Digital Strategy 2022-25

Final Decision-Maker	POLICY & RESOURCES
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green – Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Georgia Hawkes – Head of Transformation and Property
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report presents and recommends adoption of the draft Digital Strategy 2022-25. The Digital Strategy contains workstreams covering digital within the council, improving services for residents and businesses and improving digital inclusion.

Purpose of Report

Decision – for Committee to consider the draft Digital Strategy 2022-25.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. The draft Digital Strategy 2022-25 is adopted.

Timetable	
Meeting	*Date*
Policy and Resources	9 February 2022

Digital Strategy 2022-25

1. **CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Becoming a digital Council and helping our residents become digitally included will contribute to the achievement of all the Council's corporate priorities, as well as ensuring the Council designs and delivers excellent and value for money services to customers	Head of Transformation and Property
Cross Cutting Objectives	The Digital Strategy particularly supports the achievement of the following cross-cutting objectives: • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved – the strategy contains a workstream on digital inclusion. Digital exclusion is linked with deprivation and financial exclusion • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected – the strategy supports the Council's carbon reduction ambitions	Head of Transformation and Property
Risk Management	The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.	Head of Transformation and Property
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so no new funding for implementation is sought at this time.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Transformation and Property

Legal	• No specific legal implications are identified. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 local authorities have a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Council's Digital Strategy demonstrates compliance with the statutory duty. Under the current Constitutional arrangements, the Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other committee or to Council as part of the policy framework. As such it is for the Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the draft Digital Strategy 2022-25. Under the proposed Constitutional arrangements, updates to the Digital Strategy 2022-25 will likely go to the Cabinet.	Interim Team Leader (Contentious and Corporate Governance)
Privacy and Data Protection	• Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. We have completed a separate equalities impact assessment shown at Appendix 2 and have ensured that no group who have protected characteristics should be disadvantaged. In fact, the workstream on digital inclusion should have a positive impact those who are older and who have a disability, as these groups are nationally recognised as being more likely to be digitally excluded.	Equalities & Communities Officer

Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Head of Transformation and Property
Crime and Disorder	No impact	Head of Transformation and Property
Procurement	The strategy contains an action to offer more support to officers when procuring ICT systems. Some actions in the strategy may require procurement of expertise or systems, which will be undertaken in in line with the Council's procurement rules.	Head of Transformation and Property
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are; • This aligns with action 7.5 of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan: Incorporate energy saving principles into our office accommodation strategy. Use any learning from new working practices adopted due to Covid-19 responses. • It also supports carbon reduction in our ICT supply chain.	Biodiversity & Climate Change Manager

2.   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has had digital strategies or similar since 2011. The previous digital strategy covered the period 2018-21, so it is timely for a new strategy to be adopted for the next 3 years. Excellent progress has been made during the last decade, but the digital landscape continues to change – what was cutting edge 2 or 3 years ago may now be outdated - and there continues to be more to do to build on previous successes. There also remains more to do to ensure everyone can be digitally included, and the Council is working in partnership with Kent County Council to tackle digital exclusion in the borough.

2.2 During the period of the previous strategy – 2018-21 – the Council delivered some important digital projects and was able to move from a primarily office-based way of working to almost full homeworking for office-based staff overnight. Some examples of the achievements delivered are listed in the draft strategy, and the following are of particular note:

- Meeting the required accessibility standards for our main council website and being the first public sector organisation to obtain a score of 100 for accessibility from SOCITM in 2021
- Implementing Skype for business for all our people – staff and members
- Making use of information using Oneview, so that we were able to predict who was likely to become homeless and intervene early to prevent this – of the group the team worked with, less than 1% became homeless, compared with 40% of the group the team were unable to contact due to a lack of capacity.

2.3   The draft strategy proposes the following vision:

We will be an agile and data driven council, using the best of modern digital design, technology and ways of working to deliver excellent user-centred services that make a difference to the lives of our residents.

2.4   The vision will be achieved by progressing 5 different workstreams which are led by different officers across the organisation, with the Head of Transformation and Property providing programme oversight as the lead senior officer for the overall strategy. The workstreams and responsible officers are as follows:

- Workstream 1: Provide simple, accessible, end-to-end services that are easy to use and based around users' needs – *Gary Hunter, Transformation and Digital Services Manager*

- Workstream 2: Giving our people the tools they need to do their jobs – *Tony Bullock, ICT Programme Manager*

- Workstream 3: Making data work for us – *Anna Collier, Corporate Insight, Communities and Governance Manager*

- Workstream 4: Digital inclusion – *Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance*

- Workstream 5: Creating a digital culture across the council – *Georgia Hawkes, Head of Transformation and Property*

2.5   The draft digital strategy document does not attempt to make an exhaustive list of all work that will be carried out under each of the workstreams – it is important that we are more agile than that and respond to threats and opportunities as they arise – but instead gives a high level framework and flavour of the sorts of actions and projects that will be required over the next 3 years to deliver the digital vision.

2.6   The digital strategy will be refreshed annually and will be taken to Cabinet for agreement along with a progress report covering work completed and performance on the envisaged benefits.

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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1   Option 1 - Adopt the Digital Strategy 2022-25 – this would mean the digital vision was agreed and work would continue on each of the workstreams to deliver the outcomes and benefits set out in the strategy.

3.2   Option 2 - Do not adopt the Digital Strategy 2022-25 – some actions in the strategy would not be carried out. Some work contained within in the various workstreams would continue, but without a guiding vision and the structure to ensure benefits are realised.

3.3   Option 3 – Adopt an amended version of the Digital Strategy 2022-25 – the strategy could be adopted in part. For example, one or more workstreams could be excluded from the final agreed version.

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4.   PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   Option 1 – adopt the Digital Strategy 2022-25 is recommended as the strategy and the work required to deliver it has been designed to involve the right officers from across the Council to ensure the Council continues to build on its digital successes and works in partnership to ensure those who are digitally excluded or at risk of being digitally excluded get the support they need. If the strategy is not adopted (option 2) or an amended version is adopted (option 3) important work will not be delivered and the Council will not deliver the range or level of benefits for residents and for staff and members envisaged in the strategy.

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5.   RISK

5.1   The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The strategy itself is inherently about minimising threats of not adopting a more digital approach and enhancing opportunities to improve ways of working for staff and members and the delivery of services to customers.

5.2   The key risks associated with the strategy and steps that will be taken to mitigate them are:

Risk	Mitigation
The Council works at risk with untested technologies which fail to deliver as envisaged, causing a lack of return on financial and time investment	The Council generally adopts an approach of being a fast follower, learning from others who have already implemented new systems and ways of working to ensure less risk and a greater likelihood of success, whilst still taking advantage of the benefits of new technology in a timely way. On projects working more at the cutting edge, the Council uses smaller pilots to limit the risk and test the viability of solutions and evaluating this before looking to roll out on a larger scale. These

	projects are overseen by the Digital and Transformation Board, chaired by the Chief Executive.
Customers cannot access the services they need when they need them	Workstream 1 seeks to develop services that are as accessible and user-friendly as possible, both online and through other channels. For example, the project on voice automation will allow people to call and get the answers to common questions 24/7, not just when our offices are open. Workstream 4 tackles digital inclusion, working with partners to support those who struggle to get online for various reasons.
The strategy, or key parts of it, is not delivered due to time or financial pressures	The strategy is set up to be delivered as a programme, with technical experts leading each workstream that fits with their normal area of work, overseen by the Head of Transformation and Property. The different workstreams ensure the work is spread across the council at a manageable level and the best people are leading on different areas of the strategy. The oversight of the Head of Transformation and Property will ensure that risks and issues are identified early and mitigated well, and that benefits are identified and measured.
The council will use or share data inappropriately	The Council has robust processes in place around data security. The lead officer for workstream 3 – making data work for us – is the Corporate Insight, Communities and Governance Manager, who is also the Council's Deputy Data Protection Officer and so has a full understanding of the implications and processes of using and sharing data.

5.3 We are satisfied that the risks associated with adoption of the strategy and those that require management to mitigate the threat of not delivering the digital vision are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 None.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Should Committee decide to adopt the strategy, the workstream leads will continue to deliver the planned projects, which include incorporating increasing awareness of the digital vision and building digital into the culture of the organisation.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Digital Strategy 2022-25 (draft)
- Appendix 2: Equalities impact assessment

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.