

**Part 1 - Public**

**Matters for Cabinet – Non-key Decision**

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**Digital & IT Strategy Progress Update**

**1 Summary and Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress to date with regard to the Council's Digital and IT Strategy for the period 2023 – 2027.

**2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Placing our residents and the businesses we serve at the heart; the adopted strategy focuses on transforming the authority to provide seamless and responsive services at the convenience of our customers enabled by cognitive technologies.

**3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are requested to **NOTE** the progress made to date on the Council's Digital & IT strategy since its adoption in May 2023, and the direction of travel.

**4 Introduction and Background**

- 4.1 Over the past two years, the Council has made significant progress in delivering its Digital & IT Strategy 2023-27. The focus has been on improving service delivery, strengthening cyber security, and enhancing the digital experience for both residents and staff. The roadmap for the strategy is attached at **[Annex 1]** for Members' information. The green ticks indicate projects that have been completed, and amber ticks indicate work is in progress.

4.2 A detailed list of projects is contained at **[Annex 2]**. However, the key achievements and benefits are as follows:

- **Improved Cyber Security**

The Council has strengthened its defences against cyber threats by deploying advanced security tools, achieving Cyber Essentials certification, and delivering cyber awareness training to staff and members.

- **Smarter Use of Technology**

Microsoft 365 and Power BI have been rolled out to improve data analysis and decision-making across services, helping teams work more efficiently and spot trends early.

- **Better Customer Experience**

AI-powered chatbots and automated updates are now helping residents get faster answers and stay informed about services like waste collection and Council-tax.

- **Mobile and Remote Working**

Staff can now carry out inspections and fieldwork more effectively using mobile devices, reducing paperwork and speeding up service delivery.

- **Digital Inclusion and Self-Service**

New online portals and booking systems are being introduced to make it easier for residents and businesses to access services 24/7, reducing pressure on frontline teams.

- **Data Protection and Compliance**

Tools have been implemented to better manage sensitive data and ensure compliance with GDPR and other regulations.

- **Environmental and Cost Benefits**

The Council has reduced its printer fleet and digitised over 3 million records, cutting costs and supporting sustainability goals.

4.3 The Council is switching from the Agile (SaaS) system to the IDOX Uniform (internally hosted) system following a decision of Cabinet on 4 March 2025. This change offers more control and stability but burdens internal IT teams with hosting, data migration, and support tasks. Consequently, other IT projects may experience delays due to resource reallocation and increased operational overhead.

## 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 **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.

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

7.3 **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.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Roadmap Digital and IT Strategy Summary - Digital & IT Strategy Progress June 2025