

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

03 October 2023

Report of the Director of Finance & Transformation

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 DIGITAL & IT STRATEGY 2023 - 2027

A report recommending a new combined four-year Digital and IT strategy for the period 2023 to 2027.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 On 4 April this year, I reported on the outcomes and achievements of the separate IT and Digital strategies for the 4-year period ending 2023.

1.1.2 For ease, a copy of the report is attached at **Annex 1**.

1.1.3 It was noted by Cabinet at that time that the Digital and IT strategies were ambitious, but Members acknowledged that some significant achievements had been made.

1.1.4 Cabinet recognised that there are still more improvements that can be made, and it was agreed that these ambitions should be factored into a new 'combined' Strategy.

1.2 A new Digital & IT Strategy – 'Cognitive Council'

1.2.1 Having made significant progress over the last four years (2019 – 2023) in migrating the Council's IT infrastructure and adopting enterprise technological platforms, this four-year combined Digital and IT Strategy (2023 – 2027) sets out the Council's **five core digital priorities** in meeting the primary challenges faced by the authority.

1.2.2 Placing our residents and the businesses we serve at the heart; this strategy will focus on transforming the authority to provide seamless and responsive services at the convenience of our customers enabled by cognitive technologies.

1.2.3 The '**Cognitive Council**' transformation aims at providing smarter digital services that are linked to information held within multiple systems in accordance with legislative guidelines. Thus, reducing the amount of information needed to provide the services and ultimately improving the customer experience.

- 1.2.4 As well as underpinning corporate strategic ambitions of the authority, the following challenges faced by the Council are also recognised as the **key drivers** for this strategy:
- Cyber threats
 - Growing demand for digital workplace & life-skills
 - Increasing service demand
 - Financial sustainability
 - Climate Change demands
 - Loss of resilience in the local economy
 - Recruitment & retention challenges
 - Public expectation of quality and efficiency of digital services (24/7)
- 1.2.5 This strategy will be focused around the following **five core strategic priorities** in tackling the above-mentioned challenges:
- Secure by Design & Culture
 - Transformation
 - Demand management
 - Efficient workforce
 - Economic growth
- 1.2.6 The **mission** of our digital strategy will be to deliver the priorities of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) through ***challenge, innovation and transformation***, underpinned by technology.
- 1.2.7 The **vision** will be to become a ‘Cognitive Council’ where the communities and businesses we serve can interact with TMBC online instantly and securely 24/7 for the majority of our statutory services.
- 1.2.8 Whilst this strategy is ambitious, it looks to cater for the multiple and complex challenges facing the Council within the means of its financial and operational resource capacity.
- 1.2.9 The combined Digital & IT strategy for 2023 to 2027 is attached at **Annex 2** for **Cabinet’s consideration and approval**.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 None at this stage

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 This Digital & IT strategy will have a number of positive impacts on the Council's resources, including:

- 1) Increased efficiency through automated processes, streamlining workflows, and reducing the need for manual administration.
- 2) Improved customer experience through providing customers with more convenient and personalised services. This can lead to increased customer confidence and satisfaction, which can in turn lead to increased digital engagement. Thus, sustain the resource growth demand.

1.4.2 The Strategy will be underpinned by individual projects. Each project will be assessed on its own merits from both a financial perspective and its contribution to the overall aims and objectives.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Like all organisations, the Council is reliant on IT systems to deliver its services. The progress made through these strategies has reduced the risks to the authority significantly.

1.5.2 Digital solutions can help to manage demand pressures and make limited resources/capacity go further. However, reliance on digital services can also bring risks. If services are down for prolonged periods, productivity of staff is compromised as are services to the public. Disaster Recovery measures are therefore imperative.

1.5.3 Corporate strategies, goals and priorities need to align and support each other. This Digital & IT Strategy supports the activities and goals set by the Council. Without a clearly defined strategy we may not be able to prioritise our resources correctly, leading to missed opportunities to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

1.5.4 As the reliance on IT systems becomes even greater, opportunities are continuously explored to mitigate risks further.

1.5.5 Adoption of this strategy will help mitigate the following current strategic risks of the authority:

- 1) Financial position/budget deficit, and Savings and Transformation Strategy

Operational efficiencies gained via the automated technologies will help sustain and reduce the administration overheads of service provision.

Thus, becomes a catalyst in enabling the authority to meet its saving targets.

2) Performance Management

Power BI business intelligence and data visualisation tool will help the authority to proactively and dynamically measure performance and make better decisions by providing insights and foresights based on automated data analysis.

3) Carbon Neutral 2030 Aspiration

Transformation achieved over the last four-year Digital strategy has already reduced the IT services' carbon footprint by 73% (over 35 kilo tonnes). This four-year digital strategy will enable the authority to further reduce it by digitising its document management and workflows.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.6.2 Adopting this Digital & IT strategy will enable the authority to serve its vulnerable and elderly residents better through efficiency gained by enabling majority of our residents to self-serve via digital channels.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 Remote working

1.7.2 Device policy

1.7.3 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.7.4 Information Governance

1.7.5 Data protection

1.7.6 Customer Contact

1.7.7 Human Resources

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 Cabinet is requested to **REVIEW** and **APPROVE** the Digital & IT Strategy 2023 - 2027 [**Annex 2**].

Background papers:

Nil

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