

Cabinet had regard to the financial and value for money and political considerations and the risk and equality impact assessments and recognised that adopting this Digital and IT Strategy would enable the Borough Council to serve its vulnerable and elderly residents better through efficiency gained by enabling the majority of residents to self-serve. In addition, it was noted that adoption of this Strategy would help mitigate a number of strategic risks for the organisation including Savings and Transformation, performance management and carbon neutral aspiration.

- 3.2 The **mission** of the Strategy is to deliver the priorities of TMBC through challenge, innovation and transformation, underpinned by technology.
- 3.3 The overall **vision** is 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.
- 3.4 The strategy is focused around the following five core strategic priorities (below) and is underpinned by individual projects. Each project contributing to the strategy is assessed on its own merits from both a financial perspective and its contribution to the overall aims and objectives.
- 1) Secure by Design & Culture
 - 2) Transformation
 - 3) Demand management
 - 4) Efficient workforce
 - 5) Economic growth
- 3.5 The Strategy itself contained a 'road map' with individual potential projects . Each potential project on the road map is colour coded to link to one of the five core strategic priorities.

4 Progress

- 4.1 Attached at **[Annex 1]** is an update on the road map for Members' information.
- 4.2 As Members will note, a number of projects have been ticked ' green' indicating completion. Others are in progress and a commentary is provided accordingly.

Members are asked to review the progress and ask any questions as needed. The Head of IT will be in attendance at the meeting.

5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 5.1 The Digital & IT strategy should 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.
 - 3) Reduces and sustains the IT hosting overheads and helps avoid the soaring energy costs
- 5.2 The Strategy is underpinned by individual projects. Each project is assessed on its own merits from both a financial perspective and its contribution to the overall aims and objectives.

6 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 As the reliance on IT systems becomes even greater, opportunities are continuously explored to mitigate risks further.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 **Data Privacy and Protection:** Compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Council must ensure that they collect, process, and store personal data legally and transparently.
- 7.2 **Cybersecurity Laws:** the council must adhere to laws regarding cybersecurity, which includes the requirements for protecting sensitive information and reporting data breaches.
- 7.3 **Accessibility Standards:** Starting from October 2024, services across the UK government will be monitored for WCAG 2.2 AA compliance to ensure they are usable by individuals with disabilities. Websites and digital platforms must comply

with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility law, which will be the new minimum accessibility standard for all UK Government public sector websites and mobile apps.

7.4 **Procurement Act:** All procurements related to strategy will be done in adherence to the government procurement legislation and guidance.

7.5 **Regulatory Changes:** Digital strategies should be adaptable to future legal changes, as governments worldwide are continually updating regulations related to technology and data use.

8 Cross Cutting Issues

8.1 *Climate Change and Biodiversity*

8.1.1 Some impact on reducing emissions in support of carbon neutral by 2030 or enhancing the natural environment. It should be noted that digital transformation achieved over the last four-year Digital strategy has already reduced the IT services' carbon footprint by 73% (over 35 kilo tonnes). This latest four-year digital strategy will enable the authority to further reduce it by digitising its document management and workflows.

8.2 *Equalities and Diversity*

8.2.1 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. Delivery of the 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.

8.3 *Business Continuity / Resilience*

8.3.1 Through the Digital & IT strategy the Council adopts a 'Secure by Design & Culture' as a primary objective. Underpinning business continuity and resilience into the council's strategy is essential for navigating uncertainties and ensuring that critical operations continue during disruptions. By focusing on both immediate recovery and long-term adaptability, the council can safeguard the future and enhance its overall performance. Regular assessments, training, and updates to plans and processes are crucial for maintaining effectiveness in both areas.

8.3.2 As part of the strategy the council has invested in immutable backups for all critical systems across council. Immutable backups are copies of data that cannot be altered or deleted for a specified retention period. This ensures that once data is backed up, it remains intact and secure from tampering or corruption. This is a critical part of the strategy for ensuring data integrity and availability in the face of disasters, **cyberattacks**, or accidental data loss. In the event of data loss, immutable backups enable quick and straightforward recovery. The council can restore the key systems to a specific point in time without complex recovery procedures and continue its services to the public.

Background Papers	None
Annex 1	Digital & IT Strategy progress update
Previously published information:	Cabinet report 3 October 2023 Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 3rd October, 2023, 7.30 pm (tmbc.gov.uk)