

# Report

## Cabinet

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### Part 1

Date: 12 April 2023

**Subject** Digital Strategy 2023-27

**Purpose** To provide Cabinet with the proposed Digital Strategy for approval.

**Author** Head of People, Policy and Transformation

**Ward** All

**Summary** This is Newport City Council's second Digital Strategy (2023-27) and will support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27. This Strategy builds on the work achieved over the last five years and has been developed following extensive consultation with residents, businesses, staff, Councillors and other key stakeholders. It has enabled Newport Council to identify four themes which will reflect the future needs and aspirations of our citizens, businesses, service users and staff. The four themes are:

- 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

The delivery of the Digital Strategy will be developed by the Council's digital board and progress against the Strategy will be reported annually. Once the Digital Strategy has been approved by Cabinet a final version will be published on the Council's website.

**Proposal** Cabinet is asked to approve the Digital Strategy.

**Action by** Digital Services Manager

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Scrutiny Management Committee
- Cabinet Member (Organisational Transformation)
- Head of Finance
- Monitoring Officer
- Head of People, Policy and Transformation
- Digital City Board officer group

**Signed**

## Background

Digital technology is now a fundamental part of everyday life for citizens, businesses and the Council to communicate with friends, family and work colleagues, carry out online transactions and business; and to enable people to access the services they need from public sector organisations such as Newport City Council. Data and digital technology is vital for all of the Council's services and it is important as we move forward as a city that we are able to empower the citizen to access the services they need, when they need it and to ensure their information is safe and secure. The last three years have also shown the digital inequality across society whether it is access to fast and reliable networks, digital devices or having the knowledge and confidence to use online services.

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## Digital Strategy 2023-27 Development

The development of the Digital Strategy has been undertaken through extensive workshops and consultations with key stakeholders across the Council and the City. We have also reflected back on the last five years and importantly the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis whereas a Council we have had to quickly adapt and learn the following:

- Increased pace of change, facilitated by digital solutions, has seen Newport City Council transform how office-based staff can work flexibly, at home, in the office and in person with the families and people in greatest need.
- Use of technology to promote the democratic role and participation of the citizen in Newport City Council decision making through live Council meetings.
- Increase in demand for the council's online services is also changing the expectations of citizens and how they access the support and services when they need it most.
- Inequalities amongst communities to access digital technology and the necessary skills to use it effectively.
- Vulnerable and disadvantage residents such as pupils not having access to devices to participate in online learning or elderly people keeping in touch with family and friends or people being able to access key council services.
- Ensuring our systems are secure and robust to protect people's personal and sensitive data, meeting legislative requirements and preventing cyber attacks.
- Having efficient digital technology to reduce our carbon footprint and support the Council to achieve its net zero carbon 2030 target.
- Positioning Newport and the region as a significant contributor towards supporting global technology sector and encouraging new, emerging digital industries and enabling citizens to have the necessary skills to support the sector.

The development of this Strategy also supported the development of the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 and aligns to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Corporate Plan recognises the importance of digital technology to transform the way which we deliver our services, the digital infrastructure of Newport and also reduce the digital inequality of Newport's citizens. Further information on the Council's development of the Digital Strategy can be found in the Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment attached to this Report.

The draft Digital Strategy was also presented to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in July 2022. Their feedback and comments on the Digital Strategy are noted in the Report below and have been considered in the final iteration of the Digital Strategy.

## Digital Strategy 2023-27

The Digital Strategy has identified four themes which it will be delivered against and will be guided by the following seven principles:

- **Innovative** – embrace new ways of working and technology
- **Data driven** - decisions are made based on sound evidence
- **User centred** – people are at the centre of what we do
- **Inclusive** – services are available to meet individual needs
- **Collaborative** – collaboration internally and externally
- **Secure** – systems and data are protected
- **Green** – digital technology supports the Council’s net zero aspirations

These principles are closely aligned to the council’s Corporate Plan principles of Fair and Inclusive, Empowering, A listening council and Citizen Focussed. The four themes are:

- **Digital Transformation**  
We will transform services by the innovative use of digital technology that is effective, easy to use and designed around user needs
- **Digital Skills and Inclusion**  
We will develop the digital skills of our citizens, employees and members plus support improved access to digital technology
- **Data and Collaboration**  
We will improve service delivery by better use of data and increased collaboration built on secure systems and processes
- **Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity**  
We will drive excellent digital infrastructure and connectivity for the city and for the council

The Digital Strategy also includes further detail on the actions and projects which we will deliver to achieve these themes. The Council’s Digital City Board will have oversight on the delivery of the Digital Strategy. An annual Digital Report will also be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet Member which will self-reflect on the progress the Council is making against the Digital Strategy Themes. Progress will also be reported through the service plan(s) and the annual Corporate Plan Well-being Report.

Once approved the strategy will be published with appropriate graphics on the Council’s website.

### Financial Summary

- There are no specific financial implications associated with this strategy. However, the strategy reflects the digital needs and aspirations of the council and therefore does reflect a level of commitment to achieve the outcomes identified in the strategy.
- The strategy does not commit specific budget and much is around cultural change. It is anticipated that any specific costs to deliver the strategy will be identified from existing budgets

### Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Failure to deliver on the expected outcomes within the strategy	H	L	Strong governance to support the delivery of the strategy including the role of the digital board and its associated relationships with senior management and members. Annual Digital Report to report on progress against the strategy.	Digital Services Manager

Failure to respond to the changing needs of citizens, businesses, employees and members	H	L	Ensure that citizens, businesses, employees and members are engaged in the delivery of the strategy and that the council responds to the changing environment. The Digital Strategy will be regularly updated and progress reflected on the council's website and other communication.	Digital Services Manager
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### Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The draft strategy has been developed to sit alongside the new Corporate Plan and is an important part of delivering the Corporate Plan.

### Options Available and considered

1. To consider the contents of this report and associated draft strategy, providing any additional comments and/or recommendations for the strategy.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of this report

### Preferred Option and Why

1. Option 1 is the preferred option to provide any additional comments and/or recommendations for the strategy.

### Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no financial issues arising directly from this report and it confirms the service area views that the strategy can be taken forward within existing budgets.

In saying this, any future business cases that use IT to support digital services will need to be analysed to assess the financial viability of the proposal and confirm funding sources. Ideally, the digital strategy- and in particular 'digital transformation' and 'use of data' should help services to deliver recurring cashable savings given the medium term outlook.

### Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from this report.

### Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

The Digital Strategy sets out the Council's approach for the transformation of services through the use of digital technology that is effective, easy to use and designed around user needs. It focusses on improving digital skills of citizens, employees and members plus and increasing access to digital technology; better use of data and improving digital infrastructure and connectivity for the city and for the council. This will play a key part in delivering the ambitions of the Council's new Corporate Plan the Climate Change Plan and the emerging One Newport Local Action Plan.

It is noted that stakeholder engagement has informed the development of this strategy and a Fairness & Equality Impact Assessment is included with this report.

The new People Plan 2023-2027 (due this year) will support the digital strategy in identifying relevant training to ensure all our employees have the appropriate digital skills and equipment to undertake their role. The People Plan will also ensure that digital skills are included in job design as part of our ongoing workforce planning to develop a digitally capable and confident organisation. The People Plan will continue to develop policies that support hybrid working and other new ways of working as part of the proposals included in the digital strategy. This will include a reduction in daily commuting and business travel by greater use of technology which supports the objectives of the Council's Climate Change Plan.

## **Local issues**

This report is relevant to all wards.

## **Scrutiny Management Committee**

Scrutiny Management Committee reviewed the draft themes in July 2022. The full details of the discussion can be found in the minutes on the council's website. The main comments which were considered in the final strategy document are outlined below:

The committee felt that the reports were comprehensive and clear and acknowledged the hard work of the officers and the progress and transformation that had been made for both the Council and the city of Newport and its residents.

The committee highlighted the importance of accessibility, simplicity and ease of use for digital systems and updates.

The committee asked that a summary of the feedback from resident surveys be provided for information.

The committee recommended that a definition of the city centre area that is covered by public WiFi be included and noted the importance of quality and accessible WiFi.

The committee highlighted the importance of scrutinising data services partners and providers.

The committee recommended that specific data be included as well as percentages to contextualise information more easily.

These comments and other feedback were considered in the final draft of the Strategy attached.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 contains a Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 06 April 2011. The Act identifies a number of 'protected characteristics', namely age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership.

The strategy recognises the importance of ensuring that access to services is fair for all and a Fairness and Equality Impact assessment has been undertaken for the strategy.

## **Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

This report details desired future outcomes of the strategy driven by underlying principles and associated themes. Progress against the strategy will be reported in the Annual Digital Report and Service Plan updates. The strategy takes into account the sustainable development principle promoted in the Act and the five ways of working; long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement.

Any changes to service delivery driven by the strategy will consider the five ways of working and the sustainable development principle as part of the decision making process.

- Long term: the strategy is driven by principles over the long term and this includes the part of digital technology in the council's response not climate change.
- Prevention: Understanding the needs of citizens, businesses, employees and members is important to prevent issues with service delivery by getting an understanding of their desired outcomes. Extensive engagement was undertaken to reduce the potential of future problems.
- Integration: The Strategy is closely aligned to the Corporate Plan and the council's Climate Change Plan. Delivery of the strategy will be integrated into the work of the Digital City Board and reported on in the Annual Digital Report. The strategy aims to embed importance principles in service provision.
- Collaboration: the strategy recognises the key role of delivery partners, most notably the IT Service provided by the Shared Resource Service (SRS). This is a key part of all the themes, especially in

Digital Skills and Inclusion and Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity where there is a role for a large number of partners

- Involvement: Public engagement was a vital part of the development of this strategy and continued engagement and feedback is required to ensure that it meets the desired outcomes. It also involves regular updates to members as key stakeholders

## **Consultation**

The strategy has been developed following extensive engagement with citizens, businesses, employees and members. This includes presentation to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the council's Digital City Board.

## **Background Papers**

Digital Strategy 2023-27

Overview and Management Scrutiny Committee Jul 2022

Previous Digital Strategy

**Dated: 5 April 2023**