

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	18 APRIL 2013
TITLE OF REPORT:	DIGITAL STRATEGY
REPORT BY:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PEOPLE, POLICY & PARTNERSHIP

1. Classification

Open

2. Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

3. Wards Affected

County-wide.

4. Purpose

To seek approval for a new Digital Strategy 2013/18 encompassing information management, technology, communications and engagement.

5. Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) **the Digital Strategy 2013/18 be approved; and**
- (b) **the Commercial & Commissioning Board ensure that the principles within the strategy inform future commissioning arrangements.**

6. Key Points Summary

- The Digital Strategy will guide the future development and implementation of technology infrastructure, information management, and tools to support effective communication and engagement focused on delivering the priorities within the Corporate Plan.
- The strategy, supporting the customer service strategy, will provide customers with easier access to information and services at a time of their choosing.

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 Continuing to work with the existing ICT strategy (agreed in 2011) has been discounted as it doesn't sufficiently cover the issues of requiring more flexible ways of working, the rollout of broadband across the county, the increased financial pressures, Information Management as a key consideration, new emerging technologies and social media channels and the need for performance improvement in specific council service areas.
- 7.2 This revised five year strategy has been developed to take account of these changes. It will be important to check our approach however at least annually to ensure that this work remains aligned to the priorities of the organisation and the county (including the Herefordshire 2020 work) and that our approach locally adopts new technologies that continue to emerge. This must be managed in a way that delivers benefits to Herefordshire whilst minimising any risks associated with early adoption of new technology.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 The strategy broadly lays down key guiding principles, supported by a clear delivery plan, which enables Herefordshire Council to meet its current priorities in the most cost effective way.

9. Introduction and Background

- 9.1 The purpose of the Digital Strategy is to provide the framework through which technology and information support delivery of the Corporate Plan; it seeks to balance investment required to maintain and enhance technology services used by customers, employees, partners, and businesses with cost savings that can be made.

10. Key Considerations

- 10.1 The aim is to use available technologies to improve service delivery more cost effectively. Delivery of the Corporate Plan within the available resources will require the council and communities in Herefordshire to operate very differently.
- 10.2 The strategy sets out:
- The ways that customers will interact with us in the future
 - How we will make better use of information
 - How we enable staff to do their job even better and more flexibly
 - How we continue to ensure our technical infrastructure is most cost effective
- 10.3 The strategy also sets out the key priorities for investment and a high level five year road map for delivery; a more detailed delivery plan for year one is in place. The delivery plan is a living document and must be flexible to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the organisation as resources and priorities for investment change. .
- 10.4 The previous ICT strategy recognised information as a core organisational asset, but did not provide an overarching information management framework to connect up our different information activities. This has led to an over reliance on paper which in turn has led to inefficiencies in the use of accommodation, IT and human resources. The Digital Strategy sets out the approach to information management enabling the council to store and use information safely and cost effectively.

11. Community Impact

11.1 The strategy will have the following benefits for customers:

- Promoting independence and customer empowerment – engaging residents in the choice of service, working alongside them as equals to develop solutions that meet their needs;
- Reducing unnecessary contact and simplifying demand management – making contacting the council – or the wider public sector - as easy and stress-free as possible;
- Enabling customers to access our services remotely and at a time of their choosing;
- Simplifying contact with services whilst increasing improved levels of customer service;
- Easier access to accurate more joined up information.

12. Equality and Human Rights

12.1 In demonstrating due regard to the council's Public Sector Equality Duty, in our decision making processes we will ensure that individual directorates and service areas assess the potential impact of any proposed digital development, leading to fairer, transparent and informed decisions being made.

12.2 The strategy is underpinned by a set of principles which include the provision of information in an accessible way for staff and residents alike leading to increased equality of opportunity and access.

13. Financial Implications

13.1 There are no direct costs to the council arising from the strategy; it will however guide how resources are prioritised. Any investment will be determined through the normal governance process, informed by a clear business case.

14. Legal Implications

14.1 The strategy complies with the requirements of access to information legislation; it also seeks to ensure that individuals' data is managed securely and appropriately.

15. Risk Management

15.1 If the strategy is not approved the council is at risk of information governance breaches; these can both impact individuals concerned and carry a reputational and financial risk to the council. Having an approved strategy in place ensures that necessary steps will be taken to ensure that individuals' data is managed securely and appropriately.

15.2 If this revised strategy is not in place there is a risk that investment in technology is not properly aligned to the priorities of the council and will not provide the important support for performance improvement and cost reduction.

16. Consultees

16.1 Consultation on development of this strategy has been primarily with staff working in the council and Hoople Ltd. Consultation has involved those who have considered best practice

from a range of sources to inform this strategy and has worked with the priorities of the organisation and those outlined in the Corporate Plan.

16.2 General Overview and Scrutiny reviewed the paper on the 8 April 2013 and resolved that:

1. The report and the draft Digital Strategy 2013/18 be noted and the following be considered by Cabinet when considering the Strategy for approval:
2. That it is essential that Cabinet be assesses the full financial implications, both investment required and potential savings, for the Digital Strategy 2013/18;
3. That the Strategy is written in plain English and a glossary of terms used be included;
4. That Cabinet ensures that the Strategy addresses issues of potential exclusion of certain social groups or lack of access to broadband connection.
5. Emphasis needs to be given to data security to ensure that data storage systems, whether internal servers or external cloud solutions, are as secure as possible.
6. That staff are adequately trained to ensure that software and systems are fully utilised and that staff are confident in their usage.
7. That Cabinet ensures that the Strategy is aligned with the Herefordshire 2020 Review.

17. Appendices

- 17.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Digital Strategy 2013/18

18. Background Papers

- 18.1 None identified.