

Committee(s): Policy, Resource & Economic Development	Date: 30 June 2021
Subject: Digital Strategy – Action Plan 2021/22	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Sarah Bennett, Corporate Director – Digital & Customer Engagement	Public
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Summary

This report seeks to provide Members with an action plan for delivery against the Council's Digital Strategy in 2021/22.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the Digital Strategy Action Plan 2021/22 as attached at Appendix A.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

The Council's Digital Strategy 2020-2025 was approved at Policy, Resource & Economic Development Committee on 16 December 2020 (min. 646 refers).

The Digital Strategy 2020-25 provides overarching direction to the Council's plans to explore the use of technology to enable organisational and service transformation. This is critical to ensuring the Council can deliver the best digital experience to Officers, Members and Customers. The strategy also sets to enable the realisation of digital efficiency savings.

The strategy is a long term, five-year strategy and adopts three core themes. Each theme provides a set of priorities that will deliver effective change in the way we support and deliver our services.

- Customer Experience
- Data, Security & Process
- Employee Experience

A rapid response to COVID-19 using digital technologies was undertaken during 2020 to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. We responded by producing an agile action

plan that enabled Officers to react swiftly to a constantly changing environment as the response to the pandemic unfolded.

Phase 1 of our digital journey during 2020 has strongly positioned the Council to react and adapt and has started to produce achievements against the wider Digital Strategy. These achievements include, but are not limited to:

- a. Introduction of live streamed virtual meetings
- b. Rollout of Microsoft Teams for virtual office meetings and collaboration
- c. Provision of standard devices to all Council Members to support virtual council meetings and future digital councillor services.
- d. Expanded our cyber security
- e. Expanded online forms
- f. Introduction of hybrid council meetings supporting the varying needs of Council Members and Officers
- g. Introduced a performance management framework to monitor and support delivery of the Corporate Strategy, which included the early stages of creating corporate dashboard to provide easier access to business intelligence
- h. Introduction of new communications such as the GovDelivery newsletters, which has been taken up by 15,000 subscribers
- i. Implemented a fully remote Contact Centre to enable completely uninterrupted customer services
- j. Natural reduction in printing through the implementation of a number of paperless processes (such as Planning application validation). Such processes removed the need for Officers to attend the office

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

For 2021/22, a proactive action plan has been produced to identify key objectives that deliver against the Digital Strategy's three core themes. This is attached as Appendix A.

Whilst the action plan is broad in terms of objectives, there are four large scale projects that set to underpin the Council's future digital transformation. These are:

- Cloud Desktop 2.0
- End user equipment (inc. telephony)
- New website
- Brentwood Centre project

The Digital Strategy is a strategy for the whole organisation. This action plan is intended to outline those projects directly delivered by the IT and Digital team, however, other services across the organisation may also be delivering or participating in projects that contribute to outcomes within the Digital Strategy. These projects which will be captured through our internal project management framework.

Progress of all objectives outlined in the action plan will be tracked via a combination of agile project management and the Corporate Project Management framework.

It should be noted that IT and Digital resource is prioritised to infrastructure and support needs that keep the Council running. Delivery of transformational objectives will always be subject to the reactive response and support needs of the Council.

The action plan 2021/22 will remain a live and agile document and will be regularly updated. The action plan will be reproduced annually and reported to PRED.

Reasons for Recommendation

An action plan is required to ensure that we remain on track to deliver the objectives set out in the Digital Strategy 2020-25.

Consultation

None

References to Corporate Plan

The Digital Strategy supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-25, and the Council's Business Plan. The strategy naturally aligns with the 'Delivering an efficient and effective Council' theme but will influence delivery of projects against a wide range of corporate priorities.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director (Finance & Resources)
Tel/Email: 01277 312500/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

Ensuring that the Council has a robust Digital Strategy is essential to efficient operations. Service managers will use existing resources to ensure there is no revenue pressures, however, it is expected that the strategy will drive out efficiencies as part of the Corporate plan. The Capital programme already includes schemes for ICT strategy and hardware and it is intended that the digital strategy will align the required resources over the 5-year cycle as part of the budget setting process to feed into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer
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The Council must have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty under s149 Equality Act 2010 when making decisions that may affect those with protected characteristics. As outlined in the Customer Experience theme of the Digital Strategy, by ensuring that people have a choice and can, if they are unable to access digitally, use other methods ensures that this has been considered.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning and Economy)

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There are no direct economic implications. It is important that the Council can shift to a more digital presence in line with local businesses for more efficient services, which may have indirect local economic benefits.

Background Papers

[Digital Strategy 2020-2025](#)

Appendices to this report

Appendix A: Digital Action Plan 2021/22