**Signing the declaration will provide a digital vision committing the Council to meeting the needs of the resident, providing better value for money, challenging the technology market and protecting residents privacy and security.**

### **Background Papers**

Nil.

For further information, please contact Dave Richardson on Ext 5405.

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