

## **CABINET - 17 DECEMBER 2019**

# **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY, DIGITAL FRAMEWORK AND THE LOCAL DIGITAL DECLARATION**

**Report by Corporate Director for Customers and Organisational Development  
and the IT Head of Service (interim)**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) **Agree the proposed Information Technology Strategy and the Framework for Digital Service Delivery**
  - (b) **Adopt the Local Digital Declaration and become a signatory**

## **Executive Summary**

**A new strategy to guide the development and delivery of information technology for the next five years:**

2. Following engagement with service users, a service health-check and a review of national good practice the Information Technology (IT) department has produced a new strategy and technology roadmap to support the vision and objectives of the Council. The strategy will underpin the council's modernisation, improvement and development plans and will ensure that services are equipped to deliver for local residents and businesses.
3. The proposed strategy (attached at annex 1) covers a five-year period and is designed to ensure the service and the technology it deploys are well placed to meet the current and future needs of the organisation. This includes working with partners and the health sector, providing solutions that meet the needs of residents and business users.
4. The strategy will also underpin the Council's objectives to maximise the opportunities that 'digital technology' provides, ensuring local people have a choice about how to receive their services and that staff who work for the Council have access to technology that makes it easier to do their jobs. As such this paper also recommends that the Council adopts the digital service

framework (annex 2) and signs up to the Local Digital Declaration and its guiding principles (set out at annex 3).

5. It should be noted that the investment required to upgrade ICT is being built into the medium-term financial strategy and is part of the developing budget proposals for 2020/21 and will be published in the coming weeks.

### **The ICT Strategy (Annex 1)**

6. To meet our customers' expectations and the Council's strategic objectives, we will change the way we design and deliver our ICT.
7. For OCC to deliver on our vision as a place where people want to live, work and thrive, we will have to meet the needs of the community we serve, whilst at the same time creating the basis for growth, enhancement and a thriving local environment. The ICT solutions and systems across the Council provide for a critical enabling foundation for staff working within the Council, partners and citizens engaging with us.
8. The ICT Strategy outlines a 5-year plan with a significant 2-year transformation delivery programme. Its main overall aim is to build the right technology base and the IT Service to support the vision.
9. The ICT Strategy has been designed to:
  - Underpin and enable the Council's vision, integrating the core values of the Council into the IT Service and placing all customers at the heart of the way it operates.
  - Transform the way the Council utilises technology to improve service delivery, ensuring the best outcomes and value for money for residents.
  - Equipping our staff with the IT tools and services they need to do their jobs effectively.

### **The Aims and Outcomes of the Strategy**

10. The ICT Strategy has the following aims:
  - Developing a customer focused ICT service aligned to the transformation and strategic objectives of the Council. The IT Service will focus on delivering inclusive solutions that can be used by all.
  - A costed business case along with an implementation plan for the delivery of the defined ICT Strategy to ensure a clear plan for capital investment over the life of the strategy.
  - An ICT delivery model including service framework/portfolio, organisational structure and governance to support current and future joint working and partnership arrangements.
  - Identifying the future ICT related sourcing and commissioning strategy which is pragmatic but robust in achieving value for money.

- A technology, systems and applications roadmap with a clear pathway for change across the ICT landscape.
- Enabling the Council to continue to deliver existing and new services underpinned by technology for staff, partners and residents.

11. The ICT Strategy will deliver the following outcomes:

- Improving ICT services for all staff and customers which is tangible in the day to day use of technology and in how IT staff operate.
- Providing ICT that is more robust, resilient, less complex with reduced outages.
- Enabling the IT Service to become more productive and effective in delivering IT services.
- Improving information from ICT to support better decision making.
- Reducing the overall cost of ICT to the Council whilst providing greater value for money.
- Engaging more effectively with strategic partners facilitated and supported by ICT through joint working and proactive strategic ICT leadership.

This will be measured by satisfaction ratings, budget outturns and service desk KPIs.

12. It should be noted that the strategy set out at Annex 1 is a shortened version of a detailed document which has delivery plans and an in-depth technology roadmap. It is designed for a 'non-technical' reader. The detailed documents are available on request, where commercially sensitive information is included this will be treated in the appropriate fashion.

### **The Digital Framework (Annex 2)**

13. The Framework for Digital Service Delivery (2019 – 2022) has been developed through a process of engagement with staff and service users. It is a vision and set of principles of how the organisation will utilise digital capability to transform how we deliver services to our customers. Digital will allow us to better support our customers, as well as make our internal processes more efficient and cost effective. Achieving the best outcomes for Oxfordshire's communities, residents, businesses and visitors using digital services and systems that work for all.
14. In an internet enabled and consumer driven age, the experience of using our online services must be such that our customers prefer to use them, allowing us to free up staff to focus on dealing with complex human interactions. In the longer-term technology may also be used as part of the 'internet of things' to really support people to live independent and healthy lives. The framework will help us work to develop these new opportunities and technologies as they become available.

**The principles at the heart of the digital framework**

15. Customer engagement and user centric design will be at the core of our digital services so that they deliver improved customer outcomes and, in doing so, relieve Council pressures. The way we use and share data is key. We will actively lead initiatives with our local and regional partners and service providers about how we invest in data science and data sharing capabilities, tools and platforms.
16. We will encourage, incentivise and trust our staff to experiment and embrace digital changes – and importantly we will equip them with the skills to do so.
17. The Digital Team will play a central role in supporting the Council to design, select, procure, deliver and support digital solutions – as well as ensuring consistency and adherence to standards. Over the next three years we'll take advantage of the tools and technologies that are currently available to us, whilst investing tactically where we need to. Our digital systems will support us to collect better insight, data and customer feedback – which we will use to improve our customer offer, the services we deliver and our policies.

**The Local Digital Declaration (Annex 3)**

18. The Local Digital Declaration is a joint endeavour initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), the Local Government Association (LGA) and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. The Digital Declaration aims to make it possible to collaborate more effectively, to deliver services across many boundaries, to interrogate data insightfully, to realise efficiencies, and to reshape public services for the benefit of all while retaining local sovereignty, through encouraging signatories to work to an agreed set of principles.
19. Along with the Council stating its determination and vigour to transform its services to meet the current and future needs of customers, signing up to the Local Digital Declaration brings collaboration opportunities for the Council.
20. The MHCLG has established a delivery team to support all Declaration co-signatories in realising their ambition. It plays a role within central government, advocating for the approach set out in this declaration.
21. The Technology Code of Practice within the Local Digital Declaration adopts the Central Government's 'Greening Government: Sustainable Technology Strategy 2020'. This strategy sets out how government information and communication technologies (ICT) will contribute to green commitments and adopt efficient, sustainable practices.

22. Alongside this, a key members of the Local Digital Declaration namely the LGA is offering the Government to set up a joint national taskforce comprising local leaders and relevant government departments – including the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; the Department for Transport; and the Treasury – to determine the funding, legislation and policy changes needed to deliver zero net carbon emissions by 2030.

### **External Funding Opportunities**

23. The Local Digital Fund was announced in July 2018, by the UK Local Government Minister of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It aims to help local authorities implement the Local Digital Declaration by funding digital skills training and projects that address common local service challenges in common, reusable ways. Examples of funded projects are given below:
- *Birmingham City Council and two partners were awarded £69,300 to investigate how the use of virtual assistants or chatbots, such as Amazon’s Alexa or Apple’s Siri, could improve the provision of care for people in need.*
  - *Greater Manchester Combined Authority and 3 partners were awarded £80,000 to understand how better uses of children’s services data could help staff make better decisions and deliver better outcomes for children.*
  - *Sunderland City Council and 4 partners were awarded £77,000 to learn how to allow people moving into a council’s jurisdiction to contact the council just once to have all their services - including council tax, bin collections, and possibly benefits - set up.*
  - *North East Lincolnshire Council and 4 partners were awarded £52,103 to look at how the Government’s online payment service for government and public sector organisations - GOV.UK Pay - can be adopted more easily to help councils save money. Worcestershire County Council and 14 partners were awarded £57,500 to look at how registration data for births, deaths and marriages can be securely and ethically shared to improve services and reduce fraud.*
  - *Oxford City Council and 12 partners were awarded £80,000 to uncover common patterns for chatbots and artificial intelligence to help councils avoid unnecessary pressure on their contact centres.*
  - *Adur and Worthing Council and 2 partners were awarded £78,400 to discover how local directories in councils, health bodies, police forces and the voluntary sector can be better coordinated.*

## **One Oxfordshire and cross boundary collaboration**

24. During the formation of the IT strategy and the digital framework, the IT service has worked closely with partner organisation such as Oxford health, Oxford University Hospital trust and all members of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB), Integrated Care System (ICS) to ensure each organisations' digital ambitions are conducive and focused to facilitate joint working, information sharing and delivery of integrated care services to the resident and consumers of our services.
25. The strategies reflect the standards and requirements of Central Government bodies such as Digital.gov and the Cabinet Office to ensure the Council is compliant, following best practice models and will be in a position to collaborate and share information across central and local government organisations as the Council requires.
26. The service has also worked closely with Cherwell District Council to ensure the strategic ICT and Digital future outcomes are aligned to facilitate the joint working ambitions of both organisations and that any joint working models can be used with other partners should this be appropriate.

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

27. Underpinning the new IT strategy is a business case, that sets out the financial implications and the capital budgets required. These budgets are already in place and capital IT expenditure has been provided for. The Service is forecasting a significant reduction in annual revenue costs year on year over a the 5-year period of the strategy.
28. A capital expenditure programme has been defined within the strategy business case to support the implementation and on-going activities. At the time of drafting this report the council's budget is still in development, but the
29. The ICT service will realign the current organisational structure to meet the objectives of the strategy where necessary. In terms of staffing implications there are none at this time, if any staffing implications arise as the strategy is implemented, they will be subject to the usual formal consultation approaches. There is no expectation that staffing costs will increase and over the life of the strategy we are not expecting to increase the size of the IT workforce.
30. The digital strategy sets the direction and ambition for how the Council will operate in the future, so is not a specific, funded programme of work. Projects and workstreams will be required produce a business case identifying capital and revenue implications. However, many elements of 'digital improvement' will be addressed through the work the Council is already doing to improve its customer contact centre, ensuring that business processes make the most of the technology we have available. There are skilled digital professionals and

business analysts in the council's workforce that will support this improvement work.

31. The Local Digital Declaration carries no direct financial implications for the Council. Central Government periodically release funding and specialist resources specifically to support local initiatives which align with the declaration. On becoming a signatory OCC will be in a position to bid for funding to support specific digital projects (see paragraph 3.17).

## **Equalities and Inclusivity Implications**

32. The IT Strategy and our Digital Framework align with the Local Digital Declaration. It is a primary aim for our organisation to ensure that services are provided that everyone can use, including people with disabilities. We also recognise that not all people want to use 'online' services or access a website and therefore our technology should also ensure people can access services by smart phone or calling our contact centre.
33. Good digital services should not exclude people, they should provide choice. Where service users need face to face or telephone support, our technology should enable our staff to provide effective and efficient services in this way. As such our plans to improve technology include telephony and communications equipment as well as online transactions.
34. We also recognise that digital exclusion exists and as technology develops at such a pace, new groups of people and communities may become digitally excluded or find it harder to adopt new digital services. As such the Council will work to make sure that any new technology is rolled out to service users, whether they be internal customer or local residents with relevant support and guidance and that this will need to be an ongoing commitment.

## **Environmental Impacts – Reducing the Council's Carbon Footprint**

35. The Council has declared a climate emergency and stated the commitment to deliver zero net carbon emissions by 2030 and this ICT Strategy includes a commitment and the requirement to work toward meeting this goal. The strategy identifies how IT can support activities such as remote and agile working to reduce travel as well as focusing on matters such as reducing energy consumption.
36. To ensure this happens suppliers of ICT equipment and services will be assessed on their environmental policies and impact as part of the procurement exercises with the objective of all IT provided goods and services having a zero net carbon footprint.
37. IT will also work with current suppliers to promote the carbon reduction agenda to meet our objective of reducing net carbon emissions.

38. The Technology Code of Practice within the Local Digital Declaration adopts central Government's 'Greening Government Sustainable Technology Strategy 2020'. The proposed IT strategy and Digital Framework are aligned to these principals, therefore meeting national practices codes.

## Risks

### IT Strategy

Risk	Mitigation
Resources are not available to implement the strategy	An IT programme will be created to ensure the resources and activities required to deliver on the strategy are managed and any risks are addressed. A business case for these resources has been prepared and the investments required, (and savings identified) have been included within the medium term financial plan. A technology roadmap and delivery plan has been prepared including the activities and resources required to deliver.
Pressures on capital funding over the lifetime of the strategy may result in funding being reduced or withdrawn.	Resources have been identified and in some cases investments offer the opportunity to reduce running costs. Any IT capital expenditure will be required to show benefits, either added value to the service user, reduced cost, cost avoidance, or reduction of IT risk.
Emerging technologies have the power to disrupt business models	As new technologies emerge over the lifetime of the strategy, they will be assessed using the IT change control and IT Governance process. Any emerging technologies deemed desirable by the organisation will be managed by the IT strategy implementation programme with the appropriate project governance and business engagement.

### Digital Framework and Local Digital Declaration

Risk	Mitigation
IT unable to meet whole organisations demand for digital projects delivery.	Corporate transformation programme governance will set priorities for delivery. The IT digital team will be aligned to deliver against corporate priorities. Additional 3 <sup>rd</sup> party resources will be sourced for specific programmes and projects as necessary where there is a robust business case and funding to do so.



<p>Service areas unable to commit resources to deliver on their digital projects.</p>	<p>Directorates will be required to identify resource plans within their business cases for their projects and commit those resources to deliver on the projects. IT resources will be prioritised and allocated to support delivery.</p>
<p>Emerging technologies have the power to disrupt business models</p>	<p>As new technologies emerge over the lifetime of the strategy, they will be assessed using the IT change control and IT Governance process. Any emerging technologies deemed desirable by the organisation will be managed by the IT strategy implementation programme with the appropriate project governance and business engagement. There may be a requirement to upgrade the technology associated with digital delivery during the life of the IT strategy. If this is so, a full investment business case will be developed.</p>

### Concluding Remarks

39. The ICT strategy (along with its underpinning documents including a technology roadmap and delivery plans) sets out a programme to ensure our ICT is cost effective and delivers the right tools for the people who deliver our frontline services, for colleagues who work supporting those services, for Members, partners and most importantly for the local people and businesses who use our services.
40. However, the strategy alone will not deliver change, upgrading technology is not enough, and therefore the framework for digital service delivery has also been developed. This will help ensure that the IT service and services across the council work together to harness the benefits of new technology for local residents. It recognises the risks of digital exclusion and that customers need choices about how to access services.
41. These new strategies and frameworks, and the capital investment programme and projects that sit behind them, are an important enabler of the Council's corporate strategy and commitment to Thriving Communities for everyone in Oxfordshire. With the adoption and implementation of them becoming a signatory to the Local Digital Declaration is an action that Oxfordshire County Council can be proud and confident to do.

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Background papers:  
 None

Annexes:

Annex 1 - Information Technology Strategy

Annex 2 - Digital Framework

Annex 3 - Local Digital Declaration

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