CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 14 February 2017
Report Subject	Digital Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed digital strategy is a replacement for the council's existing IT strategy. However, it takes a different approach to the strategy it replaces and seeks to encompass all of the council's strategic aspirations for the IT service, the council and the whole of the county. To that end it includes strategic objectives relating to issues such as economic development and community development alongside objectives on IT service delivery.

The digital strategy is structured around the following 6 themes:
1. Digital customer
2. Digital workforce
3. Digital business and community
4. Digital partnership
5. Information management
6. Digital delivery

Each theme lists high level actions to be achieved by the end of the strategy that will be supported by an annual action plan giving more details and precise timescales. Examples of the high level actions include:
   1. seeking to improve broadband speeds within the county
   2. working with the 3rd sector and other partners to improve digital literacy within the community and small businesses
   3. moving to digital services as the first/primary means of providing as many council services as possible

It is proposed that the high level actions will be co-ordinated and monitored day to day through an officer project board. Reporting and accountability for actions in the strategy will be undertaken through the CAMMS system and the Organisational Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC).

A workshop open to all members was held on 16 December 2016. It was also considered by Corporate Resources OSC on 12 January 2017. Both broadly supported the approach proposed within the strategy, and gave helpful feedback on the critical factors needed to ensure a successful implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	That Cabinet adopt the proposed digital strategy.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE PROPOSED NEW DIGITAL STRATEGY
1.01	The Council's current IT strategy has expired. As well as being fundamental to the delivery of many council services, helping and ensuring that others have sufficient skills and access to IT is an important element in ensuring the future prosperity of the county. For this reason it is proposed that the IT strategy (which talked largely about the IT Service's role in delivering the council's aspirations for transformation) be replaced by a digital strategy that contains all of the council's strategic objectives around digital technology. The strategy therefore contains objectives around economic development, education and community working.
1.02	The proposed strategy which is attached at Appendix 1 is divided into the 6 themes below which reflect the different aspects of digital technology that will need to be developed in order to help achieve the council's Improvement Plan Objectives. They have been developed in conjunction with the Customer Services Strategy through detailed consultation with key officers across all the portfolios. i. **Digital customer** – empowering customers to access the services and information they need on line ii. **Digital workforce** – equipping our workforce with the right tools and skills required to deliver "digital first" services iii. **Digital business and community** – encouraging the development of an effective digital infrastructure to maximise the opportunities that "digital" offers to business, communities and learning centres iv. **Digital partnership** – digital technology to enable the council to work in partnership across local government, the wider public sector and the private sector to deliver improved services and drive change v. **Information management** - a key foundation for ensuring the success and sustainability of digital developments vi. **Digital delivery** – enables the provision of resilient, robust and cost effective IT infrastructure and systems to underpin service delivery and facilitate organisational change.
1.03	Each of the themes contains a short statement of the council's aspiration, the supporting principles and a list of high levels actions that will support the delivery of that aspiration. An annual action plan will be prepared to ensure that the high level actions are successfully implemented.
1.04	Some of the proposed high level actions will have a wide ranging impact upon the council. Perhaps the most significant of these is the "digital first" approach to service delivery i.e. the assumption that as many services and as much information as possible should be delivered digitally. It proposes that digital should be promoted as the primary route of access for the

	majority of council services. This will make it easier for residents to access services or information at a time that is convenient for them rather than requiring them to ring or attend the council during office hours.
1.05	Evidence from other councils shows that the digital first approach can save the council money, improve accessibility of services for the majority of residents and free up resource to improve services for those who are not able to access the internet. Even where services are not able to be delivered virtually (e.g. pest control or bulky waste collections) in many cases it will still be possible to generate efficiencies through online booking, payments or the provision of enhanced levels of information.
1.06	The workshop before Christmas sought members' views, amongst other things, on: i) which should be the first or key services to deliver digitally – reporting issues such as noisy neighbours, dog fouling, potholes and street lighting ii) what the critical success factors will be - updates for residents once a matter has been reported including a timeline for when the issue will be fixed, being able to track the progress of reported issues, ease of use and confidence in the technology. In addition members sought reassurance that the delivery of more services digitally would not result in segments of the population being excluded. Experience from other councils shows that digital delivery will free up resources that can actually improve services for those who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion.
1.07	Corporate Resources OSC considered the strategy at its meeting on 12 January. Its comments are below: • The Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Chief Officer (Governance) presented the report, assisted in points of detail by Katie Clubb and Rebecca Jones from Community & Enterprise. • The report followed on from the Digital Strategy Member workshop which had been held on 16th December. • There had already been positive press coverage of the Strategy, which effectively provides 24 hour access to a range of council services through the website. • 89%of the adult population have access to the internet, with 82% of those using it on a daily basis. • The Digital Strategy builds on, but is much larger than the ICT Strategy and involves a range of staff from across the portfolios. The Chief Officer (Governance) would remain as the lead, but it had been suggested in the report that scrutiny responsibility should be assigned to the Organisational Change OSC. This was not supported, hence the second part of the resolution, in response to assurance from the Leader and Chief Executive that responsibility would remain with the Corporate Resources OSC under its current terms of reference.

	• There were a number of concerns about the 'digital first' service and the importance of not excluding those unable or unwilling to access services online - before officers responded with the explanation that increased access to Council services through the Internet would release staff capacity to deal on a face to face basis, predominantly through the Connects offices, with those who do not wish to engage via /have not got access to the Internet. • Members acknowledged the help with online services given by Flintshire Connects and also stressed the importance of customer feedback. • The Council's commitment to providing services through the Connects offices was reaffirmed. • It was recognised that the effectiveness of the Digital Strategy was partially dependent on the availability of Broadband. It was agreed to invite Alwen Williams the regional BT Director to attend a meeting of the committee and provide an update on the roll out of Broadband etc within the county. • There were a number of concerns about IT security but Members were satisfied with the assurances given by the Chief Officer.
1.08	The extent to which the council can transform its services will need to be explored with every service (though again we can draw on examples from other councils). There will therefore need to be an exercise to establish the full potential scope for this aim. As part of that scoping exercise the resource requirements will also need to be established before the cost/benefit can be analysed.
1.09	The strategy will be supported by a detailed action plan that breaks down the high level actions into specific tasks and deadlines. Those actions will feature in service plans and can be the responsibility of middle ranking and aspiring managers as part of the Flintshire Academi. There is a need though for complete oversight and prioritisation and it is proposed that the customer services project board should fulfil this role.
1.10	Progress against the strategy will be recorded on the CAMMS system and will be reported to both Cabinet and Scrutiny. The strategy will be a key driver for changing the way the council delivers services, and so it falls within the remit of the Organisational Change OSC. Rather than report issues to 2 committees it is suggested that Organisational Change OSC should take lead responsibility.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	This strategy will require capital investment to maintain the current level of IT and a 5 year cost estimate has been submitted as part of the capital programme. The capital investment needed for objectives such as digital first is not yet clear and will only become known as the extent of any programme of changes becomes clear. As mentioned at 1.07 the

	cost/benefit of each change will need to be assessed prior to commencement and the decision whether or not to proceed taken based on available resource and relative priorities at the time.
2.02	There is sufficient employee resource for the bulk of the objectives, though again the demands of going digital first are not known. It is clear however that the capacity to undertake large scale change has been reduced within the organisation (especially the IT Service) and so larger projects will need to be specifically resourced if they are to be able to proceed. Another such example is the move to Wales Community Care Information System (WCCIS) which, due to its sheer scale, will need specific resource allocated to it.
2.03	The annual action plan will feed into the corporate resources strategy in order to build a clear strategic picture of demand versus capacity. That in turn can then be debated at the programme boards within the council and appropriate resource allocations made at the time.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The proposed strategy has been prepared jointly by the IT Service and Customer Services. It has been the subject of internal consultation with officers across all portfolios.
3.02	All member workshop 16th December 2016 and Corporate Resources OSC on 12 January 2017.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Implementing the strategy should help to increase the accessibility of services and to reduce inequality. Many of the high level actions (particularly within the Information Governance and Digital Delivery themes) are targeted at reducing or preventing risk
4.02	The strategy itself has been subjected to an Equality Impact Assessment. Changes to services (especially as part of digital first) will need to be assessed for equalities and impact on future generations as part of the scoping exercise

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Proposed Digital Strategy.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None. Current IT Strategy.

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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
	None.