

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CABINET – 8 JULY 2019</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>DIGITAL STRATEGY 2019-2024</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>NEIL WILLIAMS, CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER JACQUELINE HARRIS-BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESOURCES</b>
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	<b>CLLR SIMON HALL, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE &amp; RESOURCES CLLR MANJU SHAHUL-HAMEED, CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY &amp; JOBS</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:</b> <p>Digital transformation of the council's services and internal systems is a core enabler of all the Council's priorities as set out in the corporate plan, and a necessity in order to continue to serve the needs of a growing population against a context of funding pressures. A strong digital economy, education offer and fit-for-purpose connectivity infrastructure across our borough are vital for Croydon to remain competitive and for our residents to prosper in the internet era. The Council's Digital Strategy 2019-2024 articulates the long-term vision and sets a clear direction of travel for how we will take forward work on these imperatives in the next 5 years.</p>	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b> <p>There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the digital strategy.</p> <p>The financial implications of each element of the strategy will be developed and the funding identified before implementation.</p>	
<b>KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:</b> N/A	
<b>1. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  1.1 The Cabinet is recommended to adopt the Digital Strategy 2019-2024, attached to this report as Appendix 1.  1.2 In the event that the Digital Strategy is only approved subject to comments, Cabinet is recommended to delegate to the Chief Digital Officer acting in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Treasury authority to revise and approve the final strategy taking on board any comments received from Cabinet.	

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council is radically rethinking its approach to digital design, data and technology delivery following the appointment of a Chief Digital Officer in 2018. Significant progress has been made to date, and the approach has been formalised in the Digital Strategy 2019-2024, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The council has a strong track record of innovating in the digital space and has achieved nationwide recognition for various initiatives in the past, including winning Digital Council of Year at the LGC awards in 2017. However, it is acknowledged that a step change is required in the way that technology and digital service delivery is approached to meet the needs of our staff and residents in the future, and to direct work on digital infrastructure and tech sector growth across the borough.
- 2.3 The strategy is founded on the definition of digital set out by the founder of the Cabinet Office's Government Digital Service, Tom Loosemore:

*Applying the culture, processes, business models & technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations.*

[Source: <https://definitionofdigital.com/> ]

This definition provides the scope for the level of change necessary. 'Digital' is not just about rolling out new technology or implementing processes on the web, but instead involves genuinely transforming services for the digital age, learning from digitally native organisations such as Spotify, Netflix and others to ensure our public services for residents and internal systems for staff are convenient, available 24/7 and tailored to users' needs.

- 2.4 The strategy offers an ambitious vision of a truly digital council and borough, bringing together strands of work that previously existed as separate silos in three core themes:

**Digital council** – we will optimise how the council uses digital design, data and technology to work efficiently, collaborate, make informed decisions, adapt and innovate.

**Digital services** – we will transform the relationship between residents and the council by providing online services so good that most people choose to use them and can do so unaided.

**Digital borough** – we will maximise opportunities for digital design, data and technology to enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability and individual opportunity in Croydon.

- 2.5 We also include an additional, cross-cutting theme:

**Data and collaboration** – we will use digital tools to collaborate with organisations across all sectors, make Croydon's data open and share digital assets for the public good.

- 2.6 The Digital Strategy describes a long term vision, aligned to the outcomes we wish to deliver for the residents, communities and businesses of the borough. The specific deliverables will be published publicly in a roadmap, outlining what work will be undertaken in what order, allowing for scrutiny and monitoring of progress.
- 2.7 The strategy has been informed by a thorough review of the current strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats relating to the council's existing digital, data and technology provision. This analysis was published with the papers for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 30 April 2019, at which there was a robust discussion, and a number of recommendations, all of which have been accepted and incorporated into the digital strategy.
- 2.8 Key deliverables set out in the strategy include:
- A radically transformed corporate website that residents can trust for clear, up to date guidance and information, and which enables localisation of our services and guidance in support of the new operating model set out in our Corporate Plan 2018-2022. The website will have a much improved, consistent and user-centric design, will work across all devices including mobile, and will be fully accessible to all users regardless of disability, bringing us up to the standards set by central government for all public services and those required by law.
  - A dramatic increase in the success rate for residents being able to self-serve online unaided, growing from the current 30% of all customer contact to 75% over the life of this strategy. This will be achieved by making more of our services available online and improving those we already provide, designing and testing them with residents' close involvement to ensure the vast majority of residents can use them unaided. This will deliver significant savings to the council, but is motivated primarily by the aim of providing the higher quality of services our residents expect and deserve.
  - Improvements to how we communicate with residents online, using digital channels more effectively to inform them about decisions and service issues that affect them, and enabling them to influence council decisions
  - Improvements to the support we provide for residents to get online and develop their digital skills, not only to use our online services but to address issues of social exclusion, so that nobody in the borough is disadvantaged by the increasing necessity of being able to use online services (from the council and other service providers).
  - Significant efficiency savings from internal digital transformation, improving the tools and skills of council staff to make best use of existing technology to do their jobs; removing technical barriers to joined-up service delivery by enabling more of our systems to share data and provide a single view of the resident, family or household; and helping the council to attract and retain staff including frontline service providers by equipping them with internal technology systems at least as good as they would get in comparable organisations.
  - Significant ongoing savings year on year, through stopping unnecessary or

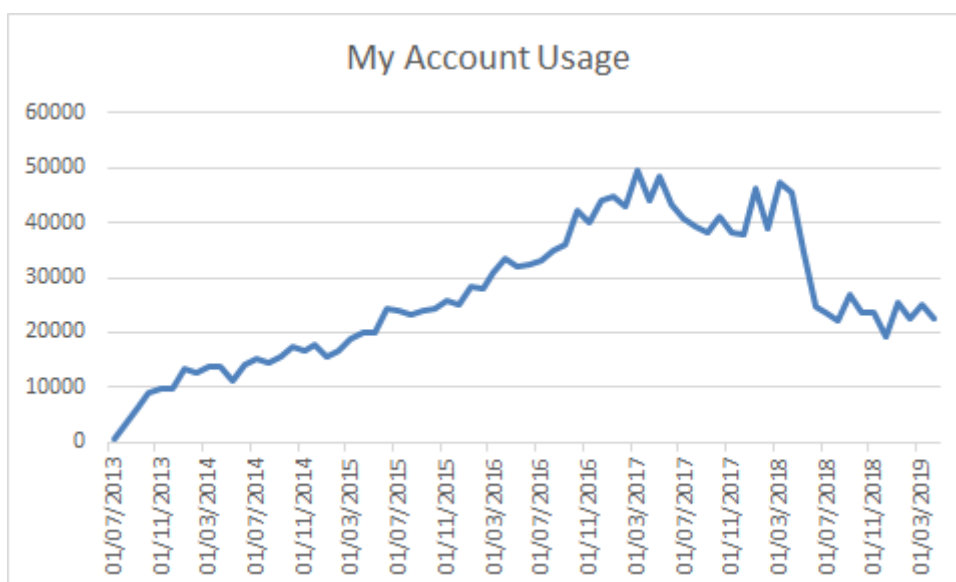
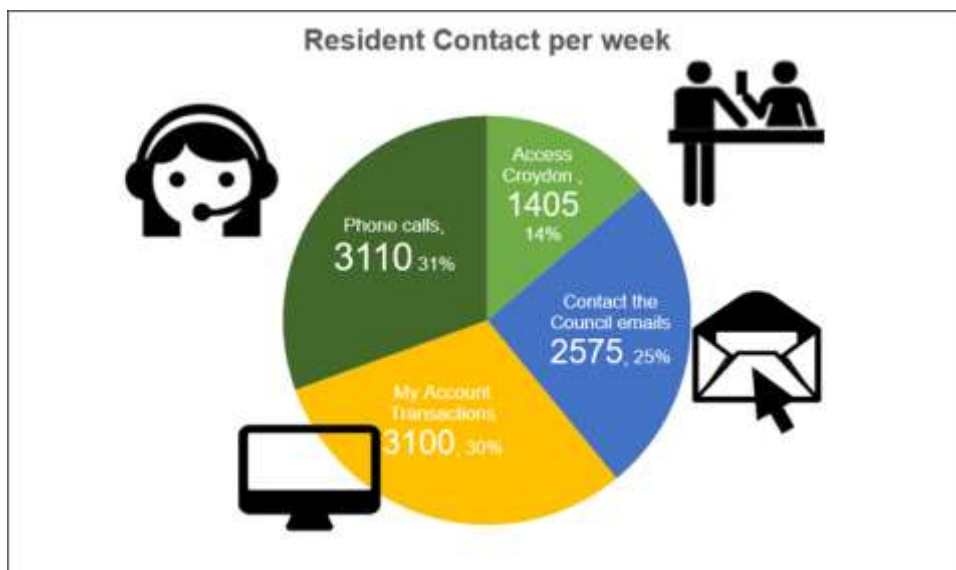
wasteful spending on technology projects (in addition to the efficiency savings and channel shift savings mentioned above).

- Actions to secure and further Croydon's reputation as a tech cluster, to sustain growth in our digital economy, deliver much-needed improvements to the borough's connectivity infrastructure, and provide a significantly improved education offer to ensure Croydon's residents can access the jobs of the future and that our borough provides the tech talent needed to remain competitive and attract and retain businesses here.

### **3. DETAIL**

#### **3.1 Background and context**

- 3.1.1 Local authorities are facing a variety of challenges as they seek to deliver much needed services to the residents, communities and business in their localities. Councils are facing considerable increases in demand, as a result of population growth, and at the same time the expectation of service quality is also increasing.
- 3.1.2 One aspect of this increased expectation is driven by the experiences our residents have from other organisations, which are increasingly digital in their ways of operating. Inspiration for this originates from digital age services, such as Netflix, Spotify, Amazon and others and lessons learned from these companies are being applied by more established organisations, whether banks, supermarkets and - increasingly - public services.
- 3.1.3 Local government has made significant strides towards making the most of the opportunities that the internet provides in terms of improving its service offer to residents. Work in the early 2000s under the e-government banner enabled paper forms to be put online, and later developments saw customer relationship management (CRM) systems and single user accounts implemented to enable greater integration between the online forms and back office systems, creating efficiencies and improving the customer experience.
- 3.1.4 Croydon Council achieved success through these stages of digitisation, winning the Digital Council of the Year award in 2017 in recognition of the progress made. However, the world of technology moves quickly, and the Council must now look beyond merely creating efficiencies through digital and must begin to genuinely transform services for the digital age.
- 3.1.5 As the following 2 charts illustrate, usage of My Account for online self-service currently accounts for 30% of all customer contact, and a quarter of all website visitors use the "contact the council" page of the site to email the council having failed to meet their need online. Take up of online services is falling, due to issues around usability and findability, when it should be rising - residents want and expect easy to use digital services. It is urgent that we change our approach, and design services that meet users' needs, presented on a website that makes it easy for residents to find and understand what they need to do, so that we can improve the resident experience, reduce the cost of our public services, and continue to meet resident demand as our population grows.



3.1.6 In recognition of the scale of change necessary, the political and executive leadership created the new role of Chief Digital Officer (CDO) last summer. From a field of over 100 applicants, they appointed an experienced digital leader who took up post in October 2018.

3.1.7 Under the new CDO, several previously disparate responsibilities have been brought together, into a newly formed “Croydon Digital Service” (CDS) within Resources:

- Corporate ICT services (provision of computers, networks, telephony and print, and a demand-led IT project management service to all council departments)
- MyAccount and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that underpins digital services and all customer service by phone, email & in person
- The Don’t Mess With Croydon mobile app for reporting street issues
- The Smart Cities workstream within the Growth Zone programme (but with the expectation that this needs to now look borough-wide) and a remit to convene, facilitate and promote the borough’s tech sector businesses

- The corporate website and intranet, including web content management
- Digital inclusion (the provision of Digital Zones across the borough)
- Programme management of all major IT transformation programmes previously managed outside of ICT, most notably the People Systems Programme (re-procurement and implementation of critical systems in child and adult social care, housing and education)
- Software support (bringing this in-house from Capita, and centralising systems support across the council e.g. for people systems)

3.1.8 In order to deliver successful digital transformation and channel shift, new capabilities are required. These include user research, interaction design, content design, in-house web development and service design. Within its existing funding CDS has brought in a small number of such specialists, demonstrating early the value of the proposed new ways of working that will be required to deliver this strategy in full.

3.1.9 The new service has already had a significant impact on digital services delivered by and for the Council, including:

- Redesigning the “contact the council” form on the website to direct residents to the online services and content they need, reducing high volumes of avoidable email contact by a third (with a plan to reduce this much further)
- Completing the successful transition of end user support services from Capita to our new supplier Littlefish, with much improved internal support service for council technology
- Significantly improving the user experience of the SEND local offer website and SENCO portal, with positive feedback from parents
- Launching Croydon Digital (<https://croydon.digital>) - a new brand and website to convene and promote Croydon’s tech sector, with a programme of well-attended events. This is already drawing attention and has generated several exciting leads for potential inward investment.
- Delivering interactive online engagement for staff around major internal conferences, to foster a culture of creativity, openness and collaboration
- Centralising management of major line of business transformation programmes, most notably to adults and children’s social care systems, making changes to capability and governance to ensure these are set up for success
- Reviewing and updating the top 50 most used pages of the council’s website to ensure they are clear and factually accurate, and improving critical service content in other areas
- Preventing new digital services launching that had not been tested with users and improving them to ensure they enable self-service rather than increase customer contact due to being hard to use. For example we improved the design and usability of the relaunched jobs site and upcoming ‘e-marketplace’ site for adult support services.
- Improving the resident experience in Access Croydon, for example with refreshed self-service kiosks enabling residents to check themselves in for appointments and avoid queuing
- Delivered numerous Smart City initiatives, as set out in page 21 of the strategy

3.1.10 The digital strategy outlines how the CDS will support service areas to deliver the ambitions the council has for delivering high quality services to residents

that meet the greater demand to be expected in a rapidly growing borough.

## **3.2 Outcomes of the strategy**

3.2.1 The digital strategy is focused on delivering various outcomes as described under each of the four themed headings. Each of these will contribute to overarching benefits for the residents, communities and businesses of Croydon, as well as the Council itself.

### **3.2.2 Improved resident experience**

The approach to digital transformation advocated in the strategy is based upon significantly improving the experience our service users have from interacting online with the council. Our aim is to design and deliver online services so good that people prefer to use them when they can. It is vital we do this, so that growth in our population does not necessitate equivalent growth in council staffing and processing costs.

This can only be done by truly understanding the needs of our users – what problem they are trying to solve, what outcomes they wish to achieve, and how they prefer to interact with the council. We will be able to do this by investing in our capability in several key areas, ones that have been tried and tested in other internet-age organisations and several other councils. These include:

- **User research** – spending time with our services users to fully understand their needs, so that we can ensure they are met by the resulting digital services, and not basing design decisions on guesswork and assumptions
- **Service design** – considering the entirety of an end to end service from the point of view of the resident, involving not just the digital element but all other aspects of a service, resulting in a consistent, well designed, efficient and easy to follow process
- **Content design** – writing online content that is designed to meet a user's need, so that it is not only simple to follow but helps them to complete a process and thus meet their need
- **Interaction design** – producing high quality modern, easy to use online services, that guide a user through a process without them needing additional guidance or explanation
- **Product management** – taking ownership of a digital service in the long term, managing a roadmap of feedback and enhancements and improving it over time, making sure it continues to meet user needs even within a rapidly changing environment.

These are roles that have not existed within the previous ICT or digital teams before, and are symbolic of the change that is required to shift from a technology, business requirement-driven approach to a digital, user-centred approach to transformation and change.

The effective use of these capabilities will result in digital services that people prefer to use to traditional channels. Our digital services will be:

- **Consistent** – with a modern look and feel, and a user experience that is replicated across all our services, users will be comfortable completing

transactions with a high level of trust in the outcome

- **Easy to use** – by designing services with our users, we can ensure that the interfaces and content are simple to follow and complete, resulting in successful outcomes for our residents
- **Data driven** – basing design decisions on user research and testing, as well as analytical data recorded by our systems, we can ensure we can deliver services that will meet user needs and reflect the actual experience of our service users
- **Continuously improved** – by regularly reviewing the way that online services are used by residents, collecting and acting upon feedback, we will ensure that they are never considered ‘complete’ and instead are regularly iterated upon to ensure they are always fit for purpose.

The result of this will be excellent digital services that meet the needs of our users, whether residents, communities, businesses – or in the case of internal services, council staff.

### 3.2.3 Savings

Whilst the delivery of efficiency and cost savings is not the main driver for digital transformation, it is an inevitable result of success in this area. Whilst previous digital programmes have had savings at their heart, the approach outlined in the strategy instead places focus on improving the experience of our users.

Savings focused programmes of work can result in ‘channel shift’ style approaches that force residents to use online services, by making it difficult, if not impossible, to access other channels. This invariably results in a poor experience for the user, and high levels of dissatisfaction, which results in digital services not being adopted in sufficient numbers to deliver anticipated financial savings.

Instead, by ensuring our focus is on meeting the needs of our service users, we will still be able to deliver efficiency and financial savings. This is because designing digital services that people prefer to use will increase the uptake of cheaper, online channels.

This will not be to the detriment of existing, traditional service delivery channels, as depending on the needs of the individual user and the complexity of their personal circumstances, the digital route might not be the most appropriate for them to take. A significant part of a well-designed end to end service is ensuring that those who cannot complete a journey online can still have their needs met through alternative means.

In addition there are many opportunities within the council’s internal operations to automate processes that are currently manual, for example scanning posted documents that could be sent as digital copies, re-keying information between systems that are not connected to one another, and multiple manual workarounds in spreadsheets and offline steps, where internal systems are not meeting their users’ needs.

Savings and efficiencies can be realised through the following means:

- Digital is a cheaper delivery channel than phone or face to face. Benchmarking figures from SOCITM show that online transactions cost an average of 0.9p per transaction, compared to £2.59 for delivering the same service by phone and £8.21 face to face.
- End to end digital services, integrated into back office systems and processes, reduce the need for staff to re-key data, process paper forms and letters and work with slow and manual offline processes
- Opportunities for increased commercialisation through online sales of products and services can increase the amount of revenue the council can achieve
- Preventing wasteful and duplicative spend on technology by providing stronger centralised governance and visibility of all council technology spend

The efficiencies created by high quality digital services can then be realised by services areas in the most appropriate way for them – by making use of resources to perform other duties or to take them as cashable savings. This should be a decision made by services according to their business needs. CDS will work with finance colleagues to identify and track these savings.

#### **3.2.4 A thriving digital borough**

The digital borough theme of the strategy sets out the council's innovative approach to enhancing the borough as a place through the effective use of technology. This will result in clear benefits throughout the borough:

- Croydon will have a thriving digital business sector, with start-ups, scale-ups and established businesses creating growth and prosperity in the local area. By building upon existing business networks and supporting business to business relations, entrepreneurs will be attracted to Croydon as the best place to locate their businesses. This ecosystem of companies will be nurtured and supported to become a truly cooperative network, with businesses working together to support each other and work together to win business, create jobs and bring further growth to the borough.
- To support the local economy and grow our own digital talent pool within the borough, there will be a clear and attractive skills offer, providing training and development in the key areas that local businesses and other organisations need to succeed in the digital age, including development, operations, and design. This will be developed in collaboration with colleagues in the council, local businesses and education providers, to ensure a sustainable talent pipeline and provide our residents with the skills for future jobs. Particular focus will be on developing skills that respond to business needs, and the provision of a robust tech skills education offer in Croydon schools and further education institutions. We will collaborate with the Croydon Creative Campus initiative to bring a high-quality university/higher education tech offer to the borough.
- Nobody will be left behind as a result of this digital strategy. The responsibility for increasing levels of digital inclusion is core to the Croydon Digital Service, and success in this area will have a positive

impact, not only on the lives of our residents but also for the Council, as more digitally literate residents will ensure a greater take-up of our digital services. Building upon the successes of the past in increasing the levels of digital skills amongst all our residents, we will identify areas where support can be provided to those who are less confident using the internet and for whom there can be a huge benefit in engaging with digital tools.

- Croydon's digital infrastructure will be improved, so that residents, communities and businesses have access to broadband at the speeds they need to achieve their aims. We will also have begun the physical enhancement of the borough through the deployment of technology to meet shared needs, including internet of things and smart cities. These technologies will only be utilised to meet clearly defined user needs and where there is an obvious benefit to the wider Croydon community.

## **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 To inform the development of the strategy, a number of activities were carried out, using an innovative open, online deliberative approach which was a first for the council. A website was created for the public to provide their ideas and feedback for the strategy – this can be found at [strategy.croydon.gov.uk](http://strategy.croydon.gov.uk). All the submissions to the consultation were subsequently published on the website for others to view and respond to.
- 4.2 In addition, consultation activity was carried out in person, including drop in sessions at the Whitgift Centre and in New Addington, as well as a Strategy Workshop with 38 members of the Croydon Tech Business Community. Responses received from the public were entered into the consultation site to maintain a single record of response data.
- 4.3 More than 70 responses were received to the public consultation and 78 to the internal staff survey. Nearly all of the responses have been reflected in the final strategy, either directly or in the form of a higher-level commitment where the comments were more detailed. A “you said, we did” blog post is being prepared which will play back to residents how their comments have helped to influence the final strategy.
- 4.4 The full draft text of the strategy was also published online for comment from 10 June 2019. The further responses received were also reflected in the final text.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the digital strategy.
- 5.2 The financial implications of each element of the strategy will need to be developed once the strategy is adopted and the funding identified before implementation can commence.
- 5.3 Some of the commitments in the Digital Borough theme of the strategy

correspond to planned spend against Growth Zone funding, detailed in the table below. This will draw down budget from within the provisional allocation previously agreed by Cabinet in December 2017. The table below shows indicative costs for the first 3 years of the strategy. The details of these projects will be agreed by the Director of Growth and the Cabinet Member for Economy and Jobs and the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources.

<b>Smart City commitments</b> <i>Numbers refer to actions in Digital Borough theme</i>	2019/20 000's	2020/21 000's	2021/22 000's
1-4 & 11. Coordination and facilitation of business growth events and activities to support tech sector and skills	£25.5	£51	£51
7. Digital challenge – growth themed innovation	£30	£45	£60
8-9 & 16 smart city innovation pilots and delivery of ongoing projects	£258	£500	£700
<b>Total</b>	<b>£313.5</b>	<b>£596</b>	<b>£811</b>

#### 5.4 Risks

There is a risk associated with the adoption of the strategy that the vision it articulates cannot be delivered due to financial constraints. This risk will be managed through careful management of the budget and prioritisation of the delivery. The risk of not adopting the strategy will lead to the council not meeting the needs of its users, and therefore not delivering on the corporate plan. Use of My Account will continue to decline and all internal digital processes will be compromised to the point of a 'lights on' service with no strategic direction for the future.

#### 5.5 Options

The options considered are set out in section 12 below.

#### 5.6 Future savings/efficiencies

At this stage it is anticipated that a number of the elements of the strategy will be invest to save items. The more services that the council provides digitally, and the greater the uptake of these online services, greater the efficiency savings are generated. The work described in this strategy will be fully costed before implementation. Each deliverable will have a benefits realisation plan produced for it, which will track any potential savings that can be delivered. These will be monitored on an ongoing basis as a part of the service's commitment to continuous improvement.

Approved by: Lisa Taylor Director of Finance, Investment and Risk

## 6. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Director of Law and Governance comments that there are no legal considerations arising directly out of the recommendation set out in this report.

Approved by: Sean Murphy Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

## **7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 7.1 The Croydon Digital Service was reorganised in late 2018 to provide a fit for purpose structure to take the directorate forward and deliver the strategy. There are currently no human resources implications of adopting the strategy. Changes in culture and ways of working will be delivered within the current structure as far as is possible.
- 7.2 The digital strategy is an important part of defining and developing the council's culture and its workforce for the future. The digital strategy will be aligned with the council's workforce strategy, that will be published in October.

Approved by: Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report as Appendix 2

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 9.1 Greater use of digital technology by the Council and uptake of digital services by residents will have a positive impact on the environment by reducing the use of printing and paper, and a reduction in unnecessary travel, for example.

## **10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

- 10.1 None identified.

## **11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION**

- 11.1 Adopting the strategy sets a clear vision and direction for digital design, data and technology in the borough and how these will contribute to the council's priorities as set out in the corporate plan.

## **12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 12.1 Not to adopt the Digital Strategy. Not adopting the Digital Strategy would leave the Council without a strategic view on its use of digital design, data and technology, resulting in the potential for confusion, unnecessary spend on conflicting or duplicating projects and potential reputational damage as a result of failing to meet our users' expectations. It would result in a continued decline in usage of existing digital services and therefore an increase in the cost to serve our existing population.

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**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy 2019-2024  
Appendix 2 – Equalities impact assessment

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

None