

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	30 May 2018
Report Title	Digital Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cllr Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
SMT Lead	Mark Radford, Chief Executive
Head of Service	Mark Radford, Chief Executive
Lead Officer	Sarah Porter, Transformation Programme Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To adopt the Digital Strategy

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Digital Strategy summarises the direction the Council is taking with regard to offering a greater range of digital services for our residents and businesses and encouraging innovation in this field, as set out in the Corporate Plan. However, it also reflects the need to provide services to those who are not technology savvy or do not have access to the technology.
- 1.2 In considering Swale's demographics as well as our view that council services should be accessible to all, but particularly to the most vulnerable members of our community, we have been very clear that our digital offer is 'digital by choice' and not 'digital by default'. This differentiates us from our neighbours, but we believe that if we design services well and with the customer in mind many people will choose to use digital channels.
- 1.3 The Strategy imagines the outcomes of how the services we deliver and the way we work will change as a result of greater use of digital technologies and approaches, addressing the areas of:
- Councillors
 - Citizens
 - Workforce
 - Community & Partners
 - Technology & Service Design
- 1.4 Further, the Digital Strategy offers guidance and instruction for the standards and principles to be met when developing digital services to ensure they are focused on the end-user as well as making sure that those who are digitally excluded are not left behind.

2 Background

- 2.1 The digital and technological arena is a notoriously fast moving sector and increasingly one in which the many of our residents and businesses are choosing to bank, shop, transact and commute.
- 2.2 Our website received over 1.3m page views in the last year, far outweighing telephone or face-to-face as the preferred method for finding out about council services. Taking advantage of this preference by delivering more services digitally offers an opportunity to meet not only our customers' expectations, but also to provide benefits to the Council. There are clear efficiencies to be gained from moving appropriate transactions to digital but it must never be about technology for technology's sake.
- 2.3 The Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) estimates the cost of a face-to face transaction to be £8.21 and a telephone call £2.59. A fully digital transaction is estimated to cost £0.09.
- 2.4 The strategy is about providing a framework for the emerging importance of digital methods of service delivery to digital. It is a significant challenge as well as an opportunity. For our staff, digital can be a difficult subject area to keep pace with there are a range of emerging technologies, couched in technical jargon and supported by a bewildering array of software and devices to choose from. It is important that we an approach to service delivery that is sustainable and cost-effective, whilst maximising the use of digital technologies.
- 2.5 When faced with uncertainty, people have a tendency to stick with what they know best and this may mean continuing the use of paper based, unnecessary burdensome processes. This strategy seeks to encourage digital service delivery. If we continue as we are we will not deliver the necessary step change in service delivery for the Council. It is against this background that the Council requires a consistent strategic direction that can be adopted by all involved in the delivery of our services.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Implementing the digital strategy will provide clear direction for service areas to work towards in the development of their future service delivery models, guiding their choices about software and devices, whilst ensuring a consistent customer experience when transacting with the Council.
- 3.2 We will draw up an Action plan to support the Digital Strategy after it is adopted. This will enable us to talk to services and understand their aspirations around digital technology in the future provision of their service. This will be done in conjunction with ICT. Any resource implications will be considered through the budget process.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Do not adopt a digital strategy. This would mean we would not be able to give clear direction and strategy for the delivery of digital services. This risks teams duplicating spend on software, creating many different online services which are inconsistent to use for the customer, and failing to spot opportunities to join up services and improve efficiency. Given the shared ICT resource in MKS, not adopting a digital strategy could also potentially mean that we are pulled in the direction that one of the other Council's would prefer to go. These councils are far more overtly 'digital by default' and that is not (at this point anyway) the view of our Members in Swale.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with:
- Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
 - Chief Executive
 - Customer Services Manager
 - Economy and Community Services Manager
 - Interim Communications Manager
 - Policy and Performance Officer (with responsibility for equalities)
 - Policy Development and Review Committee
 - Policy Manager

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	There are several areas of the corporate plan where the digital strategy could have an impact. These are included in the body of the strategy
Financial, Resource and Property	No immediate implications. Adoption of the strategy should enable us to work in a more cost effective way as an organisation. Any financial implications will be considered through the budget process.
Legal and Statutory	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Environmental Sustainability	None identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
Risk Management	None identified at this stage

and Health and Safety	
Equality and Diversity	Improved digital services should help increase our offer to residents with some protected characteristics.
Privacy and Data Protection	Increased digital activity will mean we need to consider the protection of people's personal data even more carefully and ensure that all data we hold and capture digitally is within regulations.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Digital Strategy

8 Background Papers

8.1 None