



Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Cabinet – 17 November 2022

Digital Strategy 2022-27

Purpose:	To approve the new Digital Strategy 2022-27.
Policy Framework:	Digital Strategy, Achieving Better Together, Transformation & Future Council Development
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that Cabinet: 1) Approves the draft Digital Strategy 2022-27 attached at Appendix A for public consultation and engagement. 2) Notes that a further report will be brought back to Cabinet following the consultation process.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the first Digital Strategy seven years ago in November 2015 as the Council was emerging from the outsourced IT contract. At that time, the Council's aspirations were ambitious as a significant amount of core infrastructure, network, and system improvements were needed before true digital change could even begin.
- 1.2 Hundreds of digital projects formed the implementation and the first few years saw the Council transform its technology foundations and architecture. During the past three years the Council has begun exploiting new ways of working available through the latest cloud and digital platforms. This put the Council in an advantageous position in early 2020 at the start of the pandemic, to support residents, businesses and staff with the latest digital channels and platforms.

1.3 Digital projects across the Council generally accelerated during the pandemic. As face-to-face contact was removed, use of digital and telephone channels significantly increased.

2. Digital Strategy 2022-27

2.1 This next phase in the digital journey takes account of changes in the internal and external environments, using latest intelligence to predict potential future trends. The strategy:

- Draws on the Welsh Government Digital Strategy for Wales published in March 2021
- Draws on the Central Government Digital Strategy 2021-24 from the Government Digital Service (GDS)
- Delivers key strategic priorities within the corporate plan
- Takes account of future outcomes for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Links with other strategies and operating models including:
 - Achieving Better Together – the Council’s Transformation Strategy
 - Schools’ Digital Strategy
 - Digital Inclusion Strategy
 - Workforce Strategy
 - Service Standards around Customer Service
 - Accommodation Strategy
 - City Centre development plans, and
 - The Swansea Bay City Deal Digital Programme.

2.2 This strategy (attached at Appendix A) is ambitious with a vision and six goals that aim to be aspirational and challenging. The goals provide the overall roadmap for the next five years but will also need to continuously adapt to the changing economic and technological climate.

2.3 In developing the strategy input and feedback has been sought from key stakeholders including our partners, e.g. Partner Councils, the Health Board, and voluntary sector partners. Consultation and engagement will continue, including with resident networks, and the strategy will continue to be updated to reflect the changing environment. It is proposed that the strategy is approved in principle at this stage until further public consultation and engagement has been undertaken. The integrated impact assessment will also be updated at that stage and considered as part of the final approval process.

2.4 Services across the Council have a range of digital priorities and aspirations to help improve access and operational efficiency. The next step will be to work with services to develop an organisation wide digital programme and business case for investment. This will include prioritising key projects that will have the greatest impact on the council’s corporate priorities and digital goals. The initial programme will be for two years and will include a prioritised list of pipeline projects to be added to the

programme in future years, subject to business cases and funding becoming available. The programme will also highlight any co-production, engagement or consultation planned with residents as part of that process. The digital programme and business case for investment, alongside an integrated impact assessment will be brought back to Cabinet by the end of the financial year.

2.5 The Council has a Digital Board which will oversee delivery of the strategy, the development of programme and business case, and ongoing monitoring of the programme. Going forward the Board will include the Interim Director of Corporate Services, who will act as sponsor for the programme. The Board will continue to comprise representatives from each Directorate and senior managers from Digital Services and will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation (Deputy Leader).

2.6 The Board will provide regular updates to CMT and Cabinet on progress against the overall strategy and programme.

3. Digital Strategy Consultation

3.1 We will undertake a public consultation on the draft Strategy. A survey will be developed to gather views on the draft and results will be used to inform any changes to the strategy prior to final approval. The survey will be promoted and distributed as follows:

- Online survey available on our website and staffnet for public and staff to take part
- We will use our social media and other platforms to promote the survey
- We will ensure that the survey is promoted to all our existing forums including 50+ Network, Disability Liaison Group, Poverty Forum etc.
- Hard copies of the draft strategy and survey will be made available in local libraries and the reception at the Civic Centre.

3.2 The survey will run for a period of four weeks. We will also use the survey as an opportunity to pull together a database of individuals and groups who wish to be involved in future engagement activity around the strategy and digital projects going forward.

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales by acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.4 A full IIA report is attached at Appendix B and which will be further updated following public consultation. This will be considered as part of the final approval process. Each project that emerges over the next five years as a result of this strategy will undertake an IIA screening / full IIA where applicable.

4.5 With regard to involvement, the strategy development has been informed by other strategies and operating models, some of which have included their own consultation / engagement activities. In addition, input and feedback has been initially sought from our partners. Public consultation and engagement will be undertaken on the draft Strategy following Cabinet approval in principle. Further engagement and consultation will be undertaken with residents as part of the development of individual projects that will ultimately deliver the six strategic goals. Further consultation activities include:

- A public consultation survey
- Meeting the 50+ network to ensure the strategy is informed by older people's use of all the Council's access channels, telephone, face-to-face, email and online
- Meeting the Poverty Forum – to consider the financial benefits and impact to residents of being online, including children and young people
- Meeting the Disability Liaison Group and Parent Carer's Group to consider accessibility and the impact of Council services online on residents with a disability including children and young people

- Meetings with organisations that support Welsh Language
- Further engagement with partner organisations, e.g. Health, Universities, other Councils, Welsh Government, WLGA
- Engagement with internal stakeholders: Senior management, staff and Councillors across the organisation to consider the benefits, risks, and costs of any projects.

4.6 The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 places a well-being duty on Swansea Council to carry out sustainable development. This is in line with the Council's Sustainable Development Policy and our Corporate Plan's Well-being Objectives. The strategy adheres to the transformation and future council development well-being objective in the Corporate Plan, so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future. Well-being and future generations and the five ways of working considerations include:

- Taking an outcome-based approach. We will plan and track delivery, in the context of outcomes rather than organisational (performance) level outputs.
- The strategy and resulting projects aim to provide support and access channels that support residents early and prevent problems escalating
- This is an integrated strategy that links with wider national and regional strategies and programmes
- Collaboration and partnership working is a key guiding principle of the strategy
- The strategy supports virtual learning and sustainable digital solutions for schools.
- Key stakeholders will be actively involved in the design and development of customer focused projects as a result of this strategy
- The strategy will help citizens to embrace technology which can significantly improve their life chances
- The strategy promotes the Council's circular economy approach, disposal of hardware is via sustainable means so that components can be re-used and recycled.
- A review of wider language provision will also be undertaken to inform the final strategy and Digital Transformation Programme.

4.7 Each project will assess its individual risks around deliverability and resources as part of submitting an initial business case. In addition, although this is about the roadmap for digital it is not advocating a digital only approach. Face-to-face and telephone channels will continue to support residents and will provide wraparound support for those residents using digital channels.

4.8 Our customer service standards will be reviewed and published so residents and businesses know what to expect when they contact the Council.

4.9 With regard to the cumulative impact of the strategy, each project will compile and submit a business case, which will include its own IIA screening. The overall strategy, overseen by the Digital Board, will continuously review the overall impact on people and/or communities as the programme develops and delivers. In particular how digital channels integrate with telephone, email and face-to-face channels so that the overall access to services supports people and promotes inclusion.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the strategy. However, there are expected to be additional investment requirements associated with a digital programme which will support the strategy. A full business case will be developed over the coming months including full financial analysis to make the case for investment where projected costs cannot be contained within Directorate cash limits. Any such investment is likely to necessitate a draw down from earmarked reserves. External sources of funding will also be sought to support the programme, recognising that the pace of progress will be subject to the availability of resources over the five-year lifetime of the strategy.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 Any contracts arising from the supplies and services required to deliver this strategy will be the subject of a range of procurement processes governed by the Public Contracts Regulation 2015.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A Digital Strategy 2022-27
Appendix B IIA Full Report