Report to Cabinet

Subject: Digital Data and Technology Strategy

Date: 28 March 2024

Author: Interim Corporate Director

Wards Affected

All wards

Purpose

To seek adoption of the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy which will drive improvement in the way the Council delivers its services and create more efficient ways of working.

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

  That Members:

    1) Adopt the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy at Appendix 1

---

1   Background

1.1   A baseline review of the Council's ICT function undertaken during Covid-19, recommended that the Council needed to develop a clear strategy around ICT provision, this was supported by internal audit recommendations which provided that a strategy to manage ICT procurement, delivery and risk was needed. Furthermore, through service review, particularly in Customer Services it has been identified that whilst the Council operates a number of different ICT systems, the experience of managing those systems and serving the customer effectively is challenging.

1.2   As part of the Gedling Plan 2023-27, digital improvements to services was recognised as a key requirement under the Council's priorities and in summer 2023, an internal Digital Transformation team was established combining staff from ICT and other departments to take a wider, corporate look at ICT throughout the organisation and the customer experience.

1.3   In order to support the creation of an ICT strategy, the Council procured the services of Change Network to work with the Council to create the strategy, provide a roadmap for delivery of the strategy and to advise on the best operating model for the Council's ICT function.

1.4   Change Network undertook a discovery exercise engaging with officers and members through a series of 40 face to face sessions across the organisation, including engagement with Corporate Management team and conducting observations in the customer contact centre. In addition, Change Network considered more than 50 pieces of information including the Gedling Plan, MTFP, risk registers, information asset registers, performance data, customer services metrics and the Digital Exclusion Risk Index for Gedling Borough.

1.5   Change Network used the evidence from discovery to create a draft ICT Strategy, roadmap and target operating model for ICT. The strategy was considered by the Digital Transformation team and presented to Corporate Management team for consideration. The final draft is now presented to Cabinet for adoption.

1.6   The strategy has been named the "Digital, Data and Technology Strategy" and provides the following as the overriding vision:

"To ensure easy to use, responsive and efficient services enabled by reliable and secure solutions that make best use of data to help improve lives."

1.7   Beneath this digital vision there are a number of key outcomes established for the strategy, namely that the Council wants to:

- Be more joined up

- Deliver easy to use services

- Create more efficient ways of working

- Ensure responsive, reliable services

- Maintain security of data

- Make better use of data insights in decision making

To support these outcomes the strategy sets out principles to achieve the objectives, including taking a one Council approach to governance, prioritisation

and design, considering people as part of the change, designing services end to end, and having effective risk management.

1.8 The strategy identifies four key workstreams:

- Digitally enabled Customer experience

- Smarter Working

- Data and Information management

- Community Engagement and Inclusion

1.9 Under each workstream the strategy sets out the scope of the work, the objectives, the outputs for year one and the benefits to be realised. The strategy provides clear outputs and is easy to read. In terms of outputs for year one, some of the key outputs are:

- Develop a business case for investment into a Customer Relationship Management System including programme design and mobilisation to support implementation.

- Introduce a governance process to support changes

- Create a set of core data standards and controls and review data management processes

- Migrate finance systems to the cloud

- Update employee standards to include digital standards

- Support staff and members in the use of technologies deployed through workforce development

- Establish a digital inclusion partnership network

- Engage the community in the development and testing of digital services

1.10 In order to deliver the strategy, there are a number of critical enablers which need to be in place to ensure effective delivery of the strategy both within ICT and more widely across the organisation. The strategy sets out what those enablers are, which include clear governance and prioritisation arrangements, the right resource in the right places including ICT, project management and leadership resource. The strategy also sets out levels of responsibility for implementation of the strategy and how success will be measured through better data use, feedback and performance reporting.

1.11 It is recognised that there has been a significant change in the digital landscape over the last few years, customers operate in the world of Netflix and Amazon where service delivery is expected to be quick and effortless for the customer. Customer expectation is high, and needs, particularly amongst some of our vulnerable customers are great, and this is balanced against a Council with limited capacity and funding.

1.12 It has been recognised through the approval of the budget that investment is necessary in order to improve services and deliver change through the organisation. The Digital, Data and Technology Strategy is a key component to deliver this change. The document is also key to support the recently mandated Council Productivity Plans which are required by July 2024 to demonstrate how the Council can improve productivity including through digital change and efficiency of services.

1.13 The Strategy represents a huge change in the way the Council will work and not just in the ICT sphere. The strategy will be reviewed annually to reflect progress.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that Cabinet adopt the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 Cabinet could determine not to adopt the strategy, however what is clear is that the Council does need to move forward and establish more efficient ways to deliver services and work smarter. Budget and capacity pressures have demonstrated that the Council must change to ensure it continues to deliver services with ever reducing budgets and higher demands. There are some risks around capacity, data, budget and service levels which this strategy seeks to reduce and without these changes, the Council's risk exposure will increase.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are a number of workstreams and outputs set out within the strategy that will require investment in order to deliver efficiency in the longer term. The investment will include both Revenue & Capital expenditure, budgets were approved at full Council on 21 February 2024.

Revenue Costs include staffing costs and ongoing system costs. Some of the staffing costs can be capitalised for the initial period of transformation of 2 years, after this phase the staffing costs will then become on-going revenue costs. Revenue costs will be funded by earmarked reserves in the first instance and replaced by efficiencies in the medium to the longer term. Table 1 below sets out the revenue Costs over the five-year medium-term plan.

Table 1: Revenue Costs of Digital Data & Technology Strategy					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Costs	163,200	561,100	675,100	675,100	675,100
Funded by:					
Earmarked Reserves	(163,200)	(461,100)	(475,100)	(375,100)	(175,100)
Future Efficiencies		(100,000)	(200,000)	(300,000)	(500,000)
Total Net Revenue Budget	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

The Capital costs include system costs, and project implementation costs which include an amount of capitalised salaries in the first 2 years. The initial capital costs of the project are expected to be financed through the use of capital receipts which is permitted under the direction for flexible use of capital receipts as set out in the Local Government Act 2003 sections 16(2)(b) and 20: Treatment of Costs as Capital Expenditure, with the appropriate approvals

Table 2 below sets out the capital costs which have been included in the capital programme.

Table 2: Capital Costs of Digital Data & Technology Strategy				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
System Costs	805,200	576,800	179,600	1,561,600
Project implementation Costs	159,500	212,600	53,100	425,200
Total Capital	**964,700**	**799,400**	**232,700**	**1,986,800**

The costs of the road map have been included in the capital programme, but approval of expenditure will be subject to a Full Business Case being presented to Cabinet (at a later date) which sets out a viable financial model including efficiencies that will be delivered as part of the project. In addition, in order to utilise the direction for flexible use of capital receipts a strategy must be developed and presented to Full Council for approval prior to being approved by the Secretary of State.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 There is no specific legal requirement to produce a Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, however, good governance and control around ICT projects, and data management and security will ensure better compliance with regulatory requirements and support a more effective organisation overall. The strategy also supports the wider need for Productivity Plans to be produced for the Council.

6 Equalities Implications

6.1 As part of the strategy in particular the Community Inclusion and Engagement strand, it is recognised that not all of our customers are able to use digital

technology for a variety of reasons. This may be linked to a particular protected characteristic. Smarter ways of working will free up some capacity in the organisation, particularly front- line services to support those customers who cannot access digital channels. In addition, where customers can access digital channels but need support the digital inclusion programme will help support those customers. A full EIA is attached.

7   Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1   A carbon impact Assessment is attached to this report.

8   Appendices

8.1   Appendix 1 – Digital, data and technology strategy

       Appendix 2 - Equality impact Assessment

       Appendix 3 - Carbon impact Assessment

9   Background papers

9.1   None

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by the Chief Financial Officer
Date:

Drafted by the Monitoring Officer