

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 17 January 2023

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Digital Strategy 2022 - 2027

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Digital Strategy 2022 - 2027

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2022-2027 as attached at Appendix 1.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The strategy outlines how we will support the digital ambitions of the East Lothian Council Plan 2022 – 2027 and the COVID Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021.
- 3.2 This version builds upon the solid digital foundations established by its predecessor which enabled the council to switch overnight from a predominantly desk and office based organisation to an agile one with a widely dispersed workforce.
- 3.3 It recognises that technology is a key enabler for change and improvement, playing a vital role in transforming the way we work, engage with our citizens and in the operation and strategic delivery of Council Services.
- 3.4 The Strategy provides a framework covering data governance, cyber security, digital principles and overall governance arrangements to ensure the efficient allocation of management and resources to the work programmes and projects that will be delivered in accordance with the Digital Strategy.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The new strategy will compliment and assist with the delivery of approved policy commitments made within the Council Plan 2022-27 and the COVID Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified.

[Awaiting web link to published IIA.]

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – None directly associated with the approval of the strategy. However, financial resources will be required by work programmes and projects that will be delivered in accordance with the Digital Strategy.
- 6.2 Personnel - None. However there may be personnel implications arising out of work programmes and projects that will be delivered in accordance with the Digital Strategy.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy

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DATE	4 th January 2023

DIGITAL STRATEGY

2022–27

Transforming the way we work, engage with residents,
and deliver council services.



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Executive Summary

This strategy outlines how East Lothian Council will support the digital ambitions of the ***East Lothian Council Plan 2022 – 2027*** and ***COVID Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021***.

It sets out our approach to the provision of citizen centric services for a modern efficient local authority operating in the digital age. Building on the progress from our original Digital Strategy (2017-22), it incorporates the lessons learned and culture change brought about by the council’s response to the COVID pandemic.

Over the course of the strategy, we will continue to transform our services to improve the customer experience, improve efficiency, improve ease of use and reduce operating costs. This will enable East Lothian to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new and transformative ways of working and technologies to deliver online services.

Introduction

Technology is a key enabler for change and improvement. It plays a vital role in transforming the way we work, engage with our citizens and in the operational and strategic delivery of council services.

The previous Digital Strategy led to the establishment of the solid digital foundations which enabled the council to switch overnight from a predominantly desk based organisation to an agile one with a widely dispersed workforce at the start of the first lockdown period. The subsequent response to the COVID pandemic has significantly changed working practices and rapidly increased the adoption of technology to deliver more efficient customer focused solutions.

As a council we have embraced these changes. With the focus firmly now on recovery and delivery of the ***Overarching and Thematic Objectives of the Council Plan 2022-2027***, set against the backdrop of the most severe financial constraints ever faced by local authorities, the need to embrace the opportunities presented and build on the existing foundations has never been greater.

This strategy sets out how we will embrace innovative technical solutions to meet rapidly evolving and changing business needs, respond to the changing shape of the organisation, provide value for money and enable us to respond to opportunities and demands for joint working with our partners.

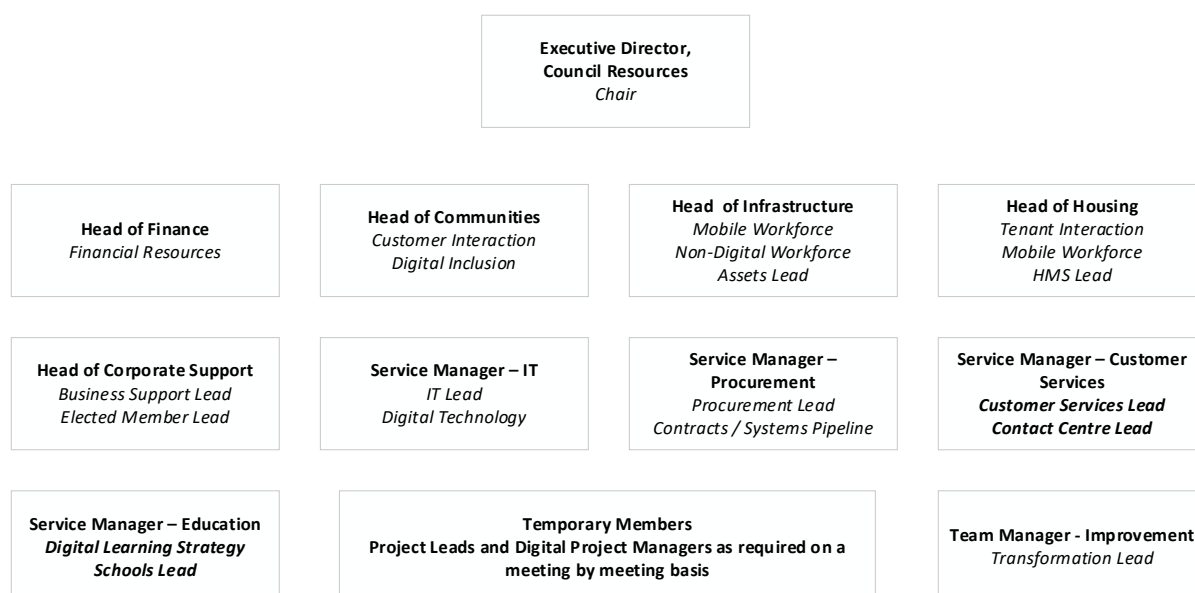
The principles within this Strategy provide a flexible framework that will guide how we develop and deploy Digital Services ensuring a consistency of approach whilst managing data in a safe and secure manner.

Digital Governance

A new **Digital Transformation Board** will be established which build on the work carried out by the previous **Digital Strategy Executive Group** and will report to the **Executive Team: Transformation**.

The Digital Transformation Board will have responsibility for providing the overall strategic direction and oversight of digital transformation and the prioritisation of digital projects and allocation of resources.

The board will be chaired by the Executive Director for Council Resources, who takes executive responsibility for decisions relating to digital transformation. The membership will be as follows with additional members being added on a temporary bases as required.



An annual Digital Transformation Work Plan will be prepared in October each year for agreement and monitoring by the Digital Transformation Board.

Digital Principles

1. The Digital Strategy is a **business strategy**, not an information technology (IT) strategy.
2. Our Elected Members, Executive Team, Chief Officers and managers will champion the use of digital, data and technology across all services and seek to embed new ways of working that enable us to become more customer-focussed, data driven, open and efficient.
3. We will put our citizens at the heart of everything we do and will redesign our services accordingly, co-designing whenever it is appropriate to do so.

4. When designing new services or transforming existing ones we will design them to be **digital by default**.
5. We will seek to rationalise our building assets and ensure they are properly equipped to support the different ways of working resulting from the COVID Pandemic.
6. We will ensure staff have the correct equipment to allow them to carry out their roles, working effectively from anywhere, enabled by a fast and reliable infrastructure in all council owned buildings and with remote access from other sites in line with service needs.
7. We will work with partners, including the Scottish and UK Governments, Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, Health and Social Care Partnership, Suppliers and community groups to deliver the best possible digital outcomes for East Lothian.
8. We will continue to invest in, and work with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government to keep abreast of national initiatives and projects and utilise their expertise where appropriate.
9. Wherever possible we will invest in technologies that have a low carbon footprint and seek to enable and support other green and low carbon initiatives, activities and working practices.
10. When procuring new digital capabilities and technologies we will use national frameworks wherever possible. Cost of ownership, adherence to strategy and open standards will be key award criteria.
11. We will strive to rationalise the number of systems providing similar functionality by reusing and consolidating wherever possible.
12. We will continue to use **MyAccount** and **Bisaccount** as our tools for verifying identities of service users and businesses which will enable us to build a single view of our customers and in turn provide them with more services in a safe and secure manner.
13. We will join the **GOVroam** and **EDUroam** services. These are national roaming services which allow 'zero touch' internet access and network connectivity to public and education sector staff across the UK.
14. We will continue to adopt the updated version of the **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines** (WCAG2.1 AA) and any successors for our websites and online portals.
15. We will follow all relevant legislation and good practice relating to Data Governance, and integrate **Privacy by Design and Default** in our systems, policies and procedures.
16. We will continue to develop and enhance our **Master Data Management** capability to enable us to provide a single, trusted view of mission-critical operational data.

Data Governance

Information is a key resource and it is vital it is managed accordingly both to maintain its integrity and ensure high levels of public trust. Customers expect faster service delivery and high levels of transparency and accountability, while legal requirements for the protection and effective management of information have become ever more stringent.

The council will ensure it maintains transparency, accountability and individual privacy by complying fully with all relevant legislation including but not limited to **Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011**, **Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act**, and **Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR**.

We have undertaken a data maturity assessment to baseline the way the council currently handles information and will deliver recommendations resulting from these activities.

We will develop an **Information Transformation Strategy** with the aim of getting '*the right information to the right person at the right time, and in the right format*'.

Cyber Security

The security challenges we face are increasing and ever changing. As well as more documented attack routes such as virus or ransom ware, other challenges are emerging. Our increased use of multiple and remote devices coupled with our increased use of systems and who accesses them result in a highly complex environment with many attack surfaces for those wishing to compromise our security.

We will ensure that the council infrastructure is secure and resilient using appropriate technical measures to protect our network and the data we hold in our systems.

We will ensure we follow current National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidelines and ensure compliance with Public Sector Network (PSN) code of connection and its successor.

We will provide regular security awareness training to staff.

We will continue to work with our partners across the public sector through participation in the Cyber Security Information Sharing Partnership (CISP) and the Scottish Local Authority Information Security Group (SLAISG)

Growing Our Capacity

Demand for services continues to grow and is outstripping our ability to provide them by traditional methods. We will seek to enable as many service users as possible to self-serve by making services available via our **Online Customer Platform** and other digital channels.

This will enable our customers to access services around the clock and from locations of their choice. This will free up traditional methods to handle the more complex cases or those who are unable to engage digitally.

Based on experiences over the duration of the previous strategy we have sought to bolster our Transformation and IT teams to establish in-house Project Managers, Business Analysts and additional IT staff rather than employing expensive long term contract staff. This has increased our capacity to work with services to bring about service transformation.

The changes in working practices brought about by the council's response to the COVID Pandemic have greatly accelerated Services reviewing the fitness of purpose of the Management Information Systems. We will seek to develop and maintain a roadmap of core **Management Information System** replacements and other key digital developments to help align priorities and secure resources.

The roadmap will also form the basis of an annual work plan which will be prepared in October of each year to feed into the budget setting process.

The replacement or significant upgrading of the functionality of our core Management Information Systems will be accompanied by an extensive business process redesign exercise to streamline and improve working practices and provide better customer service and ensure we obtain the best possible return on investment.

The council recognises that the world of work is changing and our vision for working differently in the future is evolving rapidly. To enable more flexible, efficient and robust working practices it is essential that we continue to invest in our council wide IT infrastructure and equip our staff with the correct technology to enable them carry out their roles.

We will continue to improve the speed, capacity and reach of our networks utilising improvements in technology whenever relevant and affordable to do so.

We will continue to invest in software solutions which will support the council's **Working Differently** vision and enable a hybrid workforce to work effectively whether working from council premises, from home or remotely on site.

Growing our People

It is vital we enable our employees to be confident and competent with the technologies and systems we use to deliver services both now and in the future. Digitally skilled employees can exploit technology and change how processes and ways of working can be made more customer focused, of higher quality and efficient.

A large proportion of our employees are now working on a remote/hybrid basis and heavily rely on digital communication and collaboration for productivity and wellbeing. Those employees who don't use a device currently to do their job may do so in the future and still need digital skills to access HR services, e-learning, or webinars. ***During the lifetime of the strategy we will:***

- **Conduct *Digital Skills Audits* where required and work with the teams and services to build capability and to provide training.**
- **Further develop and grow the *Digital Champions* network across East Lothian Council to ensure employees have the required knowledge and skills to use M365 and other relevant applications.**
- **Provide a *Digital Skills Learning Centre* that is easily accessible to all employees through an engaging and intuitive *Learning Management System*.**
- **Ensure all employees have easy access to digital training.**

Our schools have a critical role in ensuring our children are equipped with the digital skills they require to thrive in a Digital World. The council's ***Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy*** encompasses 4 main goals;

- **Digital Literacy of Staff.**
- **Improving Infrastructure.**
- **Digital Learning and Teaching.**
- **Digital Distance Learning.**

Through these goals we aim for our schools to build upon the digital learning and development brought about by the pandemic, ensuring that we use this progress as a catalyst in continuing to develop learning inside and outside the confines of the classroom walls.

In order to futureproof East Lothian classrooms a focus on upskilling staff in Digital Pedagogy and getting the most from the Google Workspace tools we use is of the upmost importance. Ensuring this is a priority across the council will better prepare our learners with the skills required for a successful future career.

We will continue to invest heavily in ICT in our schools to ensure they have the hardware, software and skills required to meet these goals. This will be done within the parameters of Scottish Government funding and policy intent.

In line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we will ensure the voice of children and young people is at the heart of our work to implement this strategy.

Growing our Communities

Following the periods of lockdown during COVID pandemic there is now wide recognition of the importance of addressing digital inclusion as a priority to reduce social isolation and help improve people's wellbeing including mental health, connectedness and encourage access to employability opportunities.

We will seek to make digital skills training more easily available in our communities. We will work with community groups to identify areas of digital poverty and the best methods to tackle them.

Since the early 2000's we have provided a number of **Public Access Networks** to provide access to the Internet. We will look to overhaul these and seek to provide free **Public Internet Access** in our key community facilities and build a scalable Public Access Network which can be deployed in our community buildings where needs are identified. The main premise of these networks will be that they are free, accessible to all and will be based around the use of **free cloud technologies** wherever possible.

During the lifespan of this strategy the most radical overhaul of the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) will take place. It is currently scheduled to take place by 2025. ***This will see traditional analogue lines and equipment being replaced with digital internet-based infrastructure.*** This has far reaching consequences as all traditional devices that connect to the network such as telephone handsets, ATM machines, traffic light management systems and telecare units, will need reconnecting, with some needing upgrading or replacement. Whilst the PSTN upgrade is an industry-led process the council has a critical role to play to implement the solutions required to support residents and prevent impact on day-to-day life.

Telecare and telehealth are key services that are directly affected by this. The Local Government Digital Office are leading on a national response and the council will continue to work with them to ensure a smooth transition of these essential services.

We will also continue the work already underway to ensure all our telephony systems are ready for the switchover.

Subject to demand and business need we will investigate the potential of **Internet of Things Technologies** to take advantage of advances in sensor technology in service delivery.

Growing our Economy

Provision of fast, affordable Internet access is vital to a modern thriving economy. During the lifetime of the previous Digital strategy we worked with the **Digital Scotland** team and telecoms providers to achieve a rate of over 95% of postcodes having access to **Superfast Broadband** (at the time defined as speeds of over 24Mbps).

We will continue working with Digital Scotland, telecoms, and infrastructure providers on the follow-up **R100** (Reaching 100%) project, to ensure the East Lothian roll out of access to Superfast Broadband is as smooth and fast as possible.

Since the development of broadband and mobile services the technology and demand for data speeds has moved on greatly. Ultrafast (300Mbps) and Gigabit (over 1000Mbps) broadband is facilitated by *Full Fibre To The Premise* (FTTP) rather than *Fibre To The Cabinet* (FTTC - which delivers superfast broadband) technology. While 5G mobile networks can deliver up to 100x the speed of the current 4G system and are designed to support more than just mobile phones. 5G networks can connect many more devices with smaller batteries e.g. networks of crop monitors in agriculture, are fast enough to remotely control robotics in real-time, and reliable enough for emergency services.

As homes and businesses increasingly rely on data and the ability to connect at speed, whether for streaming services, the use of 'smart home' or telehealth devices, or the home and remote working that has become a new way of operating following the COVID pandemic, continuing to increase our access to new infrastructure will be pivotal.

We will continue to work with the Scottish 5G Centre, the telecoms industry and the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure East Lothian is included in and takes advantage of all plans for investment and roll out of Ultrafast, Gigabit, and 5G technology as these become available.

Connection speeds and access are only one part of the picture, how we use data to improve transport, housing, culture, skills, innovation, and employability is the real goal. Data-Driven Innovation is a major part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. With our regional partners, Edinburgh, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife and the Scottish Borders, plus universities and colleges in the region we will continue the development of projects that support our communities and businesses.

We will promote East Lothian as a digital destination, showcasing the best of our place to encourage tourism, inward investment, relocation, and growth.



Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199

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