THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 19TH JULY, 2023

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 6TH JULY, 2023

"C47   DRAFT DIGITAL STRATEGY (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES) –

The Leader presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide Cabinet with an overview of work undertaken to develop a new draft Digital Strategy and seek approval to consult on the same before adoption.

Digital innovation was a step change away from where it was prior to the pandemic where many service users became much more used to accessing services online. The Strategy would address how digital technology could be used to become more effective, more active, more accessible, more inclusive, and also more data driven. There was a fear that some people would be left out because of such changes, but residents would still be supported by in-person and telephone services.

Councillor Sivagnanam said it was important to recognise that both digital and in person support services were available, and that demand for digital services had increased, e.g., 95% of residents in the Vale of Glamorgan digitally completed the census survey. Data gathered could be used to provide better services to residents.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1)   T H A T the contents of this report be noted.

(2)   T H A T the draft Digital Strategy and proposals contained in the report be endorsed as the basis for wider consultation.

(3)   T H A T the report and Appendix A be referred to Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process.

(4)   T H A T Cabinet receives a further report on conclusion of the consultation process in order to consider a final Digital Strategy to be adopted.

Reasons for decisions

(1)   To update Cabinet on the approach taken to developing the draft Digital Strategy.

(2)   To enable the draft Digital Strategy to be consulted upon.

(3)   To enable the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee to participate in the consultation process.

(4)   To enable Cabinet to consider the outcomes of the consultation process and proposed changes to the draft Digital Strategy and to ensure the Council adopts a Digital Strategy to provide the framework for digital development in the future."

Attached as Appendix – Report to Cabinet: 6th July, 2023

Meeting of:	**Cabinet**
Date of Meeting:	**Thursday, 06 July 2023**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Draft Digital Strategy
Purpose of Report:	To provide Cabinet with an overview of work undertaken to develop a new draft Digital Strategy and seek approval to consult on the same before adoption.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance & Resources
Responsible Officer:	Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	No Member consultation has been undertaken due to the nature of this report. The consultation undertaken to date with Council staff and the activities proposed for wider consultation are described within the body of the report.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Executive Summary:

- The Council's previous Digital Strategy ran from 2017-2020. In 2021, a Digital Maturity Assessment was undertaken to provide the foundations for developing a new Digital Strategy.

- The Council has worked with the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) to develop a new draft Digital Strategy (Appendix A) via a collaborative process that has involved over a hundred colleagues from across all service areas of the Council.

- This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the structure and content of the draft Digital Strategy and seeks approval to consult on the draft Strategy, including via reference to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee before receiving a further report on conclusion of the consultation process to enable a final Digital Strategy to be adopted.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Cabinet note the contents of this report.

2. It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the draft Digital Strategy and proposals contained in this report as the basis for wider consultation.

3. It is recommended that Cabinet refer this report and Appendix A to Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process.

4. It is recommended that Cabinet receives a further report on conclusion of the consultation process in order to consider a final Digital Strategy to be adopted.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To update Cabinet on the approach taken to developing the draft Digital Strategy.

2. To enable the draft Digital Strategy to be consulted upon.

3. To enable the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee to participate in the consultation process.

4. To enable Cabinet to consider the outcomes of the consultation process and proposed changes to the draft Digital Strategy and to ensure the Council adopts a Digital Strategy to provide the framework for digital development in the future.

1. Background

1.1 The Council's previous Digital Strategy ran from 2017-2020. During the pandemic a huge emphasis was placed on digitising ways of working, including facilitating home working and adopting new ways of working to support residents whilst in-person services were largely suspended.

1.2 In 2021 a Digital Maturity Assessment was undertaken to assess the areas of strength and improvement that would enable the Council to maximise the use of digital technology to support the delivery of the Council's services and well-being objectives.

1.3 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the work undertaken to produce a new draft Digital Strategy for the coming five years and seeks permission to consult on this draft Digital Strategy prior to reporting to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 The draft Digital Strategy can be found in Appendix A.

2.2 The draft Strategy contains information on the strategic context for the work, making connections with the Council's previous Digital Strategy and the developments of recent years, notably a Digital Maturity Assessment of the

Council in 2021. The draft Strategy includes information on the work delivered by the previous Digital Strategy and reflects on the experiences of the pandemic and the way in which digital ways of working continue to support the objectives in the Corporate Plan.

2.3 The Council has developed the draft Digital Strategy in partnership with Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) who have brought their experience, independence and expertise as part of a collaborative project that has seen over 100 colleagues from across the organisation join a series of workshops and discussions to help shape a new digital vision, strategic objectives and a roadmap for delivery.

2.4 The draft Digital strategy has taken into consideration the Council's organisational values to help shape the vision and commitments contained within the document. It has made strong connections with other key enabling strategies, such as the Financial Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan, People Strategy and Workforce Plan, Corporate Asset Management Strategy, and the Public Participation Strategy.

2.5 The draft Digital Strategy is intentionally not a 'technical' document. It is about a future way of working that uses digital technology as a key enabler for delivering the Council's services and objectives.

2.6 A vision is set out in the draft Digital Strategy, of "Transforming our digital culture: Open to new ways of working together and with the community to enhance our services. Ambitious and proud to transform our digital culture in order to unlock our digital potential".

2.7 The draft Strategy is based around four themes, each of which have two commitments.

- Theme 1 - Community and Involvement

    - Commitment 1: Listen to the community to understand their needs in order to transform digital services.

    - Commitment 2: Create accessible, inclusive and sustainable digital services for residents.

- Theme 2 – Organisation and Processes

    - Commitment 1: Create & embed reliable processes, so that digital projects are delivered successfully.

    - Commitment 2: Develop a digital culture, where digital is seen as a key enabler of all services in the organisation.

- Theme 3 – Digital People and Skills

    - Commitment 1: Equip colleagues with the tools to deliver services effectively for residents.

    - Commitment 2: Support and empower colleagues to develop and use their digital skills.

- Theme 4 – Data and Insight

  - Commitment 1: Invest in & harness data insights to inform and improve decision-making.

  - Commitment 2: Use clear standards to ensure effective data sharing.

2.8 A description and rationale is provided for each of the four themes, alongside an overview of the intended outcomes and how we will know if we are successful in delivering the strategy.

2.9 For each of the commitments aligned with the themes, actions are set out that will be taken 'now' (first year), 'next' (two to three years) and 'later' (years four and five) to show how the strategy would be delivered.

2.10 The draft Digital Strategy also sets out how progress will be monitored, through a series of indicators and that regular progress reports being included within the quarterly performance monitoring reports. Governance processes via a Digital Board and the Strategic Insight Board are also described so as to provide assurance on how the Strategy will be managed through implementation.

Engagement, Consultation & Communication

2.11 As described above, the draft Digital Strategy has been developed in partnership with SOCITM who have worked closely with a Council project team to involve and engage with over a hundred Council colleagues from all directorates. Regular reports and discussions have taken place at the Strategic Leadership Team, with Heads of Service and the Strategic Insight Board. This has resulted in a draft Strategy that aligns with the cultural ambitions of the Council to work in new ways both internally and externally. It has also afforded the opportunity for SOCITM to share their experience from other organisations and feedback from those participating in the process has been very positive.

2.12 Cabinet are requested to approve the draft Digital Strategy as the basis for consultation before receiving a further report that will present the consultation feedback and a final version of the Digital Strategy for the Council.

2.13 As part of the consultation process, Cabinet is recommended to refer this report to the Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

2.14 The consultation process will also involve:

- Inviting feedback from residents and Council service users through an online survey (with an option to provide feedback by telephone).

- Inviting feedback from all Council staff via an online survey.

- Sharing the draft Strategy with the Council's Public Services Board partners for comment.

- Sharing the draft Strategy with representatives of the Equalities Consultative Forum, the Council's staff diversity networks and the Council's Member Champions network for comment.

2.15 It is intended to consult during July and August with a view to report back to Cabinet shortly after the summer recess.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

3.1 The draft Digital Strategy will form a key part of the Council's integrated planning that enables the delivery of the Council's Well-being Objectives. The draft strategy will contribute to all four Well-being Objectives, notably to work with and for our communities and pursue specific Corporate Plan commitments including to work innovatively , using technology, resources and our assets to transform our services so they are sustainable for the future. The draft Digital Strategy is part of a commitment in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 to Adopt a new digital strategy, improve how we communicate and develop more responsive online services, including improvements for housing services and the customer contact centre and enhancements to the website.

3.2 The draft Digital Strategy has been developed by involving a large number of colleagues internally and proposals to consult more widely are described in the body of this report. The draft Digital Strategy sets out ambitions to improve collaboration through the use of technology, tackle issues of digital exclusion, improve communications and takes a long-term view of the way in which digital can be a key enabler for the organisation. Commitments to user-centred design and improving user-experience will contribute to taking preventative action and the draft Digital Strategy illustrates the integration between this strategy and other key areas of the organisation's work.

4. Climate & Nature Emergency Implications

4.1 The draft Digital Strategy makes clear references to the Council's Project Zero strategic priority, including the adoption of technology to facilitate home working and in contributing to the office rationalisation programme, Eich Lle.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

5.1 The cost of developing the Digital Strategy has been met within existing resources (via the use of a corporate reserve). The costs of implementing the Digital Strategy will be met from existing resources (revenue and capital) and investment from the Digital Reserve as appropriate.

Employment

5.2 There are no direct employment implications arising from this report. The recommendation to appoint a strategic lead for Digital is being progressed via the Council's senior management appointment arrangements.

5.3 Cabinet will note the proposed changes relating to the structure of the Corporate Resources directorate contained in a separate report on this agenda. These are intended to enable the pursuance of the Digital Strategy with focus and pace.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.4 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. The draft Digital Strategy contains references to improving digital inclusion and supporting the Council's Public Participation Strategy. An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed in parallel with the draft Digital Strategy and will be further informed by the consultation as described in the body of this report, with that being reported to Cabinet in due course.

6. Background Papers

Vale of Glamorgan Council Digital Strategy 2017-2020

Digital Strategy 2017-20 (valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CONSULTATION DRAFT
DIGITAL
STRATEGY

2023-2028

VALE of GLAMORGAN

BRO MORGANNWG

Our approach to the way we work is as important as the tools, technologies and equipment that are available to us.

Our digital vision includes commitments to build upon our work to date and harness the information we hold and use it in new and innovative ways that improve the decisions we are making and the services we provide.

I am proud to introduce the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Digital Strategy for 2023-2028. Our strategy sets out an ambitious vision for the organisation to transform our approach to digital by working together and with the community in new ways to enhance our services and unlock the potential that exists.

The pace of change has accelerated in recent years, in particular as a result of the pandemic which revolutionised the way many of our colleagues and citizens work and interact. This was also a time of learning and investment, and this strategy seeks to build on our previous achievements and further transform our digital culture.

Our digital vision sets out how we will focus on transforming our services by embracing the potential that digital technology offers. The strategy sets out how we will build on our existing ways of working by involving residents in the way we design and deliver our services, It is now time for a step-change in how we approach our use of digital tools and focus them to innovate, both in the services we provide and the way in which we work. This will involve us investing time and resource into our colleagues to support them to make the best use of the tools available. We remain absolutely committed to ensuring that no-one is left behind, and a strong focus of our work will continue to ensure that communities whose voices are at times seldom heard, or who are digitally excluded, are supported and able to be fully be involved and benefit from the opportunities available.

I am confident that in pursuing our ambitious digital vision and delivering the commitments contained in this strategy, that the way we work and the services we provide to our residents will be enhanced and place the organisation in a strong position to work to deliver Strong Communities with a Bright Future.

Councillor Lis Burnett
Council Leader,
Vale of Glamorgan County Council

> **" Our digital vision sets out how we will focus on transforming our services by embracing the potential that digital technology offers. "**

INTRODUCTION TO OUR
DIGITAL VISION

OUR DIGITAL STRATEGY OUTLINES HOW WE WILL TRANSFORM OUR DIGITAL CULTURE IN ORDER TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS OF RESIDENTS, COLLEAGUES AND PARTNERS.

Our Digital Strategy recognises that our approach to the way we work is as important as the tools, technologies and equipment that are available to us. Supporting our residents and staff to embrace digital opportunities is at the heart of the vision, which is why it is about transforming our digital culture.

This strategy builds from the previous Digital Maturity Assessment carried out in 2021 which recommended an update to make current the Council's digital strategy. Many of the objectives identified in the previous strategy (2017-2020) had already been achieved, and as a result the time was right to set a new strategic vision for digital in the future. This renewed and re-focused strategy is required to achieve the Vale's full digital potential and identify ways to deliver improved, customer-focused services while also meeting the challenging financial environment within which public services are operating. The strategy is intended to help the council make better use of data, work together more effectively with our external partners, while also meeting resident expectations for seamless, intuitive services. At its heart is a desire to embrace different opportunities, to be innovative and to use digital as a means of enabling the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan, wellbeing objectives and contributing to the Well-being Goals for Wales.

Since our last digital strategy was published, the Council has used digital as a key enabler. For example, we have used carefully deployed technology to increase the effectiveness of service delivery, from the distribution

" In 2019/20, estimated that **43**% of people had made a transaction on a public sector website in the last 12 months "

(National Survey for Wales 21-22)

of free school meals vouchers to the provision of the latest advancements in telemedical technologies that support people to remain independent in their own homes. We have enabled colleagues working out in our communities to use mobile devices that remove paper based processes and route them to their next appointment via the most efficient means of travel. We have upgraded the network capacity of our offices and schools, enabling the use of the latest gigabit broadband speeds.

Recent work, such as development of the council's website and introduction of a self-service customer platform has been well received and has seen a positive impact on the experience of our residents. In order to build upon this success, the Council aims to embed a strong digital culture across the organisation to ensure a sense of ownership of the strategy's vision and actions. In developing this strategy, it is clear that there is a strong appetite for improving digital service delivery across the council, with a focus on enhancing the areas that currently work well in order to act as catalyst for change.

We once again find ourselves in an unprecedented period of change. The potential offered by digital technology is ever accelerating. The expectations of our residents are increasing, especially as so many parts of people's lives now involve interacting using digital technology. At the same time, the demand for our services and the complexity of the needs people have is increasing, whilst resources decrease. The Digital Strategy therefore needs to set out an ambitious path to harness the power of digital technology in new and creative ways in order to help the organisation rise to the challenges facing us now, and in the future and has a focus on understanding the root causes of issues and how to prevent them.

Our Corporate Plan recognises that the achievement of several of our key organisational commitments requires the careful use of digital as an agent for change. Our carbon reduction and climate change challenge programme, "Project Zero" requires the effective use of digital as tool for
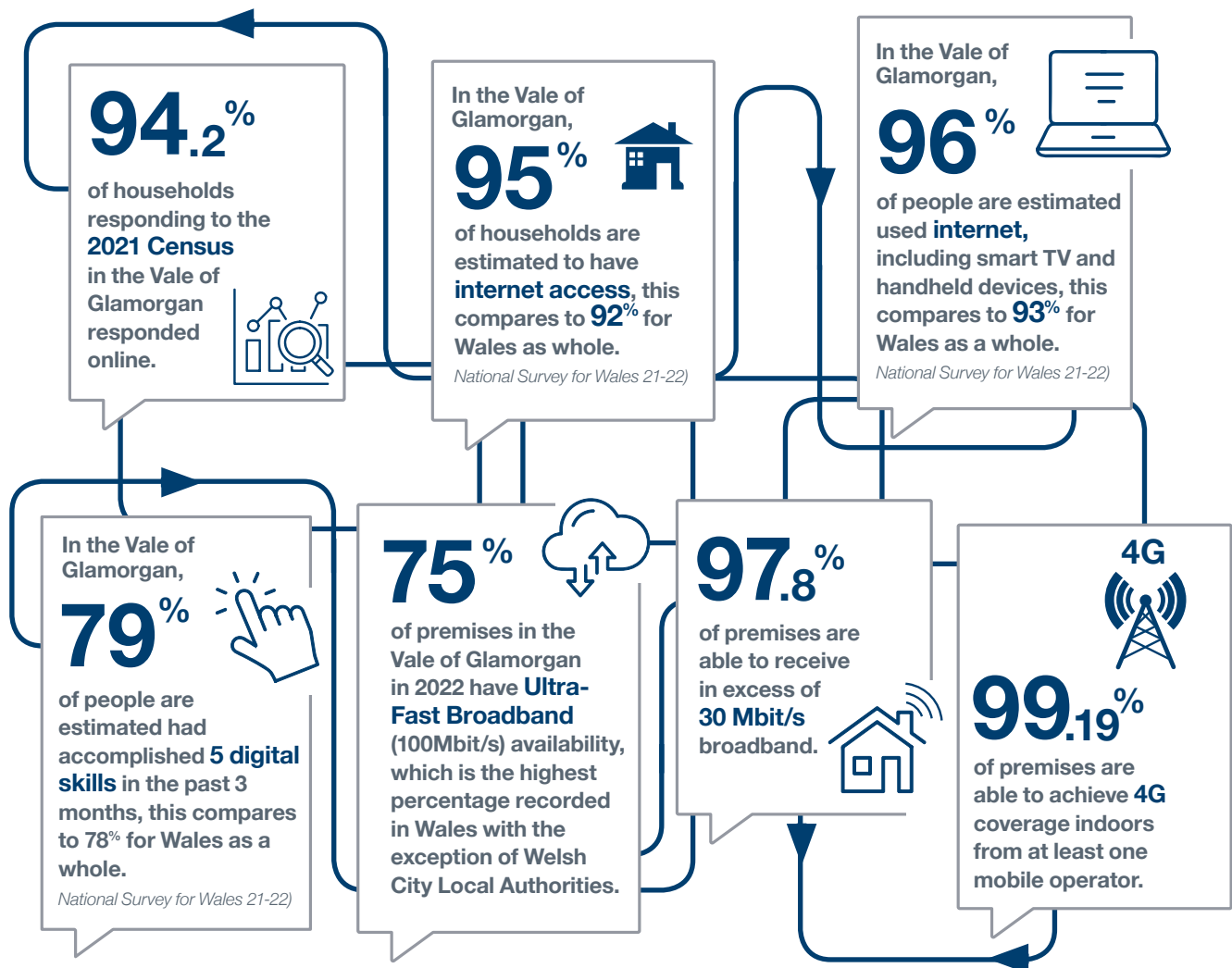
> **88**% of people are estimated to use the internet several times a day, **7**% daily, **3**% weekly and **1.5**% less than weekly
>
> *(National Survey for Wales 21-22)*
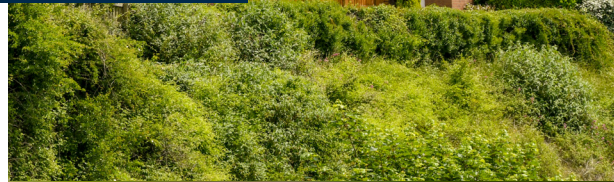
transforming the way in which we utilise our resources. The success of the "Eich Lle" office consolidation programme will also require the use of digital technology to ensure that our physical environments are configured efficiently and enable our staff to work effectively across departmental boundaries. Using new technology to automate and standardise processes offers the potential for efficiencies and improved experiences for our residents and colleagues. The cost of living crisis demonstrates the need to be able to communicate and share information and give access to information and support in new and innovative ways. The Digital Strategy has been developed in collaboration with over a hundred council staff from all five directorates in the organisation. It is based on in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholders, research and analysis of the current position of digital within the public sector, and importantly provides a vision for where the organisation wants to be in the future.

It is recognised that the recent pandemic has changed the expectations placed on the council, both internally (as remote and hybrid ways of working have become widely adopted)

and externally (with increased access to digital services being expected by residents). Investment in the Council's technological infrastructure has enabled the acceleration of new ways working. There are however opportunities for further advances to meet the expectations of our residents, colleagues and partners.

" **74**% of people are estimated to have used online help services in the last 3 months " (26% not)
(National Survey for Wales 21-22)

94.2% of households responding to the **2021 Census** in the Vale of Glamorgan responded online.

In the Vale of Glamorgan, **95%** of households are estimated to have **internet access**, this compares to **92%** for Wales as whole. *National Survey for Wales 21-22)*

In the Vale of Glamorgan, **96%** of people are estimated used **internet,** including smart TV and handheld devices, this compares to **93%** for Wales as a whole. *National Survey for Wales 21-22)*

In the Vale of Glamorgan, **79%** of people are estimated had accomplished **5 digital skills** in the past 3 months, this compares to 78% for Wales as a whole. *National Survey for Wales 21-22)*

75% of premises in the Vale of Glamorgan in 2022 have **Ultra-Fast Broadband** (100Mbit/s) availability, which is the highest percentage recorded in Wales with the exception of Welsh City Local Authorities.

97.8% of premises are able to receive in excess of **30 Mbit/s** broadband.

4G **99.19%** of premises are able to achieve **4G** coverage indoors from at least one mobile operator.

HOW WE DEVELOPED OUR
DIGITAL STRATEGY

This Digital Strategy is the result of a collaborative effort that involved and brought together the views of over 100 staff across all levels of the organisation.

Upon completion of a series of design workshops and focus groups, the outputs of these sessions were analysed and combined to help create this strategy and its accompanying roadmap. The strategy aims to enhance the way in which we collaborate with partners and the public. Defining the direction of travel for the creation of accessible, inclusive, cost-effective service channels aims to empower residents and staff, meeting their needs for different services. Having an effective digital strategy encourages clear and effective communication between our partners and ourselves, ensuring we understand the impact of our decisions on others', reducing duplication and learning from one another.

HAVING A CLEAR DIGITAL STRATEGY WILL ENABLE US TO CONTRIBUTE TO SEVERAL KEY OBJECTIVES, INCLUDING:

- A positive reduction in our carbon usage, demonstrable via a reduction in energy use achieved via a reduction in travel and use of digital communication channels.

- A reduction in financial cost as a result of deploying smarter, more cost-effective means of service delivery.

- Improved customer contact channels for residents and business via the design of digital by choice services – digital services that match the preferences of our users.

- Improved use of data to understand demand, enabling us to make decisions regarding service delivery in an evidence based way.

- Upskilling staff and residents that may feel digital excluded, giving them the confidence to use digital services.

87% of people are estimated to have bought something online in the last 3 months

(National Survey for Wales 21-22)

This strategy builds on previous digital strategies and projects which have focused on improving services, developing citizen insight, giving colleagues the tools they need and ensuring that our resident's information is held safely and securely.

Significant investment has been made by the Council to improve residents' experience of accessing services in the way they choose to contact us. Our new Customer Relationship Management system gives residents an improved online experience including the ability to be kept up to date with progress on their enquiries and requests. This has been supported with the greater use of user research and resident involvement in design of services to ensure processes are designed with a focus on resident needs.

The Council has relied heavily on the development of online services to ensure that residents have easy and convenient access Cost of Living related financial and wellbeing support. Although these services were available across a range of channels, online take up accounted for over 90% of total demand.

Our colleagues are benefiting from the roll out of Microsoft Office 365 products which enables improved opportunities for collaborative working and facilitating agile working practices, including the ability to work from home during the Covid pandemic.

We recognise the power of data to help us make good decisions about the services we provide. The council has adopted PowerBI as its core reporting tool and has been

developed capability across a number of functions to analyse and assess data from a range of sources to provide additional insight into the needs of our residents and impact of services in meeting those needs.

In developing our services, we know the high value our residents place on knowing that we hold their data safely and securely. The council has invested in a range of technologies to ensure that it complies with the latest cyber security standards and that payments taken comply with Payment Card Industry Security Standards, ensuring that payment details are secure.

OTHER RECENT WORK HAS INCLUDED:

- The development of a digital customer experience platform to enable customers to access services 24/7 and provide instant access to updates regarding their requests.

- Staff accessing information via Microsoft Office 365, enabling agile working home working.

  - Ensuring our cloud software meets the required ISO recommended security standards.

  - Invested in our reporting capacity and capability to understand key service demands.

  - Collaborating with our partners to develop user centered design approaches to building services.

  - Developing our payment platforms to ensure that payment services are easily accessible and secure.

- Working with partners to provide improve the digital skill sets of residents, including online learning to improve digital access.

- Ensuring a digital first approach to cost-of-living support that enabled residents to get rapid support regarding financial and mental health issues.

- Working with the WLGA team to develop a website that meets WCAG requirements and is accessible for all user needs.

> **"96%** of people are estimated to have used a **search engine** in the last **3 months "**
>
> *(National Survey for Wales 21-22)*

ALIGNMENT TO OUR
CORPORATE STRATEGIES

The strategy builds upon the previous Digital Strategy (2017-2020), as well as the Digital Maturity report completed in 2021. As well as incorporating aspects from other corporate and departmental strategies, the strategy seeks to recognise and promote existing and ongoing work, and fits into the wider strategic environment of the Council.

Our core strategic values have guided the strategy and what we are seeking to achieve from it:

Ambitious
Forward thinking, embracing new ways of working and investing in our future.

Open
Open to different ideas and being accountable for the decisions we take.

Together
Working together as a team that engages with our customers and partners respects diversity and is committed to quality services.

Proud
Proud of the Vale of Glamorgan: proud to serve our communities and to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan council.

The ambitions of the Digital Strategy will be reflected in the Council's Service Plans to show the individual contributions to delivering the commitments made in this strategy by all areas of the Council.

The Digital Strategy is a vital component of the Council's integrated planning framework, which underpins the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Digital Strategy supports the delivery of the Council's:

- **Financial Strategy & Medium Term Financial Plan –** by ensuring a focus on delivering value for money, supporting service transformation and new ways of working.

- **People Strategy & Strategic Workforce Plan –** by setting the digital ambitions for the Council's workforce, culture and skills to be an attractive employer of choice.

- **Corporate Asset Management Strategy –** in contributing to the reduction in the Council's physical property portfolio and enabling new ways of delivering services to residents and the community.

- **Public Participation Strategy –** by providing new ways for the Council to interact with and involve communities, including through the democratic process and ensuring seldom heard voices are heard and participation opportunities are maximised.
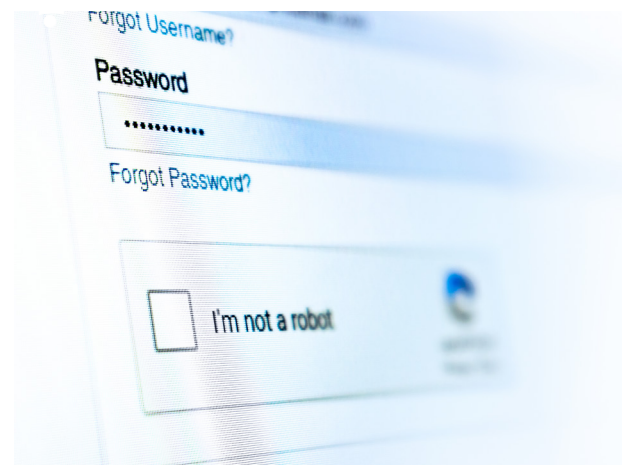
The focus on transforming the digital culture also aligns with the Digital Strategy for Wales published by the Welsh Government in March 2021.

As part of the wider project, we have also created a roadmap of prioritised actions to set a clear pathway to achievement of the vision, and a new functional Target Operating Model that outlines the skills & functions needed for the organisation to deliver on our commitments.

OUR DIGITAL VISION

Given the change that we want to achieve, we have developed a vision based around building a successful digital culture, combined with our corporate values and objectives, to create a vision statement.

The Digital Strategy is based around four key themes that underpin our vision and align with the Council's existing plans and strategies. These themes were identified from a review of our current digital position which captured our current digital approach, areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Each theme is supported by two digital commitments that have been used to frame the accompanying actions and provide a detailed breakdown of the focus of each theme.

THEME 1 - COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Commitment 1 - Listen to the community to understand their needs in order to transform digital services
Commitment 2 - Create accessible, inclusive and sustainable digital services for residents

Involving our community (residents, partners and businesses) is essential to developing user centred digital services. We are committed to providing accessible, inclusive and easy to use online services for our community.

To build on our existing **Public Participation Strategy,** we will establish User Research/User Experience capacity to help us to improve the user experience by working with residents, partners and businesses to understand their needs, areas for additional self-service and any improvements needed. We are keen to understand the most effective communication channels to ensure as many voices are heard as possible and invest in proactive communication to reduce the amount of times residents need to contact us.

THEME 2 – ORGANISATION AND PROCESSES

Commitment 1 - Create & embed reliable processes, so that digital projects are delivered successfully
Commitment 2 - Develop a digital culture, where digital is seen as a key enabler of all services in the organisation

To create a successful digital culture we will invest in improving our processes and procedures so they are as effective and efficient as possible and help us to provide a consistent approach across the organisation.
We will empower all colleagues to take ownership of digital within their role and services. We will do this by establishing a digital governance process, encouraging all colleagues to share ideas for digital improvements and fully utilising the digital tools and functionality available.

We will also invest to develop additional functions such as Enterprise Architecture as a means of overseeing and managing our digital 'estate', refresh our existing Project Management toolkit and find ways to improve connectivity across the Vale for our colleagues and communities.

THEME 3 – PEOPLE AND SKILLS

Commitment 1 - Equip colleagues with the tools to deliver services effectively for residents

Commitment 2 - Support and empower colleagues to develop and use their digital skills

Improving digital skills, providing a range of training opportunities, focusing on user needs, and services working in partnership are all needed to enhance our digital services and support people across the Vale of Glamorgan.

To provide effective training opportunities we first need to understand the current digital skill level across the organisation, then create a blended learning approach to support our colleagues' development. We will work with colleagues to understand their communication preferences, bridge the gap between services and Digital Teams by adopting Relationship/Delivery approaches and incorporate digital skills into our HR/recruitment processes.

THEME 4 – DATA AND INSIGHT

Commitment 1 - Invest in & harness data insights to inform and improve decision-making

Commitment 2 - Use clear standards to ensure effective data sharing

Investing in and harnessing the power of data will provide vital insight to improve decision making. Working with colleagues and services to understand their data needs will also help to improve the quality of the data we hold.

To ensure there is a clear and consistent approach to data across the organisation, we will develop a Data Strategy and create a network of Data Specialists to support its implementation. Dashboards will be utilised by a range of services and we will focus on cyber security to ensure there are appropriate levels of data security. This will give residents further assurance of our commitment to delivering services safe from misuse and cyber threats and ensure privacy is safeguarded through increasingly secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements.

DELIVERING THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

To successfully achieve our digital vision, we have set out a series of actions to take to deliver the commitments we have set out in each of the four strategic digital themes. These actions are shown over five years, with the actions we will take now *(within the first year),* next *(within years two to three)* and later *(within five years).*

OUR COMMITMENTS

THEME 1 - COMMUNITY AND INVOLVEMENT

Involving our community is essential to develop user centred digital services that are provided in ways that are designed to meet the needs of our residents, communities and businesses. We are committed to providing accessible, inclusive and easy to use services.

To build on our existing **Public Participation Strategy**, we will establish User Research/User Experience capacity to help us to improve the user experience by working with residents, partners and businesses to understand their needs, areas for additional self-service and any improvements needed. We are keen to understand the most effective communication channels to ensure as many voices are heard as possible and invest in proactive communication to reduce the amount of times residents need to contact us.

COMMITMENT 1 – We will listen to the community to understand their needs in order to transform our services.

Feedback from our community will help us to shape and enhance our digital services. It will provide residents, partners and businesses with opportunities to share our ideas and highlight areas for improvement to help us create the best possible services.

Now	Next	Later
Continue to engage with all in our communities to understand and deliver the most effective ways for interacting with the council.	Invest in proactive communications to reduce the need for residents to contact the council and duplicate reports of issues.	Incorporate community useability testing into system developments and improvements to understand and respond to user needs, in all project phases.
Work with customers and colleagues to understand where service transformation would add the greatest benefit and how digital can facilitate this.	Establish a governance and processes for using or requesting digital equipment including "Internet of Things" guidance for the use of voice and sensor activated devices.	Establish digital forums for colleagues, residents and partner agencies to regularly engage and seek feedback.
Use contacts with residents to proactively offer associated services and opportunities to engage with council consultations and feedback.	Explore the use of data sharing opportunities with partners where it will improve integrated services and outcomes for residents.	
Actively promote the benefits of using online and digital services.	Further develop User Research/User Experience capability to feed into service design.	
Celebrate digital achievements with the community to make them aware of digital progress and new digital opportunities within the Vale.	Explore opportunities to use digital approaches to service design and digital technology to enhance residents' experience of accessing services irrespective of what channel they choose.	
Capture and use satisfaction feedback to inform service improvement priorities.	Expand the use of digital consultations including surveys, focus groups, and engaging with partners to understand digital needs and user expectations in our communities.	

COMMITMENT 2 – Create accessible, inclusive and sustainable digital services for residents

We will ensure that the design of all digital services is user-centric, inclusive and accessible to the whole community as well as aligned with our corporate ambitions.

Now	Next	Later
Ensure all areas of the website are accessible, easy to use and available in Welsh and English.	Establish a clear microsites policy to enable services to develop a more varied online presence that meets the needs of their individual audiences.	Work with the community to understand their experience of the council's website and implement their ideas for improvements.
Empower customers to self-serve.	Work with customers and colleagues to understand the areas that would benefit from further self-service options and explore the best platforms to provide this.	Investigate single sign on options for customers using the council website, to improve and streamline the online experience.
Work with customers and colleagues to understand the areas that would benefit from further self-service options and explore the best platforms to provide this. These services could include increased availability of online payment functions and move to online initial self-assessments for social care support.		Work with colleagues to ensure that they have the skills, tools and capacity to support online services.
Invest in Digital Inclusion activities to improve access to digital services for our communities and ensure they have the skills to achieve the benefits.		

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

- Our residents, partners and businesses will tell us that they have a positive experience of interacting with our services, with high levels of satisfaction across all communications channels. Colleagues will also report a high level of satisfaction and will feel proud in delivering the high-quality services to our residents.

- A reduction in staff attrition and improved levels of staff recruitment.

- An increased positive sentiment towards the Council from residents.

- By ensuring that our online services are designed to reflect the needs of our communities, we will see an increase in take-up of these services and reduction across other channels.

- Services will be more sustainable due to increased efficiency, reduction in re-work, duplication and error.

THEME 2 - ORGANISATION AND PROCESSES

This theme focuses on the design and embedding of new processes to enable delivery of improved digital services for residents and colleagues. To create a successful digital culture we will invest in improving our processes and procedures so they are as effective and efficient as possible, work for our colleagues and help us to provide a consistent approach across the organisation.

We will empower all colleagues to take ownership of digital within their role and services. We will do this by establishing a digital governance process, encouraging all colleagues to share ideas for digital improvements and fully utilising the digital tools and functionality available. We will also invest to develop additional functions such as Enterprise Architecture as a means of overseeing and managing our digital 'estate', refresh our existing Project Management toolkit and find ways to improve connectivity across the Vale for our colleagues and communities.

COMMITMENT 1 – Create & embed reliable processes, so that digital projects are delivered successfully.

We will ensure there are consistent and effective processes, systems and toolkits in place to support and enhance our digital transformation projects to deliver high-quality digital services.

Now	Next	Later
Establish a user friendly and transparent process to encourage colleagues to submit ideas for digital improvements.	Undertake horizon scanning to identify potential digital solutions.	Work with services to identify opportunities for automation so colleagues can focus on higher value tasks.
Form a representative Digital Board to oversee the process for Digital Projects and the Digital Strategy.	Ensure Digital Service Standards for Wales are included in all projects and procedures.	
Develop and implement a process for ensuring the appropriate use of the Council's Digital financial reserve that enables investment to be made in areas that have the greatest impact and contribution to the strategy.	Provide project management training for project managers, including use of Agile.	
Communicate the digital governance processes to all colleagues.	Identify and implement additional core systems functionality which adds value, providing training and support to colleagues.	
Senior Leaders promote and champion the strategy and governance process.	Ensure that processes for maintaining website content are efficient and consistent.	
Refresh and communicate the Project Management toolkit, incorporating Agile methodology to ensure a consistent project management approach is taken for digital projects.	Investigate ways of providing lower-cost access to broadband and mobile data for residents that may be digitally excluded.	
Develop efficient systems that provide an improved user experience for colleagues, including the further roll out of Microsoft 365.		
Review all functionality available via from core systems (Microsoft 365/ Oracle Fusion/ GovService) and work with services to understand which features are most beneficial.		
Promote the benefits of existing and new systems to colleagues. Provide ongoing training and support to ensure systems are used correctly.		

COMMITMENT 2 – Develop a digital culture, where digital is seen as a key enabler of all services in the organisation.

We will create a culture where digital is seen as an important enabler of all roles within the organisation, and an essential foundation for all the services we deliver to our residents and partners.

Now	Next	Later
Appoint a dedicated senior role to take ownership and responsibility for driving forward the digital strategy.	Undertake horizon scanning to identify potential technologies that may support the transformation of services, including the potential use of artificial intelligence.	Work with broadband and data providers to improve connectivity in the identified areas.
Ensure that colleagues understand the Digital Strategy and are empowered to take ownership of digital delivery within service areas.	Identify areas of poor internet connectivity that impact on colleagues and residents.	
Ensure digital services have sufficient capacity to deliver the ambitions of the Digital Strategy.		
Establish functions and roles to include Enterprise Architecture, Digital support, User Experience and Project Management, support the delivery of digital objectives and embed digital practice across the Council.		

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

- The Council will have effective governance structures and processes in place which will mean that digital projects can be quickly assessed, approved and delivered. This will promote innovation and encourage calculated risk taking that fosters a learning culture.

- There will be a consistent approach to developing and delivering digital projects across our organisation so that outcomes are focussed on the needs of our residents and colleagues.

- Digital technology will be used to manage simple, process driven administrative task so that colleagues will be free to deal with the complex and higher risk tasks that have the biggest impact on our residents and their wellbeing.

THEME 3 - PEOPLE AND SKILLS

Improving digital skills, providing a range of training opportunities, focusing on user needs, and services working in partnership are all needed to enhance our digital services and support people across the Vale of Glamorgan.

To provide effective training opportunities we first need to understand the current digital skill level across the organisation, then create a blended learning approach to support our colleagues' development. We will work with colleagues to understand their communication preferences, bridge the gap between services and Digital Teams by adopting Relationship/Delivery approaches and incorporate digital skills into our HR/recruitment processes.

COMMITMENT 1 – Equip colleagues with the tools to deliver services effectively for residents.

We will provide colleagues with digital tools to carry out their roles and with additional training to ensure they are used effectively improving. Colleagues will feel empowered and services work collaboratively to deliver services.

Now	Next	Later
Increase availability of support in adopting new digital technology, including change management and training.	Services and IT work in partnership to understand the requirements for and deliver mobile and hybrid working solutions and integrations with existing systems.	Create a Testing Strategy to ensure a variety of users to are included when testing of all new systems and /changes.
Categorise and monitor requests regarding digital skill issues via ICT Service Desk, Organisational Development and Democratic Services.	Create and implement change and training capacity.	Invest in mobile working to support front line services, reducing the need for paper documents, eliminating unnecessary journeys and increasing efficiency and positively contributing to the Council's Net Zero target.
Improve understanding of priorities/upcoming projects between IT and Services.	Create a relationship management function to bridge the gap between IT and client services roles.	
Create a compelling self-service experience for reporting and resolving user ICT issues and communicate benefits to all colleagues.	Create a library of short 'videos and quick guides to address FAQs and provide "How To" information.	Provide colleagues with training and support to use the mobile technology available to them.
Senior leaders support a self-serve culture and encourage colleagues to realise the benefits.	Establish a clear and consistent process for user engagement within the digital project toolkit.	
Share the Digital Roadmap to help colleagues understand the digital vision and priorities.	Establish guidelines for incorporating users' needs and requirements into procurement guidance and processes.	
Consult with colleagues to understand their communication needs and channel preferences.	Establish a forum or process for knowledge sharing and collaboration.	
Explore the functionality of Microsoft Viva Engage as a possible internal communication network.		
Use of project "Show & Tells" and project blogs to communicate ideas and lessons learned from project successes and failures.		
Review the internal Communication Strategy to ensure that it meets the needs of all individual colleagues and work groups across the council.		

COMMITMENT 2 – Support and empower colleagues to develop and use their digital skills

We will invest in providing digital skills and development opportunities in a range of formats, in order to create a digitally confident workforce who are able to support and unlock our digital potential.

Now	Next	Later
Conduct a Learning Needs Analysis to understand the current digital skill level across the organisation and the priority areas for support and development. Understand digital skill requirements and the priority areas for development. Identify options for creating capacity based on the Learning Needs Analysis and identification of digital skills across the organisation. Provide colleagues with targeted digital skills support.	Create a Digital Skills Learning Strategy, working in partnership with Adult Community Learning, Design and deliver a blended learning approach to address the digital skills gaps. Appoint and train digital champions to ensure that changes to culture are embedded and sustained. Encourage colleagues, via manager feedback and annual appraisals, to prioritise digital skill training and provide ongoing support via supervision to support continuous development. Consider Digital skills training and change requirements in the system procurement and Digital governance processes. Recruit and retain colleagues with key digital skills in all roles. Incorporate development opportunities and benefits in job adverts for Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) roles. Incorporate digital skill requirements into person specifications and role design. Include relevant digital skill testing or questions within assessment processes. Prioritise digital skill assessment and training during performance review meetings and provide ongoing support for continuous development including qualifications, apprenticeships and training contracts. Develop understanding of people's career expectations within digital roles and mitigating the risk of people leaving via the corporate workforce planning approach. Invest in colleagues by expanding ongoing learning and development opportunities to help retain staff – such as qualifications or apprenticeships.	Establish a "Digital Champions Forum" to gather feedback and inform training/ support needed.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

- We will have a workforce equipped with the necessary digital skills and capacity to create and deliver services that meet the needs of our communities.

- Staff will feel an increased sense of job satisfaction and recognise the investment that the Council is making in developing their skills and career.

- Staff attrition will be lower, and the Council will be seen as an attractive place to work with opportunities to develop a career in Digital, Data and Technology functions.

- Colleagues will feel empowered to try new ways of working and changes to services using digital approaches and technologies.

- There will be increased collaborative working between Council services and with outside agencies where services can be improved in doing so.

THEME 4 - DATA AND INSIGHT

We recognise the power of the data we hold to help us better understand the needs of our residents, their experiences of using our services and whether those services are operating effectively. Embedding a strong culture regarding data processes helps ensure that data is handled safely and highlights the importance of data in operational and strategic decision making.

We are committed to working with colleagues and to developing practices that maximise the use of the data we hold for the benefit of services and our residents. Investing in and harnessing the power of data will provide vital insight to improve decision making. Working with colleagues and services to understand their data needs will also help to improve the quality of the data we hold.

To ensure there is a clear and consistent approach to data across the organisation, we will develop a Data Strategy and create a network of Data Specialists to support its implementation. Dashboards will be utilised by a range of services and we will focus on cyber security to ensure there are appropriate levels of data security. This will give residents further assurance of our commitment to delivering services safe from misuse and cyber threats and ensure privacy is safeguarded through increasingly secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements.

COMMITMENT 1 – Invest in & harness data insights to inform and improve decision-making.

We will work with services to understand their data needs and implement a consistent approach to data across the organisation. This will enable colleagues to make informed decisions, maintain secure data for our residents and utilise data to enhance our services.

Now	Next	Later
Create a Data Strategy that will cover methods and rules for data collection, verification & cleansing, analysis committing to data-driven actions and embedding data sharing principles into service design/project management toolkit.	Establish a network of Data Specialists to support the implementation of the Data Strategy and provide an ongoing investment in data to harness the power of data to make informed decisions.	Enable further data sharing across departments to improve citizen and service insight.
Define a consistent approach to the way data is stored, structured and retained across the organisation.		Explore additional tools that could be used to support the enhanced use of data.
Engage with services to understand their data needs and how these can be met.	Ensure colleagues have appropriate levels of access to analytical tools.	Investigate the best ways to safely and securely allow residents to access their data.
Review data protection and IT security processes.	Provide dashboard training for colleagues so they can fully utilise the dashboards.	
Work with services to identify areas where data security processes are preventing them from sharing and accessing data.	Ensure sufficient resource continues to be allocated to cyber security to ensure there is sufficient support available to review and address any barriers identified.	
Understand residents expectations around accessing the data that is held by the council.	Take a pragmatic approach that secures a balance that allows colleagues to work effectively and with the appropriate level of cyber security.	

COMMITMENT 2 – Use clear standards to ensure effective data sharing.

We will share data with partner agencies to help shape more effective, joined-up services, identifying opportunities and working in partnership to develop effective and efficient services.

Now	Next	Later
Improve data quality.	Empower services to invest time in correcting data quality and data consistency issues in order to provide more accurate and effective data.	
Utilise data analysis and reporting tools to identify data quality issues.		
Ensure secure and consistent data sharing with partner agencies.	Work in partnership with Information Governance/GDPR leads to ensure the correct data protection processes are in place.	
Ensure there is a clear understanding of how data can be shared to improve decision making.		
Work with partners to identify further data sharing opportunities.	Ensure all Data Sharing Agreements with partner agencies are in place where required.	

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

- A Data Strategy will be produced which is aligned with our corporate priorities and sets out how we will understand what data is held, how we will make data easy to share and how we keep it secure.

- Colleagues have access to and use service specific performance data that supports effective delivery and development of services and service planning.

- Data that needs to be held in disparate systems is aggregated to provide insight into specific issues and problems and supports strategic decision making about how these should be addressed.

- Data Sharing Agreements are in place with partners to effectively share data, improving integration and decision making.

- Insight data is available to assess the impact of service interventions and decisions on specific strategic and service issues.

MONITORING THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE DIGITAL STRATEGY WE HAVE IDENTIFIED A SERIES OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS THAT HELP IDENTIFY OUR PROGRESS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

These KPIs are aligned with the strategic ambition of our strategy.

THE FOLLOWING KPIs WILL BE MONITORED:

- **Website Traffic:** Monitoring the number of unique visitors, page views, and time spent on the council's website and self-service platforms.

- **User Engagement:** Tracking user interactions, such as comments, shares, and downloads, to gauge the level of engagement with digital content.

- **Digital Service Adoption:** Assessing the adoption rates of digital services offered by the council against a Digital Roadmap, including online forms, payment systems, and service requests.

- **Social Media Reach:** Measuring the growth of the council's social media presence, including the number of followers, likes, shares, and mentions.

- **Customer Satisfaction Ratings:** Conducting regular surveys or feedback mechanisms to gauge user satisfaction with digital services and overall customer experience.

- **Cost Efficiency:** Monitoring the cost savings achieved through the implementation of digital processes.

TO COLLECT THE NECESSARY DATA FOR MONITORING, THE FOLLOWING MECHANISMS WILL BE EMPLOYED:

- **Web Analytics:** Utilising tools such as Google Analytics or equivalents to gather website traffic data, user behaviour patterns, and conversion rates.

- **Social Media Analytics:** Leveraging built-in analytics provided by social media platforms or dedicated monitoring tools to track engagement metrics and audience insights.

- **Digital Service Usage Tracking:** Implementing tracking mechanisms within digital services to capture adoption rates, completion rates, and user feedback.

- **Surveys and Feedback Channels:** Conducting regular surveys and utilising feedback mechanisms to gather user satisfaction ratings and qualitative feedback.

- **Financial Reporting:** Analysing financial data and cost allocations to assess the cost efficiency and return on investment of digital initiatives.

We will formally monitor and report on progress on a quarterly basis, aligned with Council's performance monitoring arrangements. However, specific KPIs and metrics may require more frequent monitoring, such as website traffic, which may be monitored on a monthly basis. The monitoring results will be compiled into comprehensive reports, providing a clear overview of the strategy's progress and performance against the defined KPIs.

These reports will be reviewed by a Digital Programme Board and the Strategic Insight Board, in order to facilitate informed decision-making and ongoing review.

The Digital Strategy will be reviewed after the first year of operating and as required following that.