



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Mike Weston
Director Digital Innovation and ICT

Tel: 0114 205 6914

Report of: *Chief Operating Officer
 Executive Director City Futures
 Executive Director Neighbourhood*

Report to: *Strategy & Resources Committee*

Date of Decision: *17 April 2024*

Subject: *Future Sheffield – Digital Strategy & Customer Experience Strategy*

Type of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken	Initial <input type="checkbox"/>	Full <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Insert EIA reference number and attach EIA		
Has appropriate consultation/engagement taken place?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<p><i>“The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).”</i></p>		

Purpose of Report:

This report proposes a new Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy to be delivered under the Future Sheffield Programme, the Council’s four-year transformation programme, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Strategy and Resources Committee:

- Approve the Customer Experience Strategy attached to this report at Appendix A
- Approve the Digital Strategy attached to this report at Appendix B

Background Papers:

Customer Experience Strategy (Appendix A)

Digital Strategy (Appendix B)

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed.	Finance: Philip Gregory
		Legal: <i>Andrea Simpson, Richard Marik</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: Andrew Shepherd, Katie Mullen
		Climate: Andrew Shepherd, Katie Mullen
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Claire Taylor, Ajman Ali, Kate Martin</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Tom Hunt</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Mike Weston</i> <i>Tom Smith</i>	Job Title: <i>Director Digital Innovation & ICT</i> <i>Director Operational Services</i>
	Date: <i>28 March 2024</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report proposes a new Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy to be delivered under the Future Sheffield Programme, the Council's four-year transformation programme, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council. The proposed strategies focus on two critical areas of development to ensure an organisation wide approach to customer services and digital transformation.
- 1.1.2 As a council, everything we do is for the people of Sheffield. We face reduced resources, increasing demand and changing customer expectations. Consequently, it is more vital than ever that we are connected and work as one organisation to offer outcome-focused responses for local people which best suit their circumstances.
- 1.1.3 The Council has a vision to become: A digital council, empowering local people, communities, businesses and staff with reliable, seamless, inclusive and intuitive services, which are available 24/7 and managed sustainably.
- 1.1.4 To achieve this will require both a step-change and mind-set change for how the Council approaches digital innovation and transformation. We understand that a 'digital first' choice is not for everyone, but in transforming our digital capabilities and services (both access to information and fulfilment of transactions), a digitally preferred choice will be an option that is accessible for all. This will allow face to face or phone contact to the council to become focused on those people that need it most.
- 1.1.5 Whatever our ambitions, we must have the basics in place to achieve a digital transformation. We need to continue to invest in a secure and robust infrastructure; scope and procure the right sustainable technology and applications; and establish a first-class, modern cyber secure digital estate. Investment in skills will be critical to success. We cannot assume that our workforce has an equality in terms of digital inclusion and literacy. Our digital roadmap puts people, learning and development firmly at the heart of our digital transformation ambitions.
- 1.1.6 We find ourselves in the context of an ever-evolving landscape of a hybrid workforce, intelligent and automated applications, cloud platforms, reusable component-based architecture and the fast-paced growth and adoption of Artificial Intelligence. Understanding how we respond to and embrace emerging technologies but in an ethical and safe way will ensure we are ready for the future where digital evolution

and iteration is the norm and adoption of this way of working is critical to our service delivery.

1.2 Customer Experience Strategy

1.2.1 The Customer Experience Strategy, attached to this report at Appendix A, provides commitments to our customers that we will:

Listen and respond to customers effectively and efficiently, always putting them at the heart of designing, delivering and improving our services.

Empower people to reach the right solution for them by being accessible, inclusive and person-centred.

Be clear, transparent and considerate when we interact with customers, supported by the right digital tools, information, skills and behaviour.

1.2.2 The Council's Customer Experience Strategy sets out the Council's commitments, expectations and plans as one council to achieve a great customer experience for all. It is a council-wide strategy which sets out our shared understanding and ambition for achieving great customer experience across the council. Everyone in the council is responsible for owning and contributing to making it a reality, so we achieve improved outcomes together. Alongside the Digital Strategy, the Customer Experience Strategy will help to deliver our mission and outcomes set out in the Council Plan and City Goals.

1.2.3 Specifically the Customer Experience Strategy sets out how we can achieve better outcomes for our customers, our workforce and the council as an organisation, as set out below:

For customers:

- **Improved access:** Customers will be more able to get to the solution they need, whether online, by phone, or in person.
- **Joined up response:** We will have greater co-ordination of services for customers which considers them as a whole individual, family or community.
- **Quicker outcomes:** Customers will have faster response times and fewer transfers between teams or services when interacting with the council.
- **Clear and consistent approach:** Customers will have a fair, equitable and consistent experience every time.

For our workforce:

- **Enhanced purpose in their roles:** Our workforce will be able to focus more time and effort on those who need their help.

- **Development opportunities:** : Our workforce will have access to the training and career progression opportunities they need to deliver a great customer experience.
- **Increased productivity:** Our workforce will have better digitally-enabled tools, processes and connections to make it easier to deliver outcomes for customers, as well as the skills and confidence they need to use them effectively.

For the Council:

- **Better use of resources:** The council will have the right skills in the right places to best meet customer needs when they contact us.
- **Connected ways of working:** The council will be able to provide a holistic response by better joining up across services, so customers do not need to contact us multiple times.
- **Improved trust and reputation:** The council will see an increase in satisfaction and reduction in complaints as more customers get access to the most appropriate information or support at the right time.

1.2.4 The Customer Experience Strategy is intertwined with the Digital Strategy, as we know improving technology and digital access will play a key role in transforming our customer experiences. They both underpin how we will work and interact with our customers, communities, businesses and citizens in the future in line with our values – people are at the heart of what we do, openness and honesty are important to us and together we get things done.

1.3 Digital Strategy

1.3.1 Sheffield City Council's Digital Strategy, attached to this report at Appendix B, will be:

A council wide strategy - to transform the delivery of council services will require digital to be owned organisation wide. We will embrace the changing landscape of technology and opportunities as we strive to become a Digital Council.

Customer led - a shift to a customer focused approach will ensure we achieve measurable and tangible change and impact for our users (internal and external). We are striving to improve digital access and inclusion and deliver a coherent and intuitive digital customer experience.

Built from a solid foundation - tackling ICT areas of significant impact to staff user experience; continuing to invest in a robust infrastructure; rationalising ICT devices and connections; and focusing on business

systems improvements. We want to ensure we have the basics right from which to build on.

- 1.3.2 Our focus will not be on 'build it once and move on'. As a Digital Council we will need to transform our mind-set to one of iteration, feedback, learning from our mistakes and continually evolving.
- 1.3.3 The Strategy sets out a framework and roadmap of digital change to support the overall vision and goals of the Council. It provides a guide to the future design, development and delivery of digital, and is underpinned by a digital and technology roadmap.
- 1.3.4 The Strategy describes how our digital vision and ambition is underpinned by 4 digital pillars.

Customer First: Putting customer needs and expectation at the forefront of transforming digital services, both internal staff and external – local people, communities, businesses, and visitors.

Knowledge driven: Ease of access to data and insight to assess service delivery, streamline processes, inform continuous improvements, enable automation, procurement and decision-making and model the impact of change.

Skilled & Capable Workforce: Investment in training and skills development to shape a digitally included and literate workforce, who are empowered to deliver a continually evolving Digital Council.

Transformed Service Delivery: Embracing emerging technologies for a transformed future to ensure a digitally preferred route into all services. Establish efficient and effective strategic digital and ICT capabilities to enable frontline service to focus on customer outcomes.

- 1.3.5 To be successful and embrace the shift to a Digital Council will need: leadership and engagement, governance, knowledge and skills, collaboration and alignment across the Council and sustained investment in both staff and technology.

1.4 Next Steps

- 1.4.1 The implementation of both strategies will require investment, and an annual plan for delivery describing deliverable investment plans and potential saving will be needed. Business Cases will be developed outlining how investment will lead to ongoing revenue savings, income generation and cost avoidance. Annual reports on the implementation of the strategies, detailing delivery plan priorities, investments and potential savings, will be presented to future meetings of the Committee.

- 1.4.2 To date external support, from Price Waterhouse Coopers on the Customer Experience Strategy and Entec Si on the Digital Strategy, has been utilised to develop the proposed strategies. This has been funded from the Transformation Budget previously agreed under the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Further external support may be required to assist the Council to deliver the strategies. If so it will be the subject of future decisions.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 The draft Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy directly support the delivery of Together We Get Things Done, the Council Plan approved by Full Council on 6th March 2024. At the heart of the plan is a focus on the people of Sheffield, ensuring that everyone in the city shares in the benefits of a growing prosperous place.
- 2.2 The Council Plan, along with the Performance Management Framework and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, provides the strong foundation from which the Council will deliver the Future Sheffield Programme and the Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy are key delivery pillars for achieving the transformation we require.
- 2.3 The Customer Experience Strategy is intertwined with the Digital Strategy, as we know improving technology and digital access will play a key role in transforming our customer experiences. They both underpin how we will work and interact with our customers, communities, businesses and citizens in the future in line with our values – people are at the heart of what we do, openness and honesty are important to us and together we get things done.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Any appropriate external consultation will be carried out as part of individual projects aligned to each of the strategies, which will be brought forward for approval in the usual way.
- 3.2 Full consultation across Directorates, Senior Leadership Board, Transformation Board and Heads of Services has been carried out to develop the strategies to ensure a whole organisation approach.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 The Digital Strategy aims to have a positive equalities impact for both our customers and workforce, through the development of digital skills, creation of digital services that are more accessible, and better use of the data we hold. We must acknowledge that not everyone is able to

engage digitally, and it is not always the best way of supporting people particularly where there are complex needs or circumstances.

The Digital Strategy won't force our customers and workforce through digital channels, but will provide the option for people who want to. Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence also provide an opportunity to improve customer and workforce experience, but must be implemented in a responsible, ethical and safe way. The creation of policies built around fairness, reliability, accountability, privacy, inclusiveness and transparency will help ensure that our use of new technologies is supportive of our equality ambitions.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 The recommendations in this report ask the committee to endorse the Digital and Customer Experience strategies. The committee previously approved a commissioning strategy to implement Future Sheffield on 19 December 2022 which set out the objectives and scope of the work. The commissioning strategy identified the existing annual transformation budget and the budget contingency reserve as sources of funding.
- 4.2.2 Future reports will detail the delivery plan priorities for both strategies including planned investments, potential savings and funding arrangements including the impact on the Medium-Term Financial Analysis (MTFA).
- 4.2.3 The detailed business cases for the delivery of these Strategies are being developed and the funding arrangements will follow for approval once the costs have been determined. When considering the funding approach for the business plans which support these strategies existing budgets and reserves will be considered in the first place.
- 4.2.4 The council has an annual budget for transformation of £4m. This funding is allocated to specific transformation projects by the Future Sheffield board with advice from the Budget Implementation Group. It is anticipated that the cost of external support to further refine the delivery of these strategies will be funded through the existing transformation budget.
- 4.2.5 The government allow the flexible use of capital receipts to fund revenue transformation costs which generate ongoing savings which may be relevant as a funding source for the business cases supporting these strategies. To make use of this flexibility a strategy must be presented to Full Council disclosing the individual projects that will be (part)funded by capital receipts with a copy submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Sheffield City Council have not yet made use of this flexibility but will consider this in the approach to funding transformational activity within the scope of the Medium-Term Financial Analysis (MTFA).

4.2.6 In addition, consideration will be given to other sources of funding (e.g. grants) or additions to the capital programme where appropriate to ensure that funding arrangements are robust and affordable.

4.2.7 Any changes to 2024/25 budgets will be in line with Finance Regulations which may require approvals from Finance Committee, Strategy & Resources Committee and Full Council as appropriate.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 There is no legal requirement to have either a Customer Experience Strategy nor a Digital Strategy and there are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Any proposed actions to implement the strategies, such as those described in section 1.4 of this report, will require further decision making in accordance with the Council's Constitution and the legal implications of each decision, including any necessary compliance with public procurement legislation, will be considered fully at that time.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 Sheffield has set a target to become a net zero city and council by 2030.

4.4.2 The Digital Strategy and Customer Experience Strategy are strategic documents that supports Sheffield City Council's ambitions with regard to all of its services. The next stage is to develop implementation plans for the strategies, at which point more detailed Climate Impact Assessments will be carried out to consider the carbon and climate impacts of any changes to the delivery of a range of projects and services. It was therefore agreed that an 'initial' Climate Impact Assessment only was appropriate at this stage.

4.4.3 Implementation of digital technology will be key to addressing the climate emergency and achieving our 2030 net zero ambition, as it unlocks decarbonisation at an increased pace and scale through the ability to process more data more effectively, identify problems faster, and test solutions virtually across a number of council services and sectors in the city.

Digital solutions provide opportunities to reduce travel for both our employees and citizens, support more efficient use of our buildings including better energy management, and reduce the use of resources such as paper. We will also continue to focus on recycling obsolete ICT equipment, and utilising cloud-base solutions that are more energy efficient to operate. They are also key to realising the Council's vision set out in the Customer Experience Strategy, by improving communication and access to information, and enabling us to adapt our services and respond quickly and effectively, to support citizens with the impacts of a changing climate in the future, such as during increased extreme weather events.

4.4.4 If realised through the development of aligned implementation plans, the Digital Strategy and Customer Experience Strategy will contribute towards embedding climate at the heart of council activity, and support greenhouse gas emission reductions across both council and city.

4.5 Human Resources Implications

4.5.1 The Digital Strategy will require changes to the target operating model of the Digital Innovation and ICT Service to ensure the appropriate skills and resources necessary to deliver the strategy are put in place.

4.5.2 Equally the implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy is likely to impact on how services are delivered across the Council, and this is likely to result in changes to the way services are organised across the Council.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The Council could choose not to have either a Customer Experience Strategy or a Digital Strategy. This has been rejected because the strategies are interlinked and together will contribute to successful delivery of the Council Plan through the Council's four-year transformation programme, Future Sheffield.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy are key pillars the Council's four-year transformation programme, Future Sheffield, which is aimed at improving service effectiveness and delivery across the organisation whilst creating a robust long-term financial plan for the Council. The strategies will ensure an organisation wide approach to customer services and digital transformation. This will contribute to achieving the vision and priorities of the Council Plan.