Digital Strategy
2022 – 2027

Developing Themes – draft

Introduction

This strategy has been developed in a period of unprecedented challenges, most notably the Covid pandemic. The pandemic increased the pace of change towards digital services as restrictions changed the way people work, socialise and deliver services. In Newport, and at Newport City Council we also saw the impact that digital technology had on the way we engaged with our communities, ensured continuity of our services and provided greater flexibility for staff and Councillors.

At Newport Council we were able to demonstrate how quickly we can adapt and deliver change, moving over 1,000 office based staff to home and hybrid working. We were also able to continue our democratic duties delivering key democratic meetings and decisions using technology. The Council also saw significant increases in the use of its online services and social media to communicate with its citizens and businesses.

The pandemic also highlighted the inequalities which many vulnerable and disadvantaged communities have to accessing digital technology and services. This included families who needed to provide suitable devices for young learners to home schooling, elderly people wanting to use technology to keep in touch with their family members and businesses needing to provide online services for their customers. Despite these challenges over the last two years, Newport Council alongside its IT partners (Shared Resource Service), Welsh Government funding and charitable donations were able to prevent the short term impact for many of these families, residents and businesses.

The pandemic has also resulted in quicker and more collaborative sharing of data in the context of saving lives. This includes the rapid development of vaccines supported by collaborative efforts and the development of the Test, Trace and Protect service across Wales. The council recognises the even greater importance of data in effective service delivery and decision making. It also recognises the principle of transparency of performance and service delivery. This is in the context of heightened cyber security threats worldwide and the council recognises the need to improve cyber resilience further and protect the data it holds effectively.

To enable the effective use of technology, digital infrastructure and connectivity is critical for citizens, businesses, employees and members. The council will drive improvements to the infrastructure of the city and the council to ensure that digital facilities can be used effectively. It recognises the importance of digital infrastructure and connectivity in economic prosperity and will do everything it can to stimulate developments.

There is now an opportunity to build on from what we have learnt as an organisation and transform the way we use digital technology and services to improve Newport Council's offer for its residents, businesses and staff. We also need to continue our collaboration with our communities, service users and partners to breakdown the structural inequalities that exist for people to access digital technology, services and improve employment opportunities in this digital age. With the use of digital technology, there is also the environmental impact that we must consider in how we can use technology to support the Council's goal of becoming net zero carbon by 2030 and look at how we sustainably procure our technology and services.

This Digital Strategy outlines the Council's long term priorities and how it will support the Council's ambition to provide 21st century services for its citizens, economy and visitors.

Background

This is the council's second digital strategy, developed at a time when digital technology is increasingly important to service delivery. It has been developed following extensive engagement with citizens, businesses, employees and members. This engagement has identified various common needs and aspirations. It also recognises differences in how customers want to interact with the council given their level of digital skills and inclusion. The strategy builds on and develops activities commenced in the original digital strategy.

Citizens, businesses, employees and members expect:

- simple, effective solutions designed around their user needs
- the use of modern technology, innovation and responsiveness
- a choice of delivery channels
- support for improving their digital skills and inclusion
- protection of their data and appropriate sharing of this
- decisions to be made based on sound evidence
- the council to drive improvements in the city's digital infrastructure and connectivity

The strategy sets the strategic direction for the council over the next five years.

The strategy is based on four themes:-

1. **Digital Transformation**

   We will transform services by the innovative use of digital technology that is effective, easy to use and designed around user needs

2. **Digital Skills and Inclusion**

   We will develop the digital skills of our citizens, employees and members plus support improved access to digital technology

3. **Data and Collaboration**

   We will improve service delivery by better use of data and increased collaboration built on secure systems and processes

4. **Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity**

   We will drive excellent digital infrastructure and connectivity for the city and for the council

Further details on these four themes are provided within this document.

The proposed strategy will identify what we will achieve and how we will do it. It will also highlight various activities that will support its delivery. These are primarily focused on the next two years but the themes of the strategy will drive future work. Progress against these activities will be managed and published both through service area updates, and the Annual Digital Report.

The themes of the Digital Strategy supports the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the strategic priorities of the Council.

Wales National Well-being Goals

The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of our decisions and to work with our communities, people and each other to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The Well-being Act has put in place seven well-being goals that all public-bodies, including Newport Council must work towards in this Corporate Plan:

A Prosperous Wales	A Wales of cohesive communities
A Resilient Wales	A Wales Vibrant Culture and thriving Welsh Language
A Healthier Wales	A Globally responsible Wales
A more Equal Wales	

In the delivery of our themes, we will need to work collaboratively, locally, regionally and nationally with other public sector bodies, not for profit organisations, charities, private sector, communities and representative groups.

Over the next five years, Newport Council will be working with a range of partners including the Cardiff Capital Region (Corporate Joint Committee), Gwent Regional Public Services Board and Regional Partnership Board to deliver our Well-being Objectives and our strategic priorities.

Throughout the delivery of this strategy, we will be ensure the decisions that we make consider five Ways of Working: Long Term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration and Prevention.

We will also ensure that the impacts of our decisions consider the socio-economic impacts on Newport's communities, service users, and staff that work for Newport Council.

Corporate Plan 2022-27

The Corporate Plan sets out the long term priorities of Newport Council and the delivery of its services to communities, citizens, businesses, visitors of Newport. The Corporate Plan will be focused on how it will continue to transform services to meet 21st Century demands of its residents, businesses and visitors. The Plan will also outline how the Council will become more inclusive and sustainable ensuring people will have access to the services they need.

Further information to be provided following final agreement of the Corporate Plan.

Newport City Council Climate Change Plan 2022-27

To support the Welsh Government's target for all public services to be net carbon zero by 2030, Newport City Council launched its Climate Change Plan that sets out how the Council will achieve this target. The delivery of this strategy, action plan and projects will align and support the Council's Climate Change Plan and will consider the environmental impact on the Council and communities.

Theme 1 - Digital Transformation

We will transform services by the innovative use of digital technology that is effective, easy to use and designed around user needs

What will we achieve

For citizens and businesses
- Services transformed by the innovative use of digital technology
- Digital solutions that are innovative, effective and easy to use
- Digital solutions that are available 24x7 from anywhere
- Digital solutions that meet design, accessibility, Welsh Language and other standards
- A positive contribution to climate change targets including reduced travel by the use of digital solutions
- The council's web site is the preferred channel for customers, together with council app and customer account facilities
- Access channels that are joined up effectively, providing choice and consistency of service

For employees and members
- Digital solutions that are effective and easy to use
- Digital solutions that enable remote working and participation including hybrid meetings
- Processes for employees are automated to reduce data entry in IT systems

Some ways we will achieve this
- Improved web site
- Transformation Programme
- Digital elements of climate change plan

Theme 2 - Digital Skills and Inclusion

We will develop the digital skills of our citizens, employees and members plus support improved access to digital technology

What will we achieve
For citizens and businesses • Improved digital skills for citizens and businesses • Improved digital inclusion by providing access to devices • Improved digital inclusion by providing free public Wi-Fi • Improved digital inclusion driven by customer insight profiling • Services that are joined up across partners For employees and members • Improved digital skills for employees and members • Improved access to devices and systems for employees currently without a device • Employees and members have access to equipment to work in an agile manner
Some ways we will achieve this
• Deliver free digital skills programme • Council workforce strategy • Free Public Wi-Fi

Theme 3 - Data and Collaboration

We will improve service delivery by better use of data and increased collaboration built on secure systems and processes

What will we achieve
For citizens and businesses

- People have confidence in the council's management of their data
- Data is shared appropriately to support partnership and collaborative working for improved service delivery
- Decision making, service delivery and planning is facilitated by better use of data
- Data protected against cyber attacks and other threats
- Schools are supported in sound information management, cyber resilience and information security
- Improved business continuity by digital solutions that are resilient with high availability
- Data from digital solutions such as sensor technology makes a positive contribution to climate change targets
- Up to date and meaningful information is available to citizens, businesses etc.
- Improved transparency with council data made available that facilitates the use of data for public good in an open format where possible
- Targets achieved for customer requests for information such as Freedom of information and Subject Access Requests
- An improved understanding of the city, its citizens and businesses as a result of insight profiling, census and other data sources

Some ways we will achieve this

- Maintain accreditation to information security standards
- Improve cyber resilience
- Develop further capabilities for the Newport Intelligence Hub (NIH)

Theme 4 - Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity

We will drive excellent digital infrastructure and connectivity for the city and for the council

What will we achieve
For citizens and businesses • Excellent connectivity in the city – broadband, Wi-Fi and mobile telecommunications including 5G • Increased inward investment in the city's infrastructure • Newport established as Wales' first data city • Council services are delivered by fast and reliable networks • Smart city technology implemented • Digital infrastructure for the city considered in council buildings, planning and road infrastructure and assets For employees and members • Building infrastructure that supports a flexible and agile workforce • Employees and members have access to systems irrespective of where they choose to work
Some ways we will achieve this
• Implement the Local Broadband Fund (LBF) project in council adult residential care homes • Provide and develop public Wi-Fi in public buildings, city centre and buses

Development of the Plan

The Digital themes have been developed in consultation with citizens and businesses to understand their future priorities, using a website survey and a paper alternative. Online surveys have also been conducted using the city's public Wi-Fi in buildings and on buses. There has been a large amount of internal engagement including directly with senior managers, working with the Digital City Board and wider officer groups.

Scrutiny discussion in July 2022 will support the development of the themes and the detailed planning that follows. Once this is complete, the draft Strategy which will be developed to sit alongside the new Corporate Plan will be considered by Cabinet.