

Committee: **Cabinet**

Date of meeting: **4th October 2023**

Report Subject: **Digital Transformation Strategy for the Council**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member for Corporate Overview and Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias – Chief Officer Commercial and Customer
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Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	24/08/2023	04.09.23			14/09/2023	04/10/2023		

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report to present the Council Digital Transformation Strategy 2023 – 2027 (hereafter ‘the strategy’) to Cabinet for approval.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Council has been progressing with its digital transformation journey over the last few years, with the introduction of new ways of working, modern technology and cloud-based software.

2.2 The scope of the strategy sets out our ambition to make digital transformation an integral part of our approach to providing high quality services.

2.3 The key principles and priorities of the strategy are aimed at those that need and want to access the Council. The intention is to build good quality services with those that use and provide them.

2.4 The additional benefits of using digital technology and innovation will support independence and better-connected communities.

2.5 Through our customer-centred design approach we will consider each element of a process and how customers use our services.

2.6 Having the right culture and leadership to drive our digital ambition will support the development of customer-centred services.

2.7 Improved use of data, better engagement and collaboration will allow us to join up services to remove barriers between organisations so that customers can easily access what they need.

2.8 The Strategy is underpinned by two key principles and three priorities and are essential to improving and delivering our services in the future.

2.9 **Principle One:**, developing a culture that supports digital improvement and a seamless customer experience;

Principle Two: improving collaboration to make the best use of knowledge and expertise to create better services;

Priority One: to be a customer focussed organisation;

Priority Two: to be a digitally enabled Borough;

Priority Three: to maximise the use of our resources and technology.

- 2.10 The key themes and priorities of this strategy have been developed through user research and engagement with customers; staff engagement; senior management workshops; elected member engagement; discussions with local authority partners and results of digital maturity assessments.

These were shared with CLT and a Member engagement session was held in July 2023.

The Strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment and investment into: -

- Becoming a citizens focused organisation;
- Supporting learning and development
- Providing equal access to services
- Identifying and developing the right technology in the right way
- Improving collaboration with others

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 CLT endorsed the Strategy on 24th August 2023.

3.2 The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee recommended Option 1.

3.3 **Option 1:**
That Cabinet approves the Digital and Transformation Strategy.

Option 2:
That the Cabinet considers the Digital and Transformation Strategy and suggests recommendations for changes prior to approval.

4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (Section 15), places a duty on all Local Authorities in Wales to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

As part of this, the Council is required to develop a Corporate Plan. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 also places individual duties on public bodies. The legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales and creating a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.

- 4.2 The Strategy supports these objectives and the Corporate Plan priority “an ambitious and innovative Council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place.”.
- 4.3 The strategy is an important part of the overall governance framework and is aligned to other key Council plans and strategies including the Customer Services Strategy (currently in the democratic process for approval), the Commercial strategy, the Workforce Strategy, and Communication Strategy.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

- 5.1.2 The Strategy supports elements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and aspects of its delivery are included within the Commercial Strategy and within the Bridging the Gap Programme
- 5.1.3 There is a clear alignment to the digital programmes that are currently in progress
- 5.1.4 There are no current anticipated impacts on budget to deliver the core values of the strategy, the strategy is clearly aligned to the Corporate Digital Programme and ICT Investment Road map

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- 5.2.1 There is a risk of non-compliance of the adoption of the strategy. Failure to comply with the ambitions of the strategy will impact the delivery and savings associated with the Strategic Financial programme called Bridging the Gap, such as:
- Reducing Third Party Spend Strategic Business Review
 - Workplace Transformation Strategic Business Review
 - Use of data and insight to support decision making Strategic Business Review
 - Designing services around the customer Strategic Business Review
 - Behavioural Insight Strategic Business Review
- 5.2.2 Non-compliance to the strategy will impact the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Plan priorities and pose risks to the delivery of other key plans and strategies, such as:
- Customer Strategy
 - Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - Workforce Strategy
 - Regeneration Strategy
 - Education ICT Strategy
 - Commissioning and Procurement Strategy
 - Commercial Strategy
- 5.2.3 The mitigation of these risks will be monitored through officer networks (mentioned in Performance Section 6 of the report).

5.3 ***Legal***

Adherence to GDPR Principles, Security and code of practices

5.4 **Human Resources**

Attendance at Officer Networks across the Council, i.e. Service Design and Digital Board will support the adoption of the strategy

5.5 **Health and Safety**

None identified.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

6.1.2 Key deliverables

- Developing our My Services portal and Blaenau Gwent app so customers can self-serve and access services easily;
- Review of online content, so it's easier to understand;
- Continue to look at digital solutions to help customers self-serve;
- Identifying training opportunities to improve digital skills for staff, members and how we can access support for customers;
- Continue to rationalise the number of digital systems across the Council to reduce our third party spend;
- Looking at areas where we can use automation and artificial intelligence to improve processes.

6.1.3 There will be a set of delivery plans against each priority set out in the strategy and will have a number of key success measures, such as % of customers accessing front facing services rating the service they receive as excellent or good; % of customers choosing to self-serve.

6.1.4 Behavioural insight will also inform delivery of the strategy moving forward.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

6.2.1 The strategy will support our aim to be proactive, embracing opportunities for national, regional, partnership and local collaboration to better meet the needs of the community.

6.2.2 People already interact digitally with shops, banks and schools and request many services online. Modern customers expect to do the same with their local Council.

6.2.3 The demands and expectations of customers and staff and the speed of digital innovation means that we need to be able to deal with the rising volume of customers' requests, who want faster, more comprehensive services across a growing range of channels.

6.2.4 The additional benefits of using digital technology and innovation will support independence and better-connected communities.

6.2.5 To support the successful delivery of this strategy there are some clear links to the level of service that customers can expect to receive, whatever channel they choose to use and will be closely aligned to our Customer Services Strategy (currently in draft).

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

- 6.3.1 The Strategy, has been developed with engagement via;
- Feedback from customers, non-users, learners, businesses, partners, staff and data gathered during various service design projects;
 - Evidence from work undertaken on service design projects, i.e Planning and content design;
 - Wider CLT session facilitated by Centre of Public Digital Services to understand current position, opportunities, barriers and objectives;
 - Feedback from elected members, MCS induction session;
 - Digital self-evaluation, facilitated by WLGA;
 - Digital Exclusion project across Gwent;
 - Customer Experience and Access review;
 - Review of agile working
 - Community feedback on budget proposals – 62% want easy access to digital services

6.3.2 User research will be a key part of the strategy implementation moving forward.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

6.4.1 The Digital landscape has changed dramatically over recent years and is constantly evolving with higher expectations of standards of service and accessibility, including the way the public receive council services.

6.4.2 The Pandemic changed customer behaviour, and the way in which public services needed to respond has given momentum to shaping a new vision for the Councils customer offer.

6.4.3 The lasting impact of COVID-19 has accelerated the need for the review of the Digital and Transformation delivery model.

6.4.4 Closely aligning the strategy with understanding our demographics utilising new technology will provide a pathway for future proofing the Council moving forward into the 21st Century.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

6.5.1 The demands and expectations of customers and staff and the speed of digital innovation means that we need to be able to deal with the rising volume of customers' requests, who want faster, more comprehensive services across a growing range of channels.

6.5.2 The key principles and priorities of this strategy and the Customer Services Strategy are aimed at those that need and want to access the Council.

6.5.3 The intention is to build good quality services with those that use and provide them. The additional benefits of using digital technology and innovation will support independence and better-connected communities.

- 6.5.4 Through our customer-centred design approach we will consider each element of a process and how customers use our services. Having the right culture and leadership to drive our ambition will support the development of customer-centred services.
- 6.5.5 Improved use of data, better engagement and collaboration will allow us to join up services to remove barriers between organisations so that customers can easily access what they need, supporting behaviour change where possible.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The strategy will be shared with key partners to support working towards a more joined up public services experience for customers.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
The strategy takes a whole council approach and promotes knowledge sharing across service areas.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
Utilisation of digital solutions where customers are able to also supports decarbonisation, ability to transact online where customers are able.
- 6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***
See Appendix 2.
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1.1 The Service Design and Digital Leadership Board will oversee the delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy.
- 7.1.2 Each year the strategy will have a set of Delivery Plans developed against each priority. A set of key success measures will also be developed.
- 7.1.3 The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure we keep pace with ongoing changes to digital innovation, technologies and customer expectation.
- 7.1.4 This strategy is one of a set of strategic digital/ICT programmes designed to secure the future sustainability across the community and deliver improved outcomes for our customers, businesses and learners.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 Digital and Transformation Strategy
- Appendix 2 Integrated Impact Assessment