A Digital Strategy for a more efficient, effective, and smarter Council

Our vision is to create digital services that are so good, people prefer to use them.

Our aim is to use technology and change the way we work to make ourselves a more efficient, effective, and smarter Council.

Why we need a Digital Strategy

1. Resident's expectations are changing, and the way people interact with the council is evolving. Like many of their experiences elsewhere in their daily life, they expect low-effort, intuitive services, where they do not to have to repeat themselves and that are available 24/7 on-demand. Making requests, payment, and tracking progress should be easy and wherever possible, immediate.

2. In response, we need to change the way we deliver and offer services. We need to provide the digital services residents want and expect, and we should exploit the opportunities this brings to reduce costs (through reducing demand management) and maintain or improve the quality of our services.

3. There is enormous potential for digital to transform the way we work and deliver services. Adopting a Digital Strategy gives the council a recognised framework and methodology that will allow us to achieve our ambition. By focusing on customer needs, skilling multidisciplinary teams, and making data-driven decisions, we will be able to free up resources and allow for the implementation of digital services that meet the requirements of our customers, using software solutions that can be refined and improved upon.

4. Providing better digital services need not be at the expense of those who may have difficulty accessing them. By designing end to end services to be digital first, it is possible to provide better, more cost effective services in a number of ways (online, phone, face to face for example) and so ensuring that our services are accessible to all who need them remains central to how we will implement service changes.

5. The adoption of a Digital Strategy is also about more than just the technology we use. It will enable the Council to radically rethink how we deliver efficient, cost effective and high quality services for customers, as well as how we enable our staff to work.

What we have already done

6. Over the past few years we have followed a "Cloud First" approach to our Information Technology (IT) infrastructure. We have migrated many of our end user applications to systems that are hosted remotely and are capable of interacting with other systems. Many of our systems are already hosted within cloud environments. Other systems such as Revenues and Benefits, telephony and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) have moved to shared solutions hosted by partner organisations.

7. In parallel, we have standardised around a suite of core applications within the organisation. The use of Microsoft Office 365 and its cloud based collaborative tools for example, has enabled us to provide staff with the very latest mobile office applications on any device, at any location, at any time.

8.	In terms of the future, device, application and data management are crucial in providing any mobile environment that is safe and secure. To ensure secure access and productive staff, as well as protecting against security threats and the accidental leakage of data, compliance and security tools such as 2-Factor Authorisation (2FA)[1], self-service password management, conditional application management and proactive reporting have been implemented.

9.	These advances have created a strong, secure foundation, enabling us now to think bigger and more creatively about the challenges and opportunities and how we are best positioned to benefit from them.

What we want to do now

10.	Building on our past approach, we want to set out the guiding principles and objectives for our future direction of travel. The principles are covered in more detail in the section below, but our objectives are:

i)	The creation of a knowledge platform that connects data and intelligent systems enabling us to integrate and automate transactions where this can improve the service we give.

ii)	Careful application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) data analytics and insight, reducing the time customers spend seeking something and staff spend resolving queries.

iii)	Becoming freed from a physical location, through adoption of cloud based services to increase resilience and remove any dependency on physical IT infrastructure/assets.

iv)	For new or changing services; being digital by design, co-designed with a range of customers and ensuring convenient access with a level of consistency that makes services feel familiar and easy to use.

v)	Applying a consistent approach to procuring and reusing technologies to reduce costs of delivery and also to remove any cost associated with the maintenance and overhead of any fixed IT infrastructure.

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[1] **2FA** is an extra layer of security used to make sure that people trying to gain access to an online account are who they say they are. First, a user will enter their username and a password. Then, instead of immediately gaining access, they will be required to provide another piece of information.

11. Our Organisational Development Strategy reinforces these ambitions by confirming our aim to reduce the cost to serve our residents, increasing service responsiveness, and ensuring that the customer gets the service that they want at a time that is convenient to them.

12. We recognise that our staff and are key to delivering our objective. They are our business experts who understand our organisation needs. Supported by our transformed technology function, we want to make sure that they are equipped with the relevant skills and are empowered to continuously improve, find opportunities and implement solutions that can be measured using real time information to provide better, faster and cheaper outputs.

13. We also recognise that the implementation of this strategy could create opportunities for the council as it becomes more commercial in its outlook in order to achieve service delivery in a cost effective way.

Our Digital Principles

14. The Digital Principles form our guiding framework. These are to be used to help the organisation remain focused on delivering the ambitions set out within this strategy.

Smarter – A technological-first approach

➢   Digital will be the primary channel for providing information about council services and for simple, high volume transactions.

➢   We will enable all services to be accessed, applied for or signposted through technological channels.

➢   We will continue to offer other channels where appropriate, for example for complex services to meet differing personal circumstances. **Similarly, we will ensure there are sufficient safety nets and facilitated access to our services for those customers who are less able to access technological services**.

Sustainable – value for money and getting it right first time

➢   We will deliver efficient online services through My Account.
➢   Our staff will be agile, taking advantage of technology to deliver services at a time and place which match customer needs.
➢   We will explore emerging innovative and disruptive technologies to redesign smarter public services.

Smarter – exploiting collaborative opportunities

➢   We will use technology to work with partners and neighbouring councils. We will standardise on systems, share resources and coordinate actions more effectively than operating in isolation.
➢   By having a cross-cutting view of how we support those most in need we will remove duplication and streamline case work.

Stronger - our digital strategy relies on the highest possible standards

➢ **Quality:** We will ensure our digital services are high quality, meet customer needs and compare well to the best in the public and commercial sector.
➢ **Simplicity**: We will ensure our services are simple to use.
➢ **Security**: We will take a robust approach to data security management to protect users, customers and partners from cyber threats. We will protect privacy through effective information management and ensure effective data sharing arrangements are in place.
➢ **Resilience**: We will invest to ensure our residents, businesses, and staff have access to reliable and resilient online services and technology.
➢ **Accessible:** We will ensure digital service design can benefit everyone and that accessibility is externally tested and measured.
➢ **Inclusive**: We will start with customer need and ensure we have plans to support those who have difficulty in accessing digital services and need to access services quickly and conveniently.
➢ **Value for money**: We will make sure digital changes deliver best value and save time and money for customers and the council by designing digital services around the users. We will redesign and automate our internal processes and apply a 'buy once, use many times' approach to technology.

15. Our Digital Roadmap (Appendix A) and Action Plan (Appendix B) set out how we will deliver this strategy and implement the required changes to ensure the organisation applies these Digital Principles.

Appendix A – Digital Roadmap

Appendix A sets out our roadmap with indicative costings. It will be reviewed annually. It envisages two core approaches:

core structural changes - changes to our core systems to principally enable staff to be mobile and work remotely

digital projects – primarily delivering customer service outcomes for residents. For example, the move towards the 24/7 integrated service delivery.

Further digital projects will come out of a strategic review of our end user systems - we need to assess what we have and if it is fit for a digital workplace i.e. can we access the data, interfaces, as well as usability and also identify potential blockages. This will determine projects in years 3/4/5 which aren't included as yet.

- **Web platform redesign** - we want to achieve more than just having a website. Our new web platform will include bespoke customer accounts, properly integrated web forms, geographical mapping and integration with 3rd party hosted systems i.e. revenue/benefits, and waste management services. This will require a structural change involving the different approach being adopted to creating a fully functional and cohesive web platform. This in itself is a major project if we are to achieve a 24/7 delivery model.

- **Any web platform design and application review must complement each other**. This work will need to be completed at the same time because they both will determine the programme and the detailed work packages.

- **The programme envisages that much work is required in the autumn of 2019 through to 2020**. This is because if we are to meet our ambitions we will need by March 2020 to have an understanding of how we are going to conceptually build and redesign our web platform, which tools we want to use, and applications to bring on line and when.

- **Resourcing.** To achieve our ambition adequate resources must be made available. This includes both financial and staff resources. The resources implications will be determined through the annual budget making process. It cannot necessarily be assumed however, that we have skilled resources in house. Outside support will be necessary and in house skill sets will need to be developed. In addition, to achieve the change envisaged by this programme, it will need to be developed in conjunction with a **change management programme.** This relates both to Members as well as Council staff.

Digital Roadmap – Timetable

Core structural changes

Transition to Azure Seamless Sign On	June - July 2019
WIFI network upgrade	September 2019 - March 2020
Migrate file servers to SharePoint	June 2019 - February 2020
User device replacement programme	June 2019 - February 2020
Windows 10 upgrade	August 2019 – December 2020
Elections system OS upgrade and virtualisation	September 2019 – November 2019
Migrate to cloud-based system management tools	April 2020 – July 2020
Implement mobile device management	January 2020 – April 2020

Digital projects

Strategic review of all corporate systems	August 2019 – December 2019
Implementation of Regulatory Services Software	June 2019 – September 2020
Digitalise Committee reporting process	October 2019 – March 2020
Housing replacement project	January 2020 – July 2020
Website development	September 2019 - 2023
Website review	September 2019 – December 2019
Web platform redesign	February 2020 – July 2020
Creation of customer account	April 2020 – 2021
Integrated e-forms	April 2020 – 2021
GIS integration	April 2020 – June 2020
AI bots	August 2020 – 2023
Telephony replacement	2021
Contact Centre replacement	2021

Digital Roadmap – Indicative Costs

Structural change or project	Budget	Estimated costs
Transition to Azure Seamless Sign on	£4k	
WIFI/Network Upgrade		£50k
Migrate fileservers to SharePoint online	Internal	
User Device replacement programme		130k
Windows 10 upgrade		£40k
Elections system OS Upgrade and virtualisation		£6k
Migrate to cloud-based backup solution		£10k
Migrate to cloud-based system management tools		£5k
Implement mobile device management		£5k
Strategic review all corporate systems	Internal	
Implementation of Regulatory Services Software	£350k	
Digitalise Committee Reporting Process		£20k
Housing replacement project	£70k	
Website review		£20k
Web platform redesign		£15k
Creation of customer account		£20K
Integrated Eforms		£6k
GIS Integration		£10k
AI Bots		£20k
Telephony replacement		£20k
Contact centre replacement		£20k

To form an Action Plan

We will put in place a light touch form of IT administration. This involves:
- moving more key systems to cloud based software-as-a-service (SaaS – where software is licensed on a subscription basis and held for us by an external partner). This means developing further the use of cloud services such as MS Azure and Amazon web services for virtual server hosting,
- the integration of Azure Active Directory with multiple cloud platforms,
- the ability to purchase pre-built devices from suppliers using MS Autopilot and
- the introduction of Windows 10 to ensure high availability systems, simplified access and significantly reduced core IT administration costs.

By the end of 2020 we will implemented an electronic Committee Management system and have completed the move from Uniform Idox to the Arcus cloud based Built Environment and Regulatory Service product (encompassing Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health and Housing).

By 2024 we will:
- have further developed our cloud based Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to create a single connected platform to enable us to:
  - better manage customer information and interactions;
  - help start the replacement of legacy applications; and
  - capture a single data and information hub for internal and external customers

- Worked with our partners to decommission, wherever possible, remaining Information Communications Technology (ICT) assets (such as scanners, network switches etc.), in favour of more agile cloud consumption models, by using AI and digital voice-control for multiple scenarios, and have successfully integrated the remaining ones;

- made home working and remote working the 'new normal' for the majority of staff the majority of the time and position our staff to deal with high-complexity-high-value demand while AI solutions meet the rest; and

- created opportunities, yet unforeseen, as a result of the preparatory work on better management and exploitation of our data.

To update our Procurement Policy

Purchases will meet the following principles:

- **Business and financial needs being met**
  - Having a champion who understands the business need
  - Pricing model (i.e. a transparent, cloud pricing model in keeping with cost visibility)
  - Contracts compliant to the new contract clauses (data and intellectual property ownership)
  - Meets service level minimums (availability, performance, modes of support)

- **Technical needs being met**
  - Product is entirely SaaS
  - Use of well documented API's
  - Compatibility of API's with our platform(s)
  - Browser based
  - No code or low code, absolute clarity on skill requirements

- **Security and compliance**
  - Compatibility with our chosen identity and authentication providers
  - Compatible with activity visibility and reporting mechanisms
  - Assurance level and controls in place proportionate to its use
  - General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) impact

- **Strategic**
  - Complies with principles

- ➢ Can't be done with existing tools
- ➢ Enables us to consolidate other tools into it
- ➢ Is purchased with our customers in mind
- ➢ Doesn't require tailoring such that the real total cost of ownership (TCO) defeats the business case
- ➢ Procurement
- ➢ Contract length.

To update our Commercial Principles

We will
- Procure standard tried and rested 'off the shelf' software solutions that do not require significant development or configuration (buy not build/develop, sourcing expertise from the market and internal resources)
- Utilise knowledge of our customer to provide services across the organisation and ensure services are designed from the customers perspective
- Provide a single and informed view of our customers
- Own the customer relationship regardless of customer delivery model
- Support organisational flexibility from start up to maturity
- Create empowered and appropriately skilled and equipped staff and teams
- Enable and encourage upsell opportunities
- Encourage 'up front' payment
- Understand demand and cost of delivery
- Maximise self-service and automation for all processing
- Provide anytime, anywhere end user focused, easy to use services and systems for customers and staff
- Automate customer interaction, test with end users and enable continuous improvement
- Remove complexity
- Be consistent in design
- Ensure service management, not equipment provision
- Provide standard, predictable, user-based costs
- Provide a scalable, agile platform for the future and be horizon scanning
- Buy not build/develop, sourcing expertise from the market and internal resources
- Ensure systems have open interfaces
- Ensure solutions meet security standards
- Ensure good information management and provide single, logical data model.