



Subject:	Digital Strategy 2022 - 2025	
Report of:	Dr Peter Bishop, Director, Digital & Customer Services	
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Brigid Jones – Deputy Leader	
Relevant O & S Chair(s):	Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq – Resources	
Report author:	James Gregory, Head of ICT Programmes	
<p>Are specific wards affected? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected</p> <p>If yes, name(s) of ward(s):</p>		
<p>Is this a key decision? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference:</p>		
<p>Is the decision eligible for call-in? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>		
<p>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential :</p>		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 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. It is a necessity in order to continue to meet the significant social, fiscal and political challenges; the growing demand for vital services and the raised expectation of citizens and businesses in the internet age.
- 1.2 This requires the Council to fundamentally change how its services are designed; how they are led; our approach to innovation and how we drive change and improvement in a consistent and reliable manner across the Council.
- 1.3 The digital strategy 2022-2025 is a framework for how we create a truly digital Council to serve our citizens and businesses better. It sets out how we will take a

consistent digital approach across the Council to how we re-imagine, design, deliver and operate our services to achieve greatest value and impact where it is needed most in support of the Council's priority outcomes, addressing inequalities and striving for continuous improvement that will accelerate our ambition to be the best digital Council.

- 1.4 This strategy works alongside other programmes of change across the Council, such as New Ways of Working, Customer Service, Insight and Digital City, so that together we maximise the opportunities and levers to embed digital and innovation in what we do at all levels across the organisation and programmes of work.
- 1.5 It builds on the substantial work that has been delivered through the ICT & Digital Strategy 2016-2021 and our recognition as Digital Council of the Year 2018 (Digital Leaders Award) and the commitments as one of the many local authority signatories to the Local Digital Declaration. We have come a long way since we took back control of our IT services and with this new strategy, we will accelerate our ambition to be the best Digital Council, enabled by a user centred and data driven Digital Service
- 1.6 Five overarching priorities have been identified through extensive research, testing and validation with citizens, businesses and staff and external validation through an external Advisory Board set up to challenge and stretch our thinking. Together these priorities will:
 - A. Create online services that are easy to use
 - B. Improve our data and evidence-based decision making
 - C. Give our Council teams the right digital tools to do their jobs
 - D. Build the Council's digital and data skills
 - E. Build the best technology to support Council services
- 1.7 The strategy is supported by a detailed Delivery Plan (Appendix B) that sets out clear milestones for 2022 with metrics to prioritise what we do and measure our performance and success. We recognise that the pace of change is quick, and our plan needs to be adaptive, data driven and able to pivot. This is a time of disruption and we must be able to experiment, test, fail fast and build on success quickly. It will be reviewed annually with Cabinet. Responsibility for monitoring progress and reporting will be through the new Digital Strategy Board.
- 1.8 Where the strategy commitments correspond to areas of planned spend that relate to agreed funding from supporting programmes of work (e.g. Customer Service, Insight, New Ways of Working), then delivery of these commitments have been built into these programmes of work as detailed in Appendix B.
- 1.9 It is proposed that the forecasted capital underspend (total of £1.84M) from several IT capital programmes (Table 2) that include the un-spent capital funds from the previous ICT & Digital Strategy (currently approx. £1.6M) is re-purposed to support the continual investment that is required in technology to support new digital

platforms and refresh of systems. This relates to Priority E in the strategy and delivery plan. The remainder relates to the ITD Transition Programme (currently £0.217M), which will support Priority D, specifically D2 & D3).

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Adopts the Digital Strategy 2022-2025 (Appendix A) and Delivery Plan 2022 (Appendix B) attached to this report, which provides a vision and clear direction of travel to enable digital transformation of the Council's services and systems
- 2.2 Approves the Delivery Plan (Appendix B) which sets out the actions and milestones together with the metrics for measuring performance and success
- 2.3 Notes that capital funding for the technology theme of strategy is covered by existing capital programmes. (total £1.84M summarised in Table 2) with delegated approval for spend given to the Director Digital & Customer Services in consultation with the Director of Council Management and CIO (Assistant Director for Information, Technology & Digital Services (IT& D)).

3 Background and context

- 3.1 The Council works in an increasingly complex landscape of significant social, fiscal and political challenges. There is growing demand for vital services as well as increased uncertainty about the future. However, we do not always work in ways that are easy for employees, citizens and businesses to navigate.
- 3.2 Tom Loosemore, Ex Deputy Director of GDS has defined a widely accepted definition of digital as the following:

“Applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the internet era to respond to people’s raised expectations” [Ref: <https://public.digital/definition-of-digital>]

- 3.3 The internet era has raised expectations and demands in service delivery, and quality. Our citizens and businesses expect their interactions with the Council to be as straightforward, reliable, personalised and technologically sound as the very best experiences elsewhere.
- 3.4 These changes in expectations fundamentally challenge how our services need to be redesigned; how they are led; our approach to innovation and how we drive change and improvement in a consistent and reliable manner across the Council.
- 3.5 Digital transformation of the Council's services and internal systems is an imperative. Our policies and services need to be designed and developed from a human centred approach that prioritises simple, clear and transparent interaction and fast results in order to meet current and future needs of our citizens.
- 3.6 This requires the Council to fundamentally change its culture, practices, processes and behaviours to become more responsive, adaptive and citizen centric. This means we need to put users foremost and centre; delivering their needs quickly and

iterating based on feedback and what the data and evidence is telling us. This will ultimately provide better outcomes for the communities and people we serve.

3.7 Significant building blocks have already been put in place:

3.7.1 The outgoing ICT & Digital Strategy 2016 - 2021 has delivered substantially to support the successful service transition and stabilisation from the joint venture with Capita to bring back the Council's control of its IT services and provision. This brought the Council back onto supported infrastructure and software platforms; provided a modern platform to support services such as in Adults and Children's services. It has delivered a rationalisation and simplification of the Council's application estate including refreshing all the hardware / software and data centre services. Combined with the introduction of new management tools and Modern workplace such as Office 365, it has enabled the delivery of a more agile and efficient service to the Council and achieved efficiency savings through the 'simplify, standardise and share' strategic approach.

3.7.2 In 2018 Birmingham City Council achieved success winning the Digital Council of the Year award as part of the Digital Leaders 100 awards, which recognised the Council's innovative work on an ever-evolving application of data and digital applications to support better outcomes for citizens and businesses. It was also around this time that the Council, along with other local authorities, signed the Local Digital Declaration, which was a commitment to meeting high standards for technology and digital services and to adopting the right digital culture and ways of working to improve services.

3.7.3 In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the Council could respond rapidly to change. Technology and data were used to enable the Council to shift to new digital ways of working, doing this collaboratively and quickly working in small agile teams across service areas and in the open. This provided the basis for much of the Council's response to the pandemic to target resources to where it was needed most, predicting demand and pressure on services, to help keep residents safe, support local businesses, and find new ways of delivering services. Staff were enabled to work flexibly and safely with the right tools and gave residents and businesses the help and information they needed to support the most vulnerable.

3.8 However, the world of technology and pace of change continues to move quickly and the Council needs to look beyond merely creating efficiencies through digital and to begin to genuinely transform services for the digital age.

3.9 The Digital Strategy 2022-2025 is about creating a truly digital Council to serve our citizens and businesses better. It sets out how we will take a consistent digital approach across the Council to how we re-imagine, design, deliver and operate our services to achieve greatest value and impact where it is needed most in support of

the Council's priority outcomes, addressing inequalities and striving for continuous improvement. It is about serving our citizens and businesses better by:

- designing services around users
- being data driven
- working in multi-disciplinary teams
- working closely with our partners.

3.10 It provides a framework for designing, delivering and enabling more effective services for citizens, businesses and staff.

3.11 In development of the strategy, a user centred approach was taken engaging citizens and businesses across Birmingham as well as Council staff. Through a series of interviews, usability testing session and surveys both internal and external user research has been conducted to understand their experiences, needs, expectations and future opportunities that will best support them through the strategy. The findings have shown that our citizens and businesses will not tolerate services that are:

- Unreliable
- fail to join up around their need
- pass them from pillar to post
- ask for information more than once
- fail to answer the phone or respond online
- offer silence when what is needed are updates and assurances about progress.

This has enabled the strategy to be focused on the areas that citizens and businesses said most needed to change.

3.12 An external advisory board was established in June 2021 to support the strategy development. This brought together a core group of private and public sector experts to help challenge, stretch and validate our thinking and approach. This was also complemented by best practice research with other local government and central government experts. While the Council is unique in many ways, when it comes to digital transformation in the public sector it is very similar to many other local authorities. Key learnings identified the need to quickly demonstrate the value of an agile, design led approach to get buy in and build credibility; empowering staff to adopt digital ways of working and to de-prioritise the things that don't add value.

3.13 The results of a digital maturity analysis undertaken by Government Digital Services across England was used to help to better understand our current level of digital maturity using the local Digital Declaration as a benchmark to measure against in coming years.

3.14 Visioning and innovation workshops undertaken with service leads across the Council provided the starting point to look at the art of the possible to create the conditions for the next generation of our local services.

- 3.15 Five overarching priorities (see 4.1) were identified from the discovery work, which have been tested and validated with citizens and businesses. These provide the focus for the Digital Strategy 2022-25 (Appendix A) and the Delivery Plan 2022 (Appendix B), the detail of which has been led and developed by the senior leadership team of IT&D, working closely with leads from aligned programmes along with other supporting subject matter experts.
- 3.16 A simplified [beta web based public version](#) of the strategy, accompanies the main stakeholder strategy document (Appendix A). The web version has been shared and tested with citizens and staff and is available online to invite feedback and comment. This also includes a link to an 'easy read' html and downloadable version.

4 Priorities and outcomes of the strategy

- 4.1 Each of the five priority areas of the strategy are focused on delivering outcomes that will bring benefits for the residents, communities and businesses of Birmingham, as well as the Council and its employees. The priority areas, outcomes and key deliverables are summarised briefly below:

- **Creating online services that are easy to use:**

- Aim of this is to design and deliver online services so good that people prefer to use them when they can. Services will be designed around the user, making them seamless, accessible and easy to use across a range of devices. All services that can be will be made available online with support through other channels for those that need more help.
- Outcome of this will be an improved customer experience and satisfaction with simplified access to information, advice, guidance and transactional services. A result of success in this area will also be delivering efficiencies and cost savings, though this is not the primary focus of the strategy. The strategy is centred on improving user experience and creating high quality digital services and is informed by, and supports, the customer strategy and Programme principles.
- Key deliverables will be to establish a 'habit' for designing services around the needs of users, using an industry-standard 'User Centred Design' approach; to improve our online services, starting with the most commonly used ones; and pressing on with the next stage of delivery and enhancement of the Brum Account. This work will directly support delivery of the Customer Service programme and the digital inclusion strategy.

- **Improving our data and evidence-based decision making:**

- Aim of this is to make data front and centre, trusted, accessible and fit for purpose. This will enable data sharing between all areas of the Council breaking down silos, speeding up our work leading to more

proactive service provision and, with that better outcomes for citizens and businesses.

- Outcome of this will be joined up Council data that is readily accessible and where decisions are routinely made based on data and evidence. There will be greater transparency in how we work and operate so it is clear to citizens how we have made important decisions.
- Key deliverables will be establishing the building blocks and technical capabilities to effectively join up data effectively, validated through delivery of agreed and prioritised use cases. The governance to embed data ethics and standards with the organisation will be established. Much of this this theme will be achieved through delivery of the Insight Programme and is pivotal in the support of the Early Intervention and Prevention programme.

- **Giving our Council teams the right digital tools to do their jobs:**

- Aim of this is to set up staff with the tools, skills, learning and providing prompt responses to their queries so that they can serve their customers in the most efficient and effective way. Staff will have fit for purpose technology which facilitates rather than constrains their work as well as access to cloud collaboration technologies to engage and safely share and store information.
- Outcome of this will be staff who have the best tools available to them so they can focus less time on admin and more on their customers.
- Key deliverables will be an enhanced IT service desk to respond quickly to staff requests with better updates and self-service support; a co-ordinated programme of digital & data tailored learning opportunities and identified tools and platforms to support better working and collaboration as exemplified by the cross services Fieldworkers platform now in delivery. This theme links closely to the New Ways of Working programme.

- **Building the Council's digital and data skills:**

- Aim of this is to grow the digital and data skills of everyone in the Council so that there is a better understanding of the role and impact of digital to transform and deliver excellent services.
- Outcome of this will be senior leaders, Members, staff and partners confident in their application of appropriate digital approaches and solutions to design and deliver services that are citizen and business focused to support better outcomes.
- Key deliverables will be a programme of events, communities of practices (digital & data) to expand knowledge and learning. There will also be investment in new digital roles / capabilities (e.g. user researcher, content designer, product manager, interaction designer)

that have not existed previously. These are characteristic of the change that is required to shift from a technology, business requirement-driven approach to a digital, user centred approach for transformational change. These roles have been tried and tested in other government departments, local authorities and internet age organisations. Using existing funding, IT&D has already brought in a small number of specialists to demonstrate early value of the proposed new ways of working that is now being adopted in delivery of the Customer Service programme. This directly supports the Council's workforce strategy, New Ways of Working programme and Shaping the Future IT&D re-design.

- **Building the best technology to support Council services:**

- Aim of this is to ensure that technology is a key enabler to supporting directorates' service ambitions and the smooth operations of the council.
- Outcome of this will be a technology and digital infrastructure that is innovative, responsive, secure and adaptive to meet the changing needs of our citizens and businesses. New products will be delivered quickly and iteratively on in-house platforms and emerging technologies will be actively trialled so that the Council can take advantage of the potential benefits and efficiencies these offer.
- Key deliverables will be a detailed technology roadmap and building blocks and governance developed for delivery 2023. This supports the Digital City programme to stimulate adoption, innovation and wider external collaboration on use of data and emerging and smart technologies for inclusive economic growth.

4.2 These priorities will be reviewed on an on-going basis and will continue to evolve and, based on what we find out from research with citizens and businesses. Clear metrics have been set out to measure performance and success. The digital strategy will be reviewed annually with Cabinet; responsibility for monitoring progress and reporting will be through the new Digital Strategy Board.

5 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 5.1 The option of not adopting the digital strategy and delivery plan was considered and discounted. It would leave the Council without a strategic view on its use of digital, 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 users expectations.
- 5.2 Through adoption of the digital strategy it is helping our citizens and businesses access services more easily, introducing new channels, using service and user centred design to change our processes and systems and using data to better

understand what people need that will make the Council services and user experiences significantly better as well as more cost effective to run.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 The Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, and Chair of Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee have been formally consulted on the digital strategy and delivery plan.
- 6.2 In addition, to inform the development of the strategy, both in terms of its content and accessibility, extensive user research has been conducted through interviews, workshops and surveys with citizens and businesses. This has involved a total of 370 external users (citizens and businesses) and 45 internal users (directorate staff and Members). 'Show and tell' and 'lunch and learn' sessions, presentations at directorates' DMTs and regular weeknotes have been used to engage and elicit further feedback. A [Birmingham 'All things digital' blog](#) has been created to share more openly and widely the work on the strategy as well as our other digital endeavours.
- 6.3 A web-based beta version of the strategy and easy ready html version designed specifically for external users has been created so that we can share the strategy more widely for feedback and comment for those it impacts ahead of publishing the live version.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 High level risks are summarised in Table 1 below. The ongoing risks associated with the specific actions detailed in the delivery plan will be managed as part of the associated RAID log updated and reported on to the digital strategy Board.

Table 1: High level risks

No.	Description	Impact	Mitigation
R04	There is a risk of not achieving buy-in and engagement across the organisation to adopt and enable change effectively.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council wide commitment from senior leaders ensured • Continued close worked and shared deliverables with integrally linked programmes of work (e.g. Shaping the Future, Customer Service Programme, Digital City, New Ways of Working). • Regular touchpoints with key programme leads maintained.
R06	No effective mechanism to manage prioritisation of activities meaning everything is a high priority and it is difficult to move forward at pace.	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement improved governance through new digital strategy Board. • Clear processes and criteria for prioritisation of work agreed.
R05	No or insufficient funding is made available to support delivery of this strategy and support technology refresh and platforms.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing investment already comitted that are aligned to existing programmes of work e.g. Existing ICT & Digital Strategy, ITD Transition Programme, New Ways of Working, Insight and Customer Service Porgamme. • Regular monthly meetings held with the Finance Business Partner updating on spend to date and forecast for the programme lifespan.

8 Compliance Issues:

8.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

8.1.1 The recommended decisions are consistent with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies, supporting the Council's stated mission and commitments to ensure we are a truly customer centric organisation. The digital strategy works alongside other programmes of change to maximise the opportunities to embed digital and innovation to support the Council's outcomes, addressing inequalities and striving for continuous improvement that will accelerate our ambition to be the best digital Council.

8.2 Legal Implications

8.2.1 The Council is under a duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

8.2.2 The City Council will carry out this work under the General Powers of Competence Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

8.3 Financial Implications

8.3.1 Some of the strategy commitments correspond to areas of planned spend that relate to agreed funding from supporting programmes of work such as New Ways of Working, Insight Programme and Customer Service Programme and as such delivery of these commitments have been built into their programmes of work. See Appendix B for further info on linked programmes.

8.3.2 There are existing capital pots (total £1.84M) that include the existing unspent ICT & Digital Strategy funding (currently approx. £1.62M) is used to support the continual investment that is required in technology to support new digital platforms and refresh of systems. This relates to Priority E in the strategy and delivery plan. The funding sources are summarised below. The second pot relates to the ITD Transition Programme (currently £0.217M), which will support Priority D, specifically D2 & D3).

Table 2: Summary of budget and source to support the digital strategy

Type	Source	£M
Capital	ICT & Digital Strategy	1.623
Capital	ITD Transition Programme	0.217
TOTAL		1.84

8.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

8.4.1 None identified. Any procurement required though will be undertaken adhering to Birmingham City Council's policies and procedures.

8.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

8.5.1 There are resource implications of adopting the strategy. A re-design of IT&D in Digital and Customer Services is already underway and the Digital Strategy is one of the main drivers for the future operating models, alongside other core strategies and needs of the Council.

8.5.2 Any required changes to current job roles or future operating model for IT&D will be done so in line with Birmingham City Council's policies and procedures incorporating a full engagement / consultation process with the Trade Unions and employees. All new roles will be recruited to in accordance with Birmingham City Council's commitment to mitigate against compulsory

redundancy where possible, any new roles will be prioritised to employees at risk of redundancy.

8.5.3 The Digital Strategy is an important part of defining and developing the Council's culture and behaviours and its workforce for the future. The Digital Strategy is already aligned with development of the Council's workforce strategy 2022 and New Ways of Working programme.

8.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

8.6.1 An equalities impact assessment has been completed and is attached to this report as Appendix 3.

9 Appendices

9.1 These are as follows:

- Appendix A: Digital Strategy 2022-2025
- Appendix B: Delivery Plan 2022
- Appendix C: Equality Assessment

10 Background Documents

- Report to Cabinet 18th October 2016 - Birmingham City Council Information & Communications Technology & Digital Strategy (2016 - 2021)
- Report to Cabinet 18th October 2016 - Birmingham City Council Strategic ICT & Digital Investment Programme (2016 - 2021) ICT and Digital Strategy (2016 – 2021)
- Report to Cabinet of 27th June 2017 - Delivery of Savings against Service Birmingham ICT Contract
- Report to Cabinet of 14th November 2017 - Budget savings proposals, ending the Joint Venture (JV) with Capita for Service Birmingham and proposing new contractual arrangements up to 2020 / 2021
- Report to Cabinet of 27th March 2018 - Outcome of final stage negotiations between BCC and Capita - proposed IT and Digital Service Transition Roadmap to 2020/21, with associated investments and benefits (appendix 2 gives a summary of performance against the strategy)
- Report to Cabinet of 16th April 2019 - Capita ICT Service Transition update
- Report to Cabinet of 14th May 2019 - Update on the delivery of the Birmingham City Council Information and Communications Technology and Digital Strategy (2016-2021)
- Report to Cabinet on 21st July 2020 - Update on the delivery of the Birmingham City Council Information and Communications Technology and Digital Strategy (2016-2021)

- Report to Cabinet on 18th May 2021 - Update on the delivery of the Birmingham City Council Information and Communications Technology and Digital Strategy (2016-2021)