

Digital Strategy 2021-2024



Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Forward by Executive Member Cllr Ash Cartman
3. What is digital
4. Digital vision and fit with corporate strategy
5. Strategy ambitions
6. How we will work
7. The model
8. Making North Somerset a more digital place
9. Improving the digital organisation
10. Staying Secure
11. Creating information out of data
12. Developing digital communities
13. Developing digital communities
14. Encouraging digital innovation
15. Success story – get connected
16. Success story – channel shift
17. Success story – adult social services
18. What have we achieved so far
19. Conclusion and measuring success

Executive Summary

- Digital is changing the way people live, connect and work.
- This strategy is about how we will deliver the services and infrastructure our residents need to thrive and live happy, healthy lives. It's about how we can serve our residents better and tailor how we deliver services to meet differing needs.
- We want to create a modern, sustainable area that is a great place to live, work, play and do business, and make sure we remain resilient and competitive in a rapidly changing world.
- We will do this as a digitally enabled council, supporting our staff and members to understand digital capabilities and providing them with the resources to achieve that.
- We will develop an understanding of the scale of challenges that relate to digital exclusion within North Somerset and work with communities and partners to address them, to ensure that all our residents can benefit from our ambitions. We will consider how we support our residents with their interaction with the digital world where poverty, inequalities and vulnerabilities exist.

Forward by Executive Member Cllr Ash Cartman

"Digital technology has transformed our lives in ways that we could not previously have imagined, and it continues to do so at a pace. The world that we live in has evolved significantly and for most of us, digital technologies have become an essential part of our lives.

Digital technology has also changed the way that people expect to interact with us and therefore we need to ensure that we meet these needs. Our digital strategy seeks to support this need for access to digital technologies and help us to be able to plan a path to improved services and outcomes for our residents."



What is digital?

“Digital means applying the culture, practices, processes and technologies of the internet era to respond to people’s raised expectations.”

Tom Loosemore

Tom Loosemore wrote the UK’s first [Government Digital Strategy](#), and served as the GDS’s deputy director for five years. He led the early development of [GOV.UK](#).

Quote from the Government Digital Service:

The world around us is digital, whether we like it or not. Government must learn how to be digital too. To apply the culture, practices, processes and technologies of digital era. To understand what they are, how they work, and how to put them to use to meet user needs. Because only by meeting those user needs will we be able to respond to people’s raised expectations and change how they feel about government.

Digital vision and the fit with corporate strategy

Our digital vision

Take a “digital first” approach to respond effectively to the expectations and needs of our residents, visitors and businesses.

Corporate strategy and the digital vision

The Corporate Plan is the council’s overarching strategy, setting out the council’s vision and ambitions for the area and the outcomes it wants to achieve for local people.

The council’s digital strategy is informed and shaped by the vision and ambitions set out within the Corporate Plan. It has been developed in consultation with a range of service managers to provide a digital framework for the organisation. As a result the strategy extends across the breadth of the Corporate Plan. The digital strategy is important because it facilitates the opportunity for innovation and efficiencies.

Corporate strategy priorities

- A thriving and sustainable place
- A council which empowers and cares about people
- An open and enabling organisation



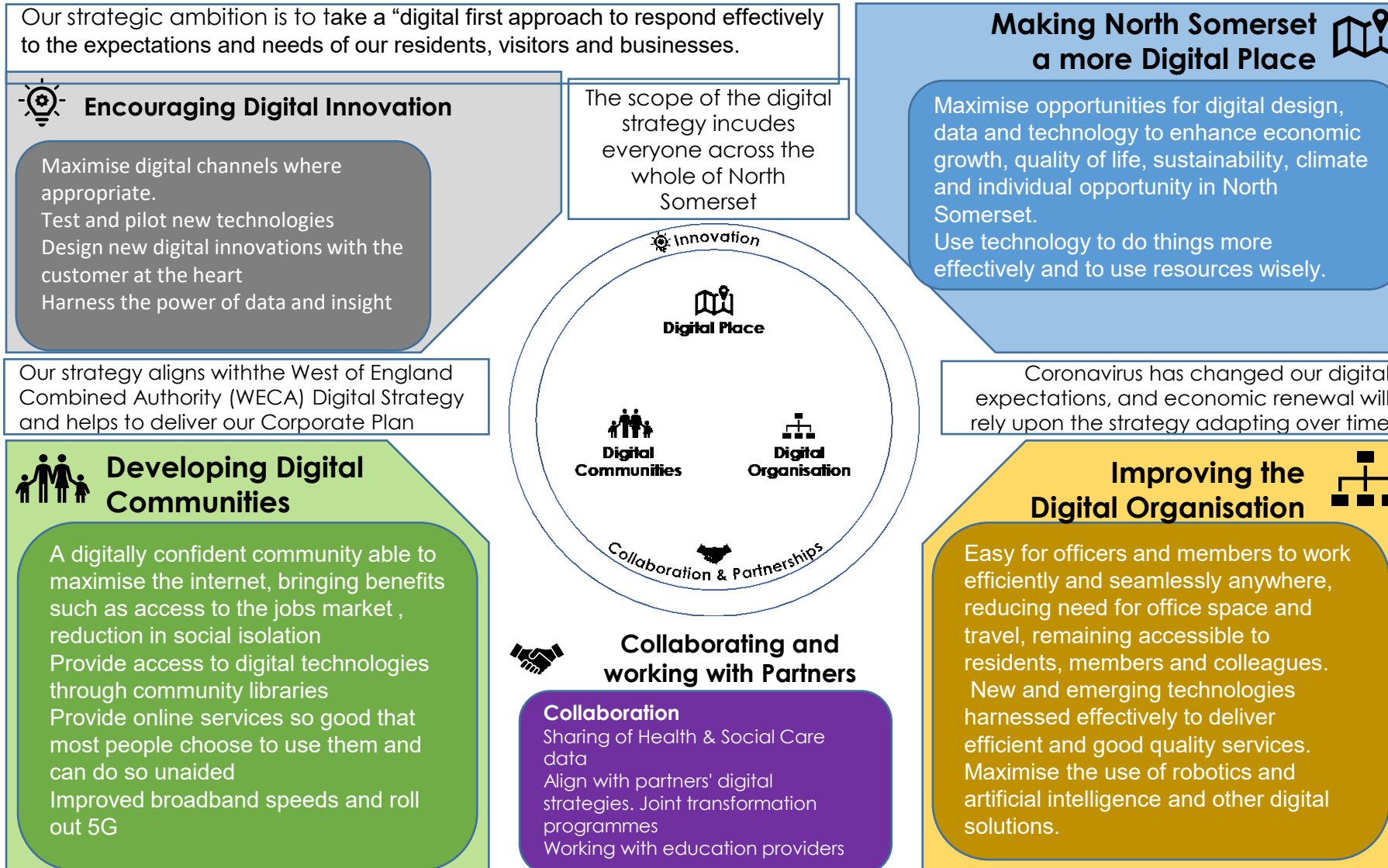
This strategy has the following ambitions, delivered together with our partners

- Residents will have a **better experience when accessing the council's services and information**, with an easy-to-use website that works on any device, digital services so good and convenient that people prefer to use them when they can, and digital communications which inform and consult them on the issues they care about
- Residents will also have access to an **enhanced digital skill offer**, helping them build their confidence in areas from basic computer literacy to enable their connectivity to online services and tackle social isolation, to skills needed for learning, education and study, through to the professional skills they need to access the jobs of the future and broaden career prospects. Alternative support will be provided for those residents who lack the ability to engage digitally.
- Residents, visitors, students and businesses will enjoy **faster broadband connectivity** through initiatives including public WiFi, free access to computers and technology through libraries, full fibre broadband rollout, 5G deployment, digital signposting and smart technology solutions that help reduce energy consumption, lower emissions, improve public safety and help make NSC a more attractive place to be
- NSC will have a **thriving business sector** supported by access to the levels of connectivity they need to grow and thrive and able to access the talented people they need who are equipped with the digital and tech skills required in our changing economy.
- NSC council **officers and members will have access to continuously improving technology** and have the skills and confidence to use it well, helping them deliver great services to residents as efficiently as possible and freeing up more of their time for frontline services
- **Partner organisations** will be able to work with the council and with each other more effectively, supported by digital collaboration tools and more open communications, and making use of shared data and digital platforms

How we will work

1. We will focus on user needs
2. We will develop and improve our services in this dynamic environment
3. We will use data to demonstrate where we need to focus and to support our decision making
4. We will share our work with others and seek to learn from others
5. We will work in partnership to achieve our ambitions

The model



Staying Secure

It is a sad fact of life that for all the benefits that technology brings to modern society, it also presents an opportunity for criminals to try and exploit systems for their own gain. We take the steps that you would expect of a local authority to protect our systems and the data that we hold in them from unauthorised access.

Responding to the pandemic in 2020 brought out the best in human nature however it also saw a sharp rise in the number of fraudulent grant applications, malicious emails containing malware and phishing attacks. The number of ransomware attacks against public sector organisations has also increased dramatically in recent years with criminals seeking only to extort money with no thought for the effects of their actions on the vulnerable who rely on public services. We will continue to work hard to identify these threats and keep them at bay.

We participate in local and national intelligence sharing forums and constantly review our approach to security. We test our systems regularly to identify any vulnerabilities we may have and mitigate any risks that we find. We process some of the most sensitive personal information imaginable entrusted to us and it is vital we ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of it at all times. Victims of identity theft will testify that it is a harrowing experience and we will ensure that as we rely more and more on digital interaction we do not compromise our security standards.

Information security therefore remains a core principle that underpins each of the ambitions presented in this Digital Strategy as well as an integral part of all projects we undertake, re-enforcing the concept of *Data Protection by Design* as enshrined in the General Data Protection Regulation.

Creating information from data

In delivering our services, one of the challenges we face is not to lose sight of the principles and practices of good information management in the face of the sheer quantity of information we generate. The modern, mobile and remote workforce requires this vital information to be available wherever and whenever it is needed and to achieve this requires investment both in technology and training. We have ambitious programmes to move us forwards so that we know:

- What information we have and where it is located
- How we can share it appropriately and collaborate with partners
- How to protect it properly
- How to manage it properly over its whole lifecycle
- When to destroy it
- How to maximise the value we get from it by combining it with other relevant information

This will not be achieved overnight however we have the right tools and infrastructure in place to move us forwards at pace.

Our ambition is to make North Somerset a more digital place

We will maximise opportunities for digital design, data and technology to enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability, climate and individual opportunity in North Somerset. We will use technology to do things more effectively and to use resources more wisely.

Desired outcomes:

- We enable and facilitate digitally connected new homes and communities
- We make it attractive and easy for service providers to invest in North Somerset and accelerate the installation of full fibre broadband and 5G infrastructure
- We use digital technologies to support renewable energy generation and carbon storage
- More businesses have the digital skills and technology solutions they need to grow and become more productive
- Digital solutions support the reduction of transport emissions
- Digital solutions support charging point options for vehicles

Our ambition is to improve the digital organisation

It is easy for many officers and members to work efficiently and seamlessly anywhere, reducing the need for office space and travel, whilst remaining accessible to residents, members and colleagues.

New and emerging technologies are harnessed effectively to deliver efficient and good quality services. We are well on the way to 'paperless' and 'cashless' operation, and are maximising the use of robotics and artificial intelligence and other digital solutions.

Desired outcomes:

- We use technological solutions to achieve a net zero carbon council
- The council has developed strong digital leadership within the organisation
- The workforce is flexible and mobile by default, supported by digital technology and telephony
- Appropriate technology for officers and members so that they can work effectively to achieve their objectives, with regular review and continuous improvement to meet changing needs
- New and emerging technologies are explored and implemented where appropriate
- Officers have digital access to data and knowledge in order to make informed decisions and more council data is made open as part of our transparency agenda
- Predictive analytics is used to understand the changing needs of our population and the services they will access
- Data visualisation is used to make our data and performance information easy to access and understand both internally and externally
- Live streaming is available for council meetings
- The council maximises the adoption of MS365 and intranet use

Our ambition is to develop digital communities (1)

We will have a digitally confident community who are able to maximise the internet, bringing benefits such as access to the jobs market and reduction in social isolation. We will work with communities to develop new technologies to support our health and wellbeing services.

We will provide access to digital technologies through our community libraries to enable residents to connect to council and government digital services and other digital first services, and to gain the skills to access them independently.

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. We have an ambition to deliver channel shift, moving those who can and want to, to our digital channels, allowing us to provide more support those you can't or are more vulnerable. We will engage with our residents in user testing to ensure that digital technologies meet their needs.

More residents are able to take advantage of national programmes to improve broadband speeds and roll out 5G.

We will engage with our Citizens Panel using digital tools as our primary method of research.

Our ambition is to develop digital communities (2)

Desired outcomes:

- The council provides accessible websites with easy to use self-service options which are used as a preference
- The council engages with the community in user testing to ensure that digital technology meets the needs of the customer
- The council has understood what digital exclusion looks like in North Somerset and has worked with partners and communities to address issues identified locally.
- The library service is successful in enabling digital access to services and improving digital literacy support
- The council engages and consults with residents via digital tools
- Visitors can find information about the area via digital resources for tourism
- The council has a well-developed programme of maximising independence using digitally enabled technologies
- The council has developed a technology enabled care (TEC) strategy ensuring that TEC is a key part of delivering the vision for adult social care in North Somerset to improve health and wellbeing
- The council will work with care providers to encourage adoption of TEC into everyday practices
- Businesses know where to go for high quality advice and support in relation to technology adoption, accessing digital upskilling courses for their staff and understand their own future digital needs
- We will work with partners and skills providers to ensure residents understand what a career in the digital/ technology sector looks like or the digital skills they need for future jobs in our economy and they are able to access the courses they need to gain employment progress into high quality jobs.

Our ambition is to encourage digital innovation

We will use innovation to deliver better services for our residents and customers, maximising digital channels where appropriate.

We will actively test and pilot new technologies, and will work with partners to achieve this. Performance data will be available for officers to inform our decision making. We will design new digital innovations with the customer at the heart, not at the end of the process.

We will harness the power of data and insight effectively to reduce duplication and improve our services. Council and partner data sets are combined where possible to provide richer data sets to inform decision making.

Desired outcomes:

- We have an Innovation hub to incubate ideas
- We are actively testing and piloting new technologies
- Our actions are informed by insight from rich data
- Promotion of digital careers and progression opportunities such as apprenticeships, traineeships, work experience and future government employment initiatives.
- Staff have smarter working tools to enable flexible working
- We will procure an innovative, developmental TEC service

Success stories – Get connected – what has been achieved

Digital Inclusion Project funded by NSC and the DWP

• Overview:

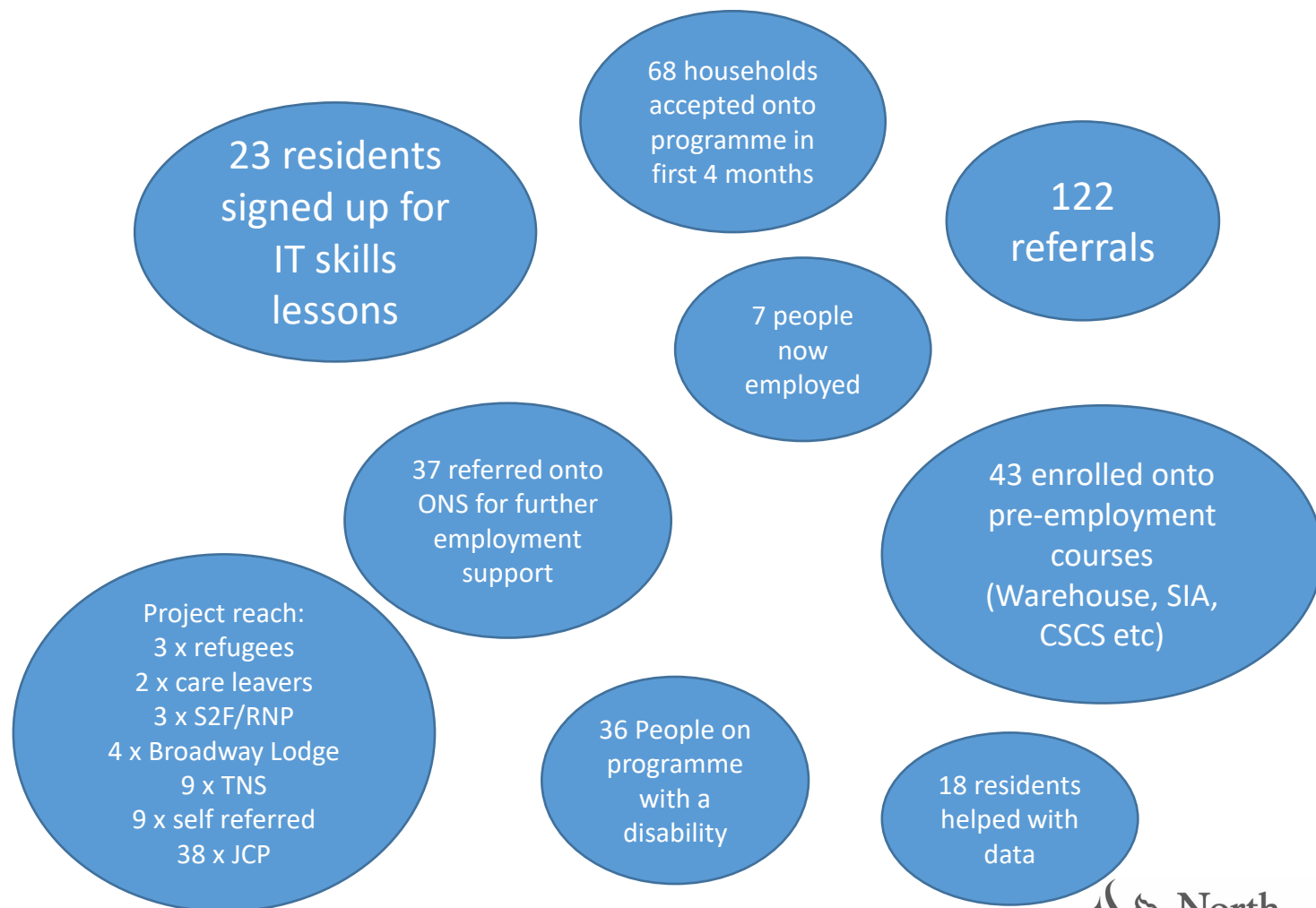
- To provide laptops/data for 12 months to help 120 households at risk of digital exclusion.
- Provide continued support throughout the 12 month period assisting with access to courses and support to improve skills and employability chances.

• Challenges:

- Poor phone signals struggling to connect with data
- Securing devices and paying for them
- Not being able to help more elderly people due to DWP targets

• Continued aims:

- Continued networking with charities and local providers to promote project
- On target to help 120 households



Success stories – channel shift - what has been achieved

Through a focused programme of channel shift we have achieved the following:

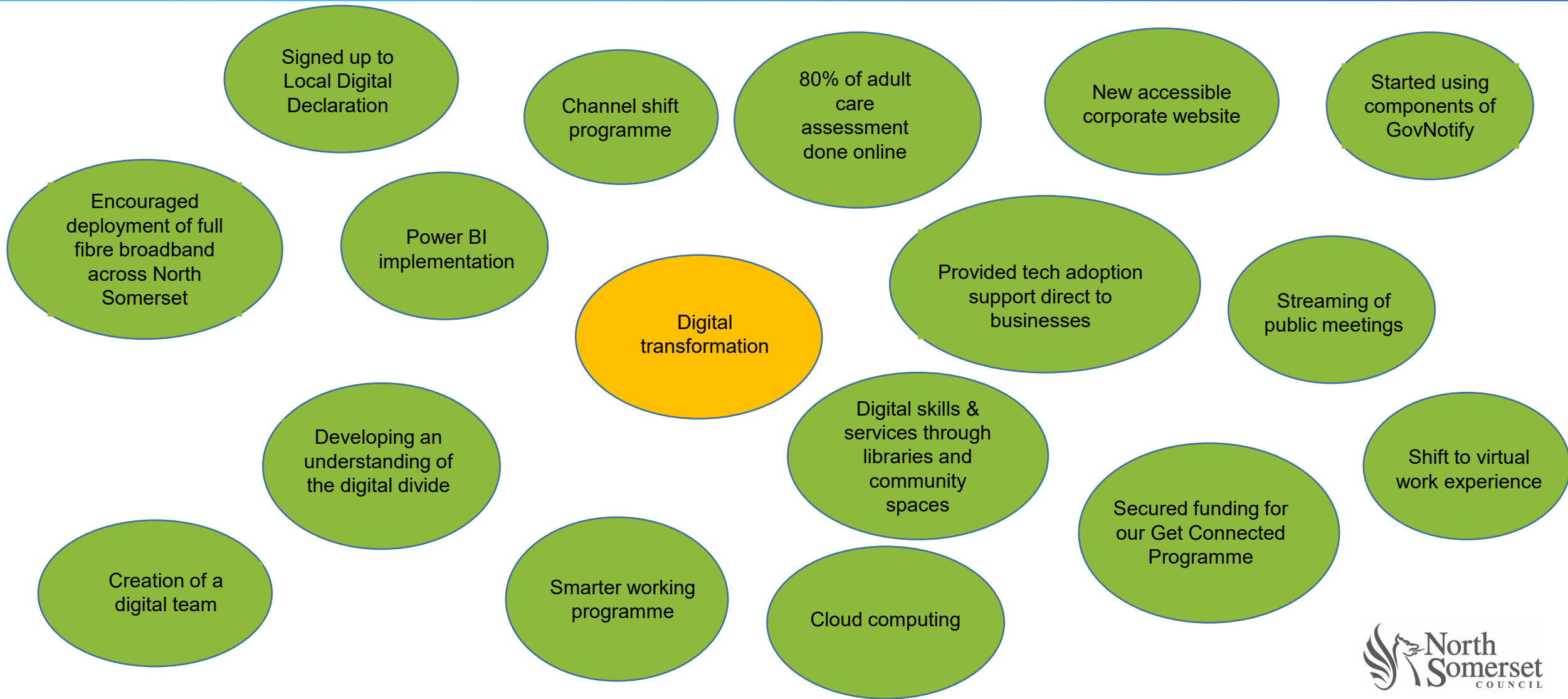
- Over 90% of residents order their bins online
- 90% of residents report missed collections online
- 71% of residents report fly-tipping online, being able to pin-point the location on a map
- 87% of resident apply for their blue badges online
- We have an average of 426 web chats with our residents every month
- We have 30,000 customers registered for ebilling
- 57% of all Benefit and Council tax customer contact transaction and external DWP transactions automated
- 57% of all council tax transactions enacted via self service tools
- 34% of council tax customer transactions are fully automated
- 100% of new benefit claims are completed via self service tools

Success stories – Adult Social Services – what has been achieved

Working with various stakeholders Technology Enabled Care projects have created the following feedback:

- Tamar Court Alexa project - “The reminders & video calling are very useful”
- Tover Tafels (Magic Tables) - “Reduction in challenging behaviour, interacting/engaging more with other service users/staff, talking more/reminiscing, improved sleeping patterns, increased independence/confidence.”
- Acoustic Monitoring - "Because acoustic monitoring detects disturbance within the room falls and incidents are prevented"
- Hydration Innovation App - "Working in partnership with North Somerset, LGA, NHS digital and the CCG has proven a benefit to the care home as we have been able to share knowledge and been considered an equal partner "
- The Wellness Service, welfare checking and TEC support - "Mr B was able to communicate with his family using WhatsApp video calls on the GDS Tablet. Mr B and his son phoned us to thank us for our help and Mr B thanked us for ‘bringing his family back to him’.
- Remote assessment - Virtual assessment achieved when face to face was impossible

What have we achieved so far?



Conclusion and measuring success

Our vision is ambitious, and we need to ensure that we measure our progress across the lifetime of the strategy.

In addition to the digital strategy, a supporting action plan has been created which will be included in the council's annual business planning framework. The plan will span the period of the strategy and will define actions by date. The framework will monitor and evaluate progress against the action plan and is reported at DLTs, CLT and to the Executive and Scrutiny Panels. Formal monitoring of the action plan will take place within the ICT Board.

We welcome feedback on this strategy. You can email digitalteam@n-somerset.gov.uk with any thoughts you may have.

Equality Impact Assessment

Please add content where << XXX>> is indicated.
Please make Yes or No bold as appropriate.

Service area: Council wide

Does the topic of this assessment link to a budget reduction proposal: No

Equality impact assessment owner: Simone Woolley

Assistant Director/Director sign off: Amy Webb

Review date: 2/11/21

1. Equality Impacts

Please make High, Medium or Low bold as appropriate

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

2. The Proposal

2.1 Background to proposal

(Please provide a brief explanation of the project/proposals. You should consider the impact on both customers and staff)

The organisation needs to create a digital strategy to outline our approach to all things digital over the next three years. Officers from across the council have worked together to create a strategy which covers all areas of the organisation, based upon their area of expertise.

It is worth mentioning that the digital strategy only covers our digital approach. We are currently working on a Customer Service strategy which will cover how we engage with our customers across all channels, so will offer a broader view of how the council engages with its customers. This strategy is solely about digital and, and we understand that digital does not work for everyone. With that in mind, we need to develop a strategy for those who want to and who can, and acknowledge what we will do about those you can't or won't.

The digital strategy is broken down into four themes:

- **Making North Somerset a more digital place** is about the we will maximise opportunities for digital design, data and technology in order to enhance economic growth, quality of life, sustainability, climate and individual opportunity in North Somerset. We will use technology to do things more effectively and to use resources more wisely. This will have an impact on both customers and staff.
- **Improving the digital organisation** is about making it easy for many officers and members to work efficiently and seamlessly anywhere, reducing the need for office space and travel, whilst remaining accessible to residents, members and colleagues. It is also about harnessing new and emerging technologies to deliver efficient and good quality services. This will have an impact on staff.
- **Developing digital communities** is about ensuring that we will have a digitally confident community who are able to maximise the internet, bringing benefits such as access to the jobs market and reduction in social isolation. We will work with communities to develop new technologies to support our health and wellbeing services. We will aim to transform the relationship between residents and the council by providing online services so good that most people choose to use them, giving us the capacity to help those who are more digitally excluded or vulnerable. This will have an impact on both customers and staff.
- **Encouraging digital innovation** is about using innovative means to deliver better services for our residents and customers, maximising digital channels where appropriate and to use data and insight

effectively to reduce duplication and improve our services. This will have an impact on both customers and staff.

2.2 Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers

There may be impact on other organisations such as the voluntary sector if customers feel that they are not able to get the service they need from the council in the way that they want it. Potentially they may refer to, for example, Citizens Advice or North Somerset Council's initiatives supporting residents at risk of digital inclusion.

Section 3 – What Do We Know?

3.1 Customer/staff profile details – what data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be, affected?

The digital strategy covers the whole organisation so has the potential to affect the whole population of North Somerset. We understand that particular groups may be disproportionately impacted by pushing the digital agenda and we intend to continue to engage with those groups to gain their feedback. We will also be engaging with those group to develop the customer service strategy which will look at how we engage overall.

3.2 What does the data or evidence tell us about the potential impact on diverse groups, and how is this supported by historic experience/data?

It does not tell us what the potential impact on diverse group would be, we are making some assumptions alongside feedback we have received from equality stakeholders. We have also made a commitment to review the equality impact as the proposal is implemented.

3.3 Are there any gaps in the data, for example across protected characteristics where information is limited or not available?

Yes, we do not hold data about our visitors protected characteristics.

3.4 How have we involved or considered the views of the people that could be affected?

We have presented the strategy to a working group which included representation from by CAB, VANS, Curo, Alliance Homes, Town and Parish councils, Big Worle and Age UK.

The strategy has also been out for public consultation.

3.5 What has this told us?

We understand what the issues with regards to digital in that it can negatively affect those with disabilities, with literacy issues, without access to minutes or data, for example. We also understand how some of the digital initiatives will bring benefit to other such as technology enabled care. We recognise that there are pockets of people who are digitally excluded, and we have this included in our strategy so that we take time to understand the issue in more depth and address it. We already have many initiatives within the council to address this, and a good example is included in the strategy document. Opportunity North Somerset is a council-led Employment and Skills support initiative for those with barriers to employment and at risk of digital exclusion. The support includes access to IT equipment and data, access to services providing digital skills of all level and for all ages.

The feedback from the public consultation has been adopted into the strategy wherever possible. Some feedback has already been actioned after the consultation closed (the upgrading of MyAccount). Examples of some of the feedback:

- The bulk of the comments were that there was no reference to the “how”. We have included reference to a digital action plan which sits behind the strategy which outlines what will be delivered, when and by whom.
- We have added more focus on accessibility and ensuring that we are tackling digital exclusion. A project team has already been set up to look at this, so this is in train.
- There was reference to difficulties using different browsers on the website. The digital team will update the advice and guidance on the corporate website
- It was suggested that there was a missing piece around data security. A new section has been added to fully cover this.
- There was mention of hybrid council meetings. These are already happening.
- There was mention of updating the MyAccount portal. This has been done since the consultation took place.
- There was a request to improve usability testing. This was done for the MyAccount portal and the digital team have a plan to do more in future. This is covered in the strategy.
- There was a request to involve Age UK. We already work closely with other relevant agencies and engage with them through Equality Groups.
- It was suggested that It should be a requirement of all planning consents for new housing and commercial developments that high speed fibre broadband connections should be installed to every property. This is covered within the strategy.
- A request was made to make the strategy more accessible. This will be done.
- There was some feedback around the training and skills of Library staff. This has been updated in the strategy.

3.6 Are there any gaps in our consultation, what are our plans for the future?

We have provided good opportunities for consultation but acknowledge that much of this has been done online through public consultation. We will continue to engage with groups to ensure that any gaps are addressed.

Section 4 – Assessment of Impact

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups?

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, = = Neutral, - = Negative

Impact Level

Impact type

Summary of Impact

	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
Disabled people		x						<p>Some disabled people may find it more difficult to access digital services .</p> <p>For example, people who have visual impairments, learning disabilities, non-neuro-typical, cognitive impairments or dementia, and some physical disabilities may face barriers in using digital-based services, and may have to rely on a carer or assistant to help them.</p> <p>However, we will continue to meet the needs for reasonable adjustments to our services when they are requested or identified as being needed.</p>
People from different ethnic groups			x					<p>Potentially language issues may impact ability to access services. We will continue to use an interpreter or have information provided in an alternative language to support customers whose first language is not English.</p>
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)			x					<p>May benefit some women / parents / carers who no longer need to find childcare to attend an appointment</p>
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people				x				

People on a low income	x				It may be that those on low income do not have access digital services. As part of the customer service strategy due in 2022 we are looking at all customer access channels and ensuring that telephone remains available and face to face for those who really need it. Free access to digital services will be made available to all through libraries
People in particular age groups	x				Older people may have a preference for a face-to-face or telephony service if they have been used to it. They may struggle to adapt to digital services. They may not have a device or broadband/data, they may not have the skills or the opportunity and motivation to learn digital skills. Some older people will have reduced dexterity which makes use of IT more challenging.
People in particular faith groups		x			
People who are married or in a civil partnership		x			
Transgender people		x			

Impact Level

Impact type

Summary of Impact

Impact Level					Impact type			Summary of Impact
H	M	L	N	+	=	-		
Other specific impacts, for example: carers, parents, impact on health and wellbeing, Armed Forces Community etc. Please specify: 3. Residents who are digitally excluded								As part of the strategy, the council is seeking to understand what digital exclusion looks like in North Somerset and to find ways to work with partners and communities to address issues identified locally.

Does this proposal have any potential Human Rights implications?

Yes **No**

If 'yes', please describe

<<Text here>>

Could this proposal have a Cumulative Impact with any other budget savings?

Yes **No**

This is an impact that appears when you consider services or activities together; a change or activity in one area may create an additional impact somewhere else

If 'yes', please describe?

<<Text here>>

Section 5 – Action Plan

Where you have listed that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	How will it be monitored?
1. Review impacts	Continued monitoring of feedback from initiatives carried out.
2. Residents who have an access need and require a reasonable adjustment will continue to have their access needs met through a range of methods of communication such as telephone and face to face appointments and the provision of accessible information where needed. Free computer access will be made available in libraries. Consult with disability groups to make sure services are accessible as possible and ensure appropriate assistance is offered. Ensure that online services meet required accessibility standards. Ensure that all council staff know about appropriate ways to help disabled residents to access their services via technology	Continuous feedback/monitoring

3. People on low income – mitigate lack of access to digital services through providing free access to the internet in libraries, as well providing access to Council phone support through libraries, and through digital inclusion initiatives to increase access to devices.

4. Older people – mitigate through provision of digital skills initiatives, access to digital support in the community, access to public PCs/WiFi in libraries, signposting to opportunities to get assistance and skills support

5. As part of the strategy, the council is seeking to understand what digital exclusion looks like in North Somerset and to find ways to work with partners and communities to address issues identified locally.

A working group has been set up to work on this so progress will be monitored through this group.

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

The impact of this proposal will continue to be monitored through feedback and monitoring of equality issues.

ICT Strategy



2021 - 2024



VERSION CONTROL

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Version	Date	Description
1.0	10/02/2021	Version presented to CLT 17 Feb
1.1	30/03/2021	Updates following discussion at CLT and other comments received
1.2	12/05/2021	Minor changes ready for scrutiny

FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR ASHLEY CARTMEN, EXECUTIVE MEMBER

In all aspects of our lives the Covid pandemic has redefined what we previously accepted as our normal daily routines. Technology has always allowed us to challenge our acceptance of barriers and limitations, whether these are the geographical boundaries of a school, the physical limitation of a length of a cable, or the artificial barrier of “office hours”. The response to the pandemic however created the driving force for us to accelerate a transformation programme in weeks that previously would have taken us years to complete, simply to allow us to maintain our services.

Adapting to the post-pandemic world requires us to be innovative and deliver services in a way that 12 months ago we would not have considered possible. In this respect, we rely on our technology to drive this transformation and how we will navigate this changing world is detailed in a trio of documents comprising this ICT Strategy, the Digital Strategy and the Information Strategy.

The success of our relationship with Agilisys and Liberata has allowed us to work through the immediate impacts of Covid, and I now look forward to us exploiting the opportunities created by our investment in a modern digital platform as we rise to meet the challenge ahead.



Contents

Executive Summary	4	Strategic Themes of the IT Strategy	15
Positioning the ICT Strategy	5	Supporting the Workforce	17
Managing Risk	6	Maintaining Security	18
The Security Challenge	7	Server Estate Management	19
Equality and Diversity	8	Infrastructure Management	20
Environmental Impact	9	Devices	21
Context	10	Applications	22
Strategic Priorities	11	Information Management	23
Value for Money	13	Delivering Projects	24
Focusing on our Customers	14	Delivering the Strategy	25
		Priority Outcomes for 2021/22	26

Executive Summary

The council has enjoyed an immensely successful relationship with its strategic partner, Agilisys since the launch of the Support Services Partnership in 2010. The ease with which we have been able to adapt to new working practices in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic in 2020 is testament to the infrastructure and systems implemented by Agilisys over the years.

Our contract with Agilisys specified an initial ten-year term with an allowance for an optional five-year extension which we exercised in 2015, meaning that the contract will run until September 2025. In planning ahead, we will need to commence work on preparing commercially for what comes after the contract following the local elections in May 2023.

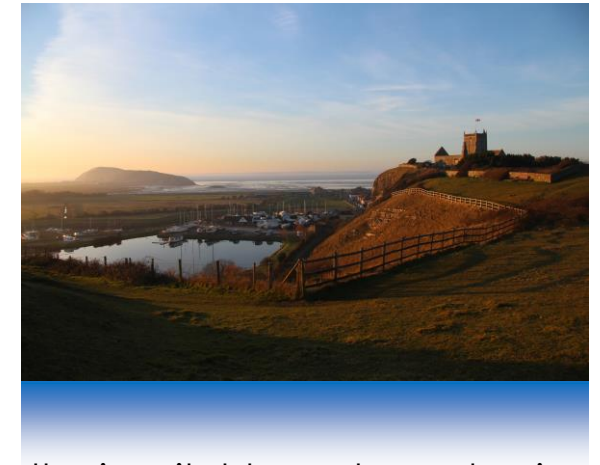
In technical terms though it is important that we start now to ensure that our IT infrastructure, whilst complex, is based on as mainstream and non-proprietary an approach as possible to ensure that we have alternatives for support post-2025.

In preparing in this way, there is no intention to be critical of our Agilisys colleagues without whom we would have been in a very different place in being able to respond to the Covid pandemic.

We will consolidate our status as a Microsoft-based organisation over the next three years by moving our server estate from an Agilisys private cloud into the Microsoft Azure public cloud, and make more extensive use of cloud-delivered services and supplier-hosted applications.

Whilst this IT strategy has been written at a lower level than is usual and focuses more on technology, it still recognises the primary need for our IT to support our workforce in driving business transformation as we seek to reduce costs in the inevitable post-pandemic period of savings to be made in the public sector.

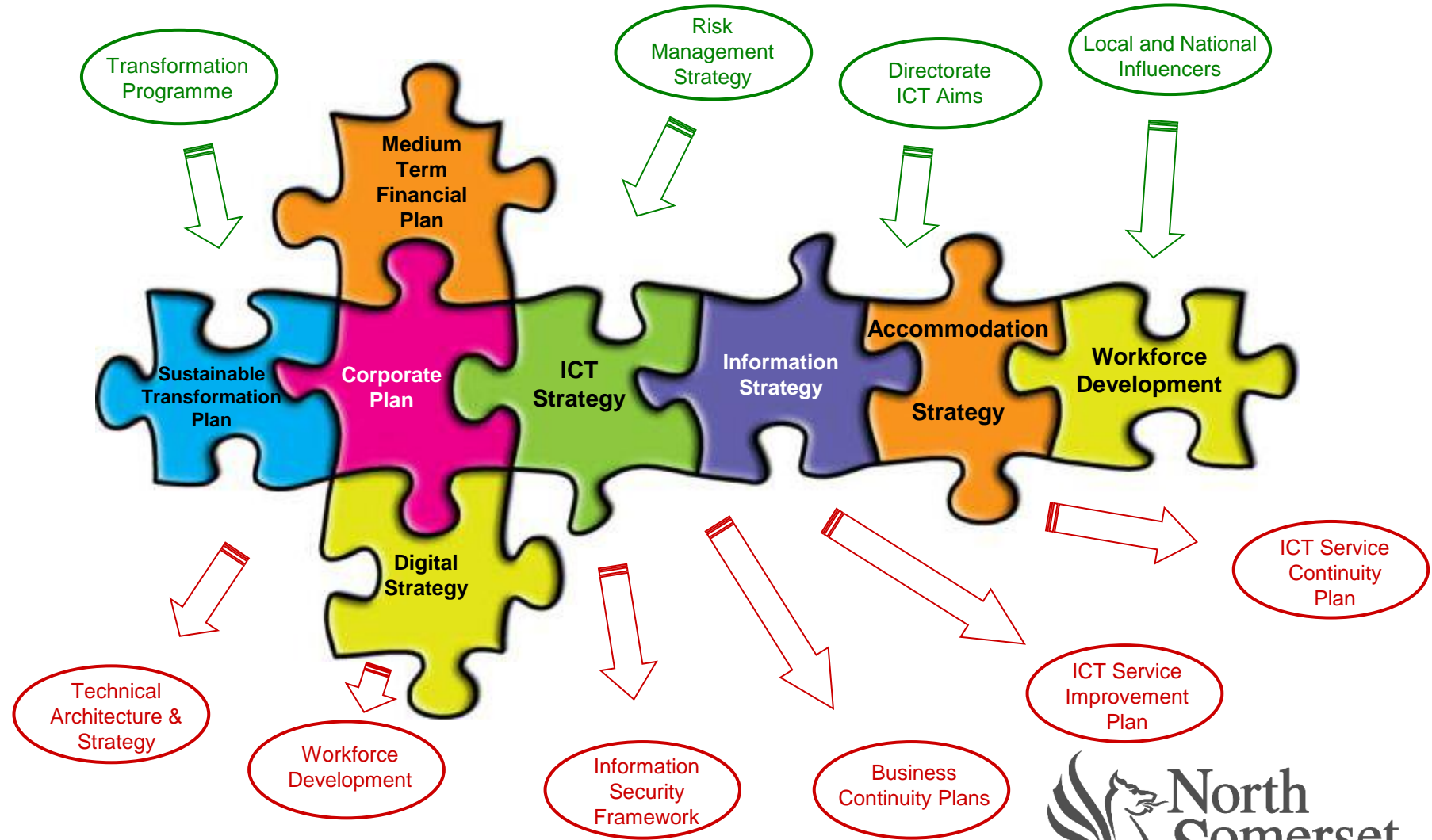
It is important to read this strategy alongside the Digital and Information Strategies which it supports.



Positioning the ICT Strategy

Whilst the ICT Strategy sets out the priorities for the development of ICT, it does not do so in isolation, instead forming one component of an overall set of documents which collectively provides the complete picture for the development of ICT across the council.

It is particularly important to consider the ICT Strategy alongside the Digital Strategy and the Information Strategy as there is a high degree of inter-reliance between these documents.



Managing Risk

We regularly monitor the key risks that could affect our ability to deliver services. In addition to a corporate risk register we maintain a **register of risks** that relates purely to the ICT service. This is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the controls we apply to mitigate risks are still appropriate.



The **ICT service continuity plan** is jointly owned by the council and Agilisys as our IT service partner. It highlights the level of resilience to failure that is designed in to the IT infrastructure and systems. The level of resilience must always be balanced against the cost of the investment required to protect against a particular risk. We use a well-established method of evaluating the likelihood of the risk materialising and the impact on our business if it does happen to determine if the investment is warranted.

Business continuity planning forms a key element of our service planning activities. This ensures that we are able to continue delivering services in the event of a failure of the technology on which we rely. Each service area is responsible for producing its own business continuity plan which may involve the use of manual processes, relocating the service to another building, or a combination of different measures.

The **ICT disaster recovery plan** is wholly maintained for us by Agilisys as this determines how our IT service partner will restore services in the event of a failure of the technology.



The Security Challenge



Sadly, whether they are aware of it or not, every user of technology is subject to regular intrusions that are intended at best to advertise unwanted products, and at worst to infiltrate IT systems, steal vital information or extort money. The public sector has seen a rapid increase in the number and sophistication of targeted attacks in recent years and this is expected only to get worse.

The response to the national pandemic and the subsequent move to a wholly mobile or remote workforce has increased the level of risk of intrusion into our systems and disclosure of information and we have had to react accordingly, both in terms of new security infrastructure and workforce training. We participate in local and national intelligence sharing forums and constantly review our approach to security.

We will continue to maintain a level of security around our systems appropriate to the nature of the data that we hold, at all times seeking to achieve the right balance between restrictions and functionality.



Equality and Diversity

We are committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities; we aim to create the best possible quality of life for people who live in, work in or visit the area.

North Somerset is an area of increasing diversity which brings positive benefits to us all. It is essential that we consider this diversity to ensure everyone has equal chances to live, work, learn and feel part of the community free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

We use equality impact assessments to identify the potential impact of our policies, services and functions on our residents and staff to make sure our services reflect the needs of the community in North Somerset. We will undertake an equality impact assessment as part of the consultation and ratification process of this strategy and this will be published as an Appendix to the strategy accordingly.

In progressing the digital journey it is important not to exclude those for whom the use of technology represents a challenge too far. Where we require our customers to use online services we will provide mediated help in our gateways and through our contact centre.



Environmental Impact



The council has declared a climate emergency and we are committed to developing policies that enable all people throughout North Somerset to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

The move to cloud-based computing services has driven up the energy consumed by data centres such that it now represents around 1% of the global electricity demand and that the IT industry as a whole will account for around 3.5% of the total global carbon footprint.

We will seek to reduce our consumption of energy by reducing our IT processing capacity in line with predicted demand. It is no longer acceptable to maintain an IT estate that can support the entire workforce through the early hours of the morning and across non-working days. We will work with our data centre providers to ensure that our utility model for IT can respond to daily peaks and troughs in demand so that we can turn off hardware when do not need it.

We will continue to use the remote working tools that have been firmly established throughout the pandemic to minimise the need to travel, both for our officers, and for our residents and customers when engaging with our services.

Context

This ICT strategy has been written to cover a pivotal period of challenge and transformation which is defined by:

- Response to the Covid-19 pandemic
- IT systems that were designed to support office-working must now support an almost wholly remote workforce;
- New financial pressures created by the pandemic loaded on top of the cost of care to support an ageing population, and children and young people;
- Increase in the number and sophistication of cyber attacks against the public sector
- The need to protect the environment and the climate for future generations;
- Realignment of responsibility for services to be determined and delivered at a community level;
- Spiralling demand for data storage and computing power
- Increase in service costs that hugely outstrip the rate of inflation;

- Inbuilt obsolescence in IT solutions requiring regular reinvestment;
- Emerging partnerships and stronger collaboration between agencies such as through the Integrated Care System;
- Increasing expectations of officers, residents, councillors and visitors of the quality and performance of our digital services



Strategic Priorities

Our vision is to deliver an **Open, Fairer and Greener North Somerset:**

- We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition for North Somerset;
- We aim to reduce inequalities and promote fairness and opportunity for everyone;
- We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.



To achieve this vision we will create priority actions based on our three key aims:

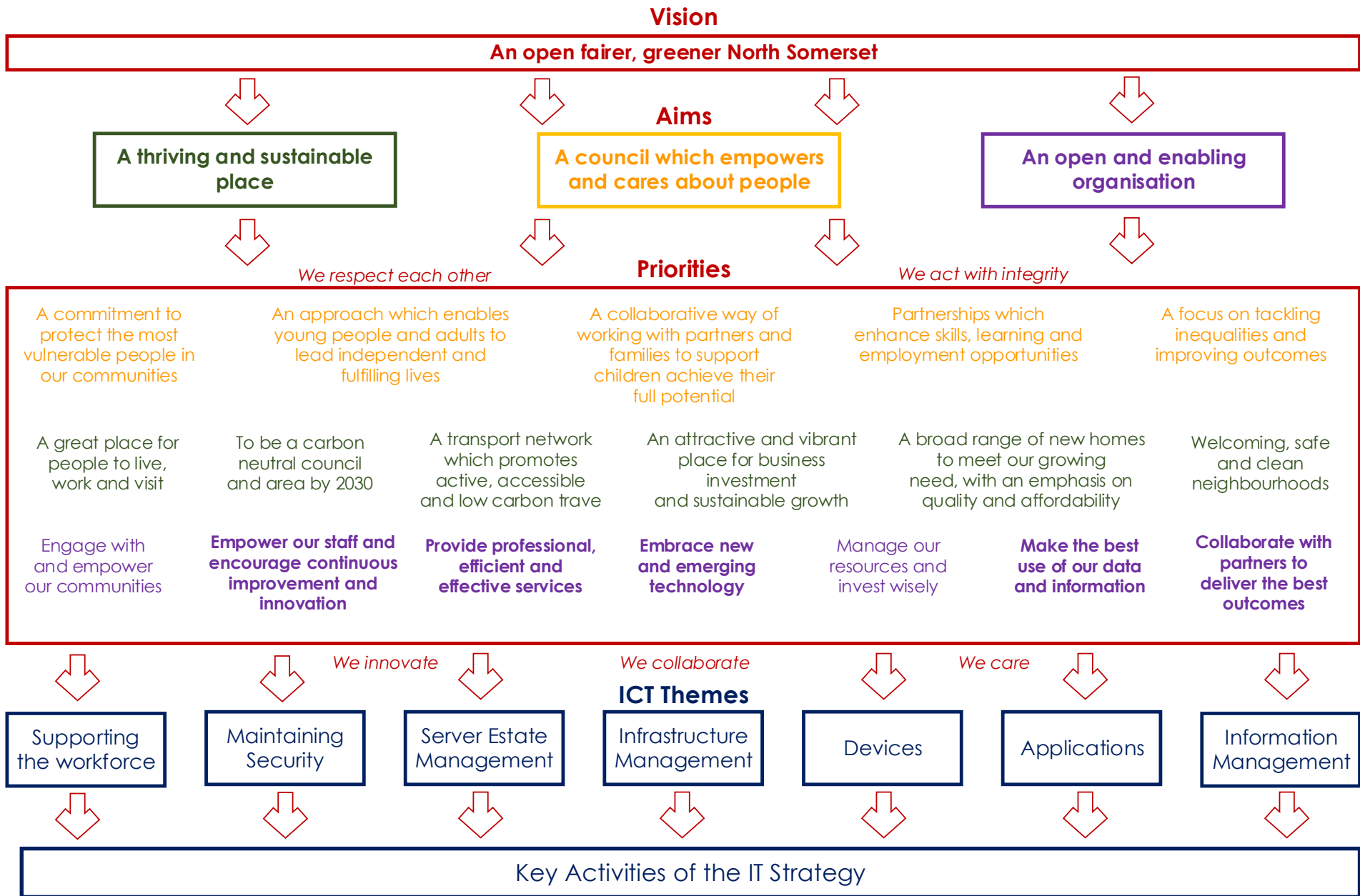
- A thriving and sustainable place
- A council which empowers and cares about people
- An open and enabling organisation

In addressing our priorities we will:

- Act with integrity
- Respect each other
- Innovate
- Care, and
- Collaborate

The ICT strategy contributes significantly and directly to our third priority, creating an open and enabling organisation, however through the activities of our service teams across the council and their reliance on technology to deliver those services, the strategy is both influenced by, and impacts on, all three priorities.



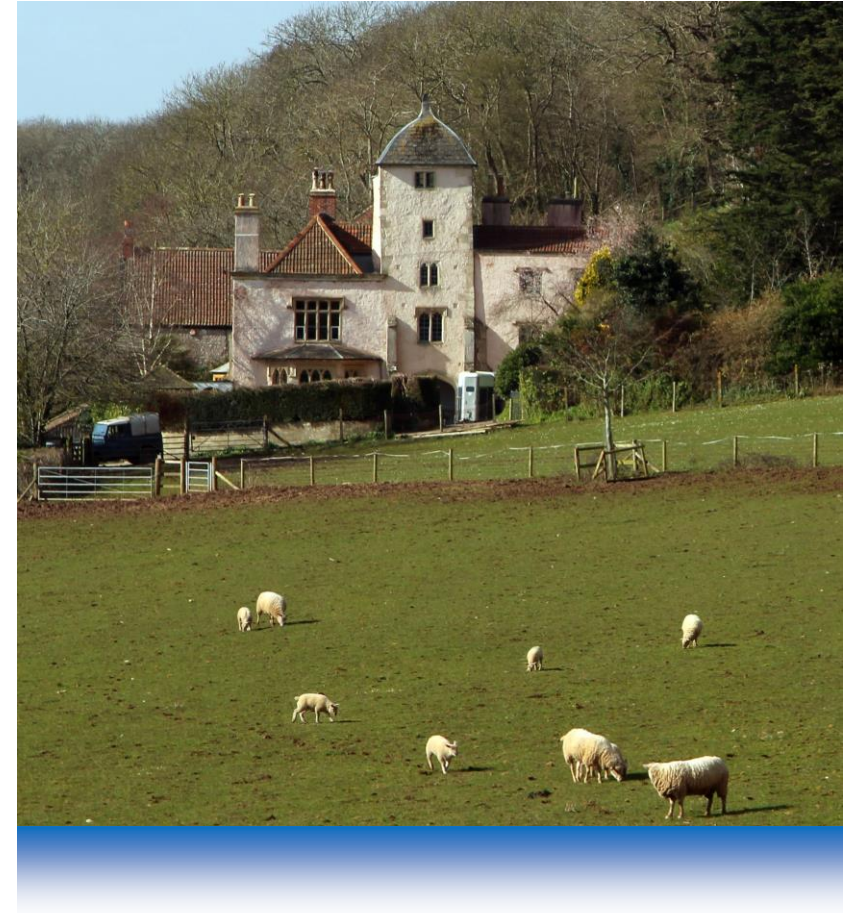


Value for Money

As a council we have a good track record in managing our finances well and we use investments in technology to unlock savings across the authority.

Our IT solutions will always be cost-effective and benchmark well with those of other unitary authorities of a similar size. We will size them so that they do not underperform, yet are not over resourced. We will demonstrate this through tools which highlight our processing, licensing and storage capacity as well as by going through a formal benchmarking exercise.

The investment we have made in building a scalable, modular cloud-services platform has allowed us to resell services to public sector partners thereby sharing costs and generating income. We will seek out additional opportunities to generate further income streams through this approach over the life of the strategy



Focusing on our Customers

Like all organisations, the ICT service exists solely to support its workforce in delivering both front line and back office services. This support extends far beyond the traditional role of simply being able to supply equipment and diagnose and repair faults. Helping organisations to evolve by using technology to find innovative and more efficient ways to deliver higher performing services is now a core role for all IT departments.

Of course, not every idea is a good idea, often for reasons that are sometimes not immediately apparent, and the ICT service has a core role to play in making sure that in our desire to exploit technology to better effect, we do not inadvertently expose ourselves to a higher level of risk than we should be prepared to accept. “No” is never an easy message to deliver, and so we will strive always to convert this into, “But you could do it this way instead”.

In the longer term it is vital that the IT service does not become detached from the front line service teams it supports and addresses issues in a practical and real-world manner centred on the needs of our officers, elected members, residents and visitors, all of whom must be treated with the most excellent standards of customer care.

Of course the influence of the ICT service extends far beyond the immediate workforce and elected members to the residents of North Somerset and its visitors, workers and volunteers. Much of this scope of activity is described more fully in the council's Digital Strategy.

We will evolve our ICT service to ensure that it supports and contributes to the aims of the Digital Strategy to:

- Make North Somerset a more digital place
- Improve the digital organisation
- Develop digital communities
- Encourage digital innovation



Strategic Themes of the ICT Strategy

Eight themes form the basis of the ICT Strategy and take account of the need to:

- Ensure that we can support the workforce in delivering professional, efficient and effective services;
- Get the basics right and deliver reliable and high-performing ICT systems for our customers;
- Deliver projects in a responsive and agile way;
- Support the residents of North Somerset and our wider customers by progressing the objectives of the Digital Strategy;
- Maintain confidentiality, integrity and availability of systems and information in accordance with statutory guidelines and industry best practices through the effective management and mitigation of risk;
- Refine a formal refresh programme for desktop/mobile ICT equipment and core systems infrastructure, supported by the centralisation of asset ownership and budget responsibility;



- Be innovative in seeking solutions that deliver improved services at lower cost;
- Extend collaboration tools to partners and other agencies to improve care services, reduce the level, perception and impact of crime, and participate in local, regional and national projects
- Maximise income through trading the use of our digital platform to other public sector bodies



- Satisfy the demand to deliver services “digitally by default” whilst ensuring that we do not inadvertently deny access to our services to those for whom more traditional methods are essential;
- Ensure that our officers possess the skills required to make the most effective use of the technology in which we invest;
- Review this strategy and the associated service delivery arrangements regularly, ensuring that strategic direction reflects the needs of the workforce, businesses and residents, and remains affordable during challenging economic times.



The seven strategic ICT themes that flow from these overriding requirements are:

1. Supporting our workforce
2. Maintaining security
3. Server estate management
4. Infrastructure management
5. Devices
6. Applications
7. Information Management
8. Delivering Projects

The eight themes are presented in greater detail on the following pages each with a series of key activities through which the ICT strategy will be implemented.



Supporting the Workforce

Aim

Operational practices changed overnight in response to the Covid pandemic and for the council, this forced a rapid acceleration of a long-held strategy to mobilise the workforce. Working at such pace diminished the ability to tune the performance of the systems and, in addition, some IT services could not adequately be replicated across a wholly remote workforce.



Our short term activities will therefore be centred around tuning the infrastructure and making sure that the IT systems fully support the workforce as it adapts to a new life away from the office. We also need to make sure that we have adequate training material in

place, particularly for those systems that were deployed at pace in anticipation of, or in reaction to, the need for the workforce to operate away from the office.

Key activities

The operational ICT service will be improved through a range of activities including:

- Reducing the latency experienced in real time applications such as Microsoft Teams
- Giving our partners and other agencies outside of the council access to our collaboration tools
- Making mobile equipment easier to use in the field
- Improving the performance of wireless networks in the office environment, particularly for roaming
- Providing access to information and suitable tools to highlight problems on home networks and broadband connections
- Enabling the use of a wider range of peripheral devices like Bluetooth which do not create information governance issues
- Enhancing the range of training material available to officers and elected members

Maintaining Security

Aim

The residents of North Somerset must have confidence in our ability to ensure the integrity, availability and confidentiality of the personal information we process. We therefore undertake to have robust systems and processes in place to protect information from inappropriate disclosure.

Cyber attacks are increasingly becoming more sophisticated and are often professional, well-resourced operations, sometimes involving nation states.

We will maintain our investment in security appliances as well as monitoring tools to provide visibility of what is happening on our networks in real time. We will also continue to invest in our final line of defence, our workforce, to ensure that they have the knowledge and confidence to recognise a fraudulent attempt to gain access to our systems and information and know how to respond.



Key activities

Key work we will undertake to enhance the security of our systems includes:

- Submit annually to external review through the PSN assurance process and whatever follows once the PSN is decommissioned;
- Achieve Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation;
- Enhance the training material available to the workforce and elected members and make refresher courses mandatory
- Continue to participate actively in local intelligence sharing groups such as SW WARP
- Conduct peer review of information security management system
- Move towards certificate-based authentication to enhance security at the network edge
- Refine and improve cyber incident management response plans

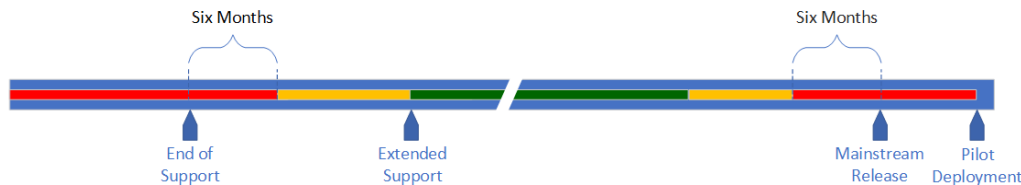
Server Estate Management

Aim

For many years we have located the majority of our server estate in the cloud and this strategy further strengthens that approach with a commitment to move infrastructure from private to public cloud.

Being a largely Microsoft-based organisation, we will seek to maximise the use of the Azure environment to leverage additional benefits such as *disaster recovery as a service*.

We aim to keep our retained server estate operating in the centre of the lifecycle sweet spot, neither at the forefront of new technology, nor racing against end of support deadlines to decommission.



Where we can, we will move towards managed services, providing an evergreen, fully patched estate so that we can concentrate on driving future transformation rather than committing resources to refresh constantly what we have already deployed.

Key activities

Key work we will undertake on our server estate will include:

- Migration of the existing estate to the Microsoft Azure environment
- Review of assets supporting critical services and deployment of disaster recovery as a service
- Improve predictive analysis of impending failure of assets
- Seek supplier-hosted managed services for our major back office applications
- Realise energy savings by reducing server capacity during periods of low demand.



Infrastructure Management

Aim

The national pandemic has taught us that organisations that are tied to their offices by systems and infrastructure will struggle to adapt to the new world of remote and mobile working we are now likely to see. Our telephone system is a good example of infrastructure that no longer supports the way we need to work. In support of our cloud-first approach, we will therefore seek to move the legacy infrastructure that is not already cloud-based to an infrastructure as a service (IaaS) model.

Where we are required to maintain local infrastructure we will continue our preference for mainstream suppliers to facilitate easier support through contract transition.

We will ensure that we maintain capacity and flexibility to innovate yet retain the security that our information assets require. Our networks must support real time applications across the entire workforce without experiencing lag and jitter commonly associated with first generation conferencing applications.

Key activities

Key activities we will undertake to improve the performance of our local infrastructure will include:

- Replacement of the existing IP telephony platform with a cloud-based service similar to that which we use successfully in our contact centres;
- Upgrade the core, distribution and access layers of our network to provide the capacity required of modern applications;
- Maintain our compliance with security standards including PCI DSS and PSN and add Cyber Essentials Plus;
- Implement a managed post and print service using a commercial supplier to reduce costs and improve information security.
- Replace and simplify the remote access VPN, improving the functionality for mobile devices without sacrificing security.



Devices

Aim

The choice of devices for our workforce to use is driven by each individual's workstyle but will largely fall into one of the following categories:

- Static desk-based
- Mobile
- Field worker

We will seek to deploy Windows Virtual Desktops on thin client, desk-based and laptop computers where possible, only using thick clients where there is a need to run applications that do not suit the virtual desktop environment.

We support an approach of 'Use Your Own Device' where a personal computer can be used to host a virtual desktop session, however we consider 'Bring Your Own Device', where a personal computer is physically connected to our networks, to be a step too far.

For mobile devices we have historically used Apple technology, however this will be reviewed as part of this strategy to ensure that we are not missing opportunities to transform and innovate.



Key activities

Key activities we will undertake to improve the performance of the devices we use will include:

- Improve the performance of the virtual desktop environment for real time applications so that we can reduce the ratio of thin client : thick client devices from 70:30 to 80:20;
- **Maintain the Windows 10 virtual desktop as an evergreen platform on which to work;**
- Review mobile device policy in light of inter-operability developments in recent years and the introduction of new applications, particularly for elected members;
- **Formalise a centralised refresh programme for assets based on a realistic, real-world approach that extends device life without compromising security or performance;**
- Improve the usability of mobile devices by reviewing the restrictions enforced through the mobile device management platform;
- **Establish formal accessibility criteria for all ICT projects**



Applications

Aim

As an authority we will maintain our position of utilising commercial off the shelf products rather than developing applications ourselves to use as major back office systems. We will undertake systems integration work however using stand tools available to us such as through Microsoft 365.

Where possible we will seek to procure applications that are hosted as a service by the supplier to ensure that these applications and the infrastructure on which they are located remain evergreen and incur a minimal support overhead.

We will seek to avoid the need to duplicate information when selecting products and a strict governance framework will be in place to consider any procurement outside of agreed strategic approaches.

Our corporate approach to lifecycle management will ensure that we have projects in place to replace and upgrade applications in a controlled manner.

We will insist on a viable disaster recovery and service continuity plan being available as part of any procurement exercise.

Key activities

Key activities we will undertake to improve the management of the application estate include:

- Establish a managed refresh programme with a rolling five year view to allow us to budget appropriately for system replacements;
- Deploy licence tracking tools to ensure that we have the optimum number of licences available for each application;
- Testing continuity and recovery plans for each major application on a regular basis;



Information Management

Aim

Outside of the workforce, information is the most valuable asset in our possession and the council's ambitions for managing its information assets are described fully in the Information Strategy.

Our IT systems must allow us to understand fully the information that we hold and be able to locate it and draw it down easily. It must also alert us to when it is no longer appropriate to keep information.

We are in the process of migrating all of the legacy information we hold into a structured environment from where we will apply automated tools to classify, index and store information going forwards.

It is critical that in a world where public services are delivered by a partnership of agencies we are able to collaborate and share information. We will therefore be seeking to open up our M365 environment to improve the experience of delivering services in conjunction with outside agencies whilst making sure that our information governance obligations are properly met.

Key activities

Key activities we will undertake to improve the way we manage and use information assets include:

- Complete the work to replace the legacy extranet with an updated solution based on SharePoint Online;
- Include the ability to create multi-agency teams in our M365 environment;
- Migration of unstructured and semi-structured information currently held in files and folders on shared network drives into a structured Microsoft environment;
- Development of a knowledge management platform to allow us to extract more value from the information we hold;
- Development of tools to improve the flow of information across the council and with partners whilst significantly reducing the quantity of email in use;
- Deploy intelligent analysis tools to categorise and index information we need to retain and alert us to that which we should destroy.



Delivering Projects

Aim

As we evolve as a council and adapt to delivering services in new ways we are seeing a high demand for ICT development activity. We need to improve our ability to deliver IT projects in a more agile way and work to reduce the lead times that we currently experience.



Whilst we have a good track record of delivering major projects successfully, we struggle to manage a pipeline of over a hundred smaller projects particularly in the context of ever-changing priorities. We need to strengthen our governance processes as well as improve the transparency of the activities that take place so that our customers can obtain a higher degree of confidence in our ability to deliver.

Key activities

We will improve the delivery of our projects by:

- Working with our Agilisys colleagues to explore ways to increase project resources;
- Creating a category of requests that can be identified during a triage process of being quick-win, easy to deliver activities that do not need to enter the project process and can be fast-tracked for rapid delivery;
- Reviewing the project governance arrangements to improve the visibility of progress through the system, involving customers at each stage.



Delivering the Strategy

Our challenge in implementing the ICT strategy is to make best use of over-stretched resources to deliver maximum benefit to our residents, customers, members and officers. Clearly in the current climate, the necessity to develop new ways of doing things across all service areas is the number one priority and ICT has a significant role to play in this respect.

The budget to fund the activities of the ICT strategy will come from six sources:

1. The Support Services Contract in which a number of days of development activity has been agreed in advance
2. Funding which is contributed by our partners to joint development projects
3. The elements of our capital budget allocated to projects with ICT components
4. Elements of the revenue budget that our service departments use for ICT-related activity
5. Invest to save cases
6. Grant funding from external projects and initiatives



In determining the relative priorities of projects that are competing for resources it is essential to ensure that we maintain a fair and transparent process of negotiation within the governance bodies.

The ICT strategy and its activities are subject to our internal audit processes as well as scrutiny from members and the rigours of normal service monitoring. These activities ensure that the strategy remains appropriate to the needs of the authority and its customers and is being implemented in an appropriate and timely manner.



Priority Outcomes for 2021/22

The IT strategy will be measured for success on an annual basis at the end of the financial year against a number of priority outcomes defined at the beginning of the year.

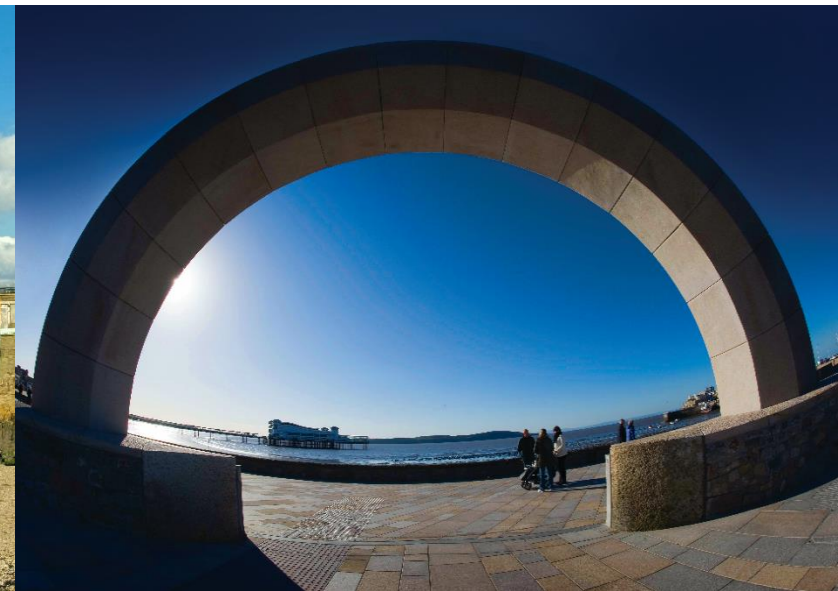
Given the challenges created by the pandemic, priorities will initially be focused on activities which allow the council to innovate and deliver services in very different and more efficient ways.

The immediate priority actions to be delivered are:

- Allowing third parties to participate in our Microsoft Teams environment so that we can collaborate on all aspects of service delivery
- Replace our telephone system with one which supports a remote workforce
- Improving the performance of real time applications across the estate
- Deliver a new program of information governance and information security training
- Improve the usability of systems by revising the constraints that we enforce on mobile devices
- Migrate our server estate to the Microsoft Azure environment
- Implement disaster recovery as a service for critical systems
- Upgrade the core layer of our local area network
- Migrate to a commercial post and print service for our outbound white mail
- Deploy licence tracking tools to realise savings from unused but licensed software
- Improve our ability to deliver small scale IT projects
- Conduct a further cyber incident management exercise to build on the experience of previous lessons learnt
- Achieve Cyber Essentials accreditation
- Replace our committee papers system and the means by which papers are distributed electronically to elected members



Information Strategy



2021 - 2024



Foreword by Councillor Ashley Cartman, Executive Member

Similar to most organisations, having reliable access to quality information is critical to the basis of every decision we take. In order to make good decisions, we need to ensure that the information used to support those decisions is as rich, comprehensive and as accurate as we can make it. We also need to make sure that we can find it and that when we need it, it is accessible but only to those who should be able to see it.

As a public body we operate in an environment of transparency where there is an increasing level of expectation that we will simply publish information without waiting to be asked. This requires us to know in a great level of detail what we hold, where to find it and how to link it together so that it creates a complete picture.

Like many, the challenge we face is not to lose sight of the principles and practices of good information management in the face of the sheer quantity of information we generate in the modern day. Our investment in technology places us in an ideal situation to move forward in the post-Covid period, allowing our officers and members access to information wherever they happen to be working, and enshrine trust in the eyes of our residents that we can look after their personal information with the care it requires.



Contents

1. Executive Summary	4	9. I have the knowledge and skills to manage information	18
2. Positioning the Information Strategy	5	10. I know what is expected of me when creating information	21
3. Equality and Diversity	6	11. I recognise the implications and risks of keeping information that we no longer use	24
4. Consultation and Engagement	7	12. I have the IT I need to manage information	27
5. Summary of Principles	8	13. I understand the value of information we hold and how to exploit it	30
6. I know what information we've got and where it is stored	9	14. Delivering the Strategy	32
7. I collaborate with others and share knowledge and information appropriately	12		
8. I know how to protect information and manage it appropriately	15		

Executive Summary

In this digital world we are continually reminded of the need to have high quality information at our fingertips. The post-Covid world we inhabit will require us to operate very differently and we will rely even more on having efficient access to the information we hold to direct our strategic decision making, and to operate our services as efficiently as possible.

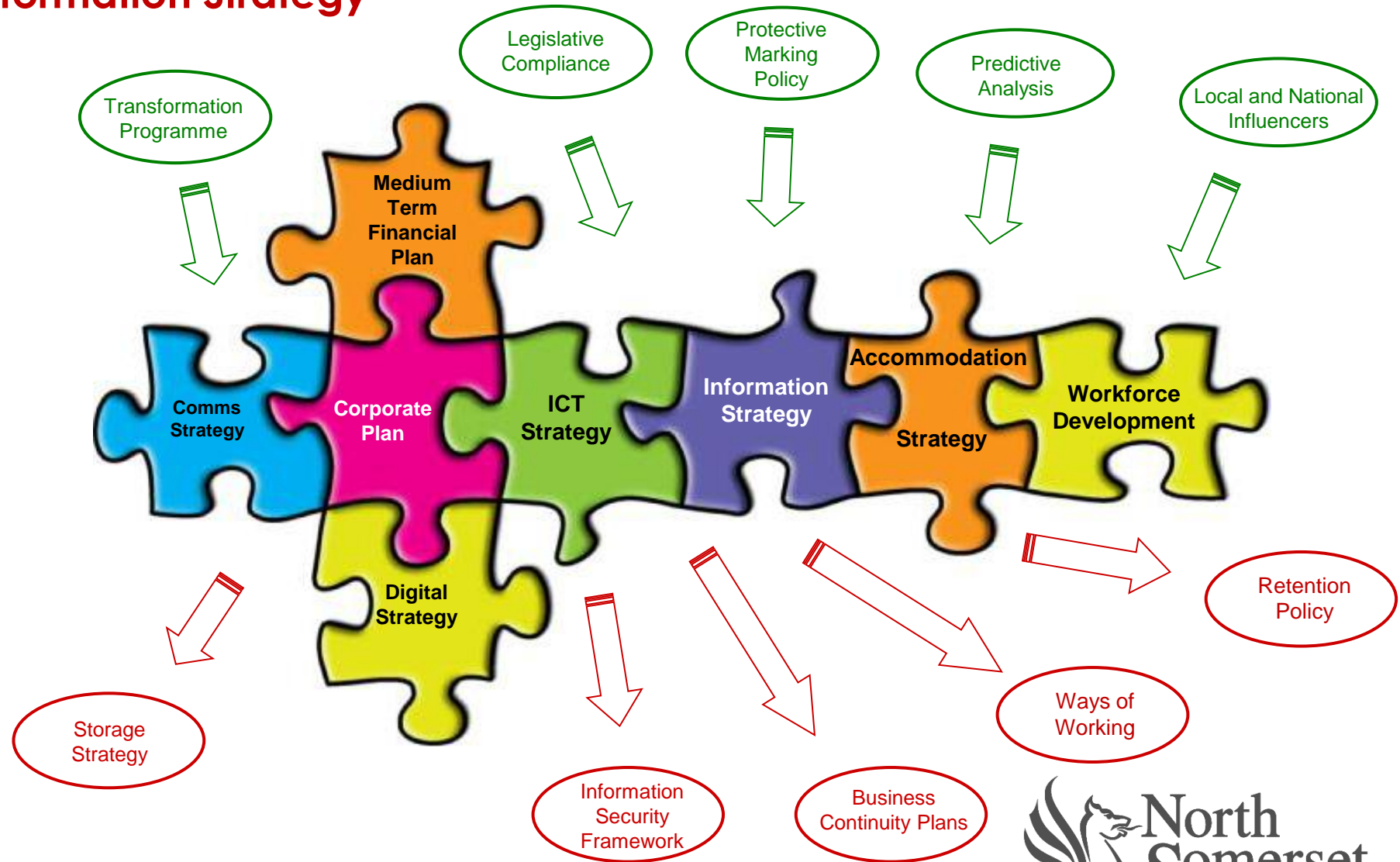
This strategy outlines the steps we will take that are necessary to improve the way we manage and use information. It introduces eight principles through which we will invest in technology and develop the key skills needed in the workforce over the next three years.

We recognise that we have a journey to make and it is one which will not be completed overnight, however some significant steps have already been taken, particularly in relation to some of the tools and technologies available to us.



Positioning the Information Strategy

Whilst the Information Strategy sets out the priorities for improving the way we manage our information, it does not do so in isolation, instead forming one component of an overall set of strategies which collectively provides the complete picture for the development of information management across the council.



Equality and diversity

We are committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities; we aim to create the best possible quality of life for all people who live in, work in or visit the area.

North Somerset is an area of increasing diversity which brings positive benefits to us all. It is essential that we consider this diversity to ensure everyone has equal chances to live, work, learn and feel part of a community free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

We use the information we hold to identify where we need to intervene or do something differently, and to understand the potential impact of our policies, services and functions on our residents and staff to make sure our services reflect the needs of our diverse community.



Consultation and engagement

We are committed to ensuring that our organisation is open and engaging and that our residents and stakeholders are empowered to have their say in decision making.

Access to information underpins our commitment to ensure:

...a menu of opportunities for residents and communities to engage at a level which suits them best. Wide-ranging informative and accessible communications with residents. Consistent, timely and good quality engagement in decisions, service design and financial planning. Best practice has become common practice



Summary of principles

1. I know what information we've got and where it is stored
2. I collaborate with others and share knowledge and information appropriately
3. I know how to protect information appropriately
4. I have the knowledge and skills to manage information
5. I know what is expected of me when creating information
6. I recognise the implications and risks of keeping information that we no longer use
7. I have the IT I need to manage information
8. I understand the value of the information we hold and how to exploit it



I know what information we've got and where it is stored

Providing officers and members with **the right tools** for managing information and **training** them in their use will help everyone to know **what information** is available to them, **why it's being held**, **where it is stored** and **what we do with it**.



We will:

- Reduce the volumes of information that we hold, only keeping information where there is a business need to do so, and in line with statutory requirements;
- Increase staff awareness of the information that they create, e.g. avoiding unnecessary emails and re-using information to avoid duplication;
- Increase the use of shared corporate repositories enabling quicker responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and improving our understanding of what we hold and what can be made available to the public. This increases our ability to be open and transparent;
- Maintain our knowledge of the information held by the council through the **Information Asset Register (IAR)**;
- Ensure that appropriate retention schedules are applied and followed. We will securely dispose of information when we no longer require it;
- Find effective solutions for managing our paper holdings as well as our electronic information. Many areas of the council continue to hold some information on paper and certain parts of the business rely heavily on paper files;
- Maintain an electronic archive, making sure that we apply appropriate destruction dates, indexes and other relevant metadata, for efficient retrieval; and
- Recognise that websites and other online systems form part of our information resource and so also need to be effectively managed.

Current actions:

1. Review the Information Asset Register originally created in 2018.
2. Map information assets against physical assets so that we can understand where our information is stored
3. Review retention schedule against the Information Asset Register
4. Relocate information we hold from the existing Agilisys private cloud into the Microsoft public cloud
5. Complete the interface between Teams (SharePoint) and Windows Explorer
6. Review e-training and incorporate content into an online portal
7. Inspections of the council's remaining archive stores.
8. Explore options for transfer of records archive
9. Communications plan delivered through Knowledge articles and 365 collaboration tools

Recognised Omissions to be Designed:

- Electronic storage monitoring tool to provide management information for structured and unstructured data
- Structured hard copy file storage review
- Records management training
- Behaviour Campaigns
- Operational governance and charging mechanism
- Datashare / publication scheme



I collaborate with others to share knowledge and information appropriately

We work openly and collaboratively, sharing information and knowledge with colleagues, partners, stakeholders and the public as appropriate. Information and knowledge are key service and corporate assets and we have a responsibility to share and re-use data to release value and maximise benefits.



We advocate:

- a risk-based approach to sharing to ensure information and knowledge are shared responsibly;
- active sharing and re-use of information to meet service need;
- sharing of appropriate information with the public to meet government commitments on transparency and accountability, facilitating the re-use of data to increase economic and social value.

We need to have a clearer picture of information sharing activities. **We must:**

- maintain common data sharing principles and agreements, and work to embed these across the council;
- maintain a clear picture of with whom we need to share information, such as stakeholders, partners or suppliers, in a responsible way;
- develop a clear picture of where information and knowledge resides and flows across the organisation.

Current actions:

- Review all of our information sharing and processing agreements and map results against the information asset register
- Corporate Business Intelligence Team developing the skills to make use of advanced collaboration tools such as Flow and PowerBI to improve data flow around the council and with partners.
- Business Intelligence developing resident collaboration tools for information and data sharing.
- Extend the functionality of Microsoft Teams so that we can include external agencies in our virtual teams, sharing files with them as appropriate and working in collaboration on policies and plans.
- Strengthen planned initiatives for open data.
- Promote the use of public data on the website via the Publication Scheme.

Recognised Omissions to be Designed:

- Develop an online portal for customers to access and manage their own personal data.



I know how to protect information appropriately

We need to maintain a proactive, planned, proportionate approach to risk and security. Our response to managing risk should be appropriate and balanced with business need, enabling staff to do their jobs whilst safeguarding information. We need to emphasise that protecting information does not mean that we cannot share it and sharing information with our partners can often be the right thing to do.



We will:

- Monitor compliance with security policies, ensuring that we adhere strictly to procedures for handling breaches, and that lessons learnt are incorporated into working practices;
- Support secure information sharing internally and with external partners and providers, whilst ensuring we adopt a proportionate approach to sharing between trusted domains;
- Explore secure ways of working with new technologies, such as social media and collaborative work spaces, ensuring that staff are informed about their responsibilities when using them, both in the office and at home, and are held to account.
- Continue to assess and revise those technical solutions which are already in place for protecting information, particularly where these mechanisms hinder the business process;
- Build information requirements into business continuity procedures, by identifying those assets which are business critical and protecting them accordingly;
- Continue to ensure that each information asset has an owner who has been adequately trained in good information management practices;
- Ensure alignment with government strategy on cyber security;
- Give staff the tools to protect information and manage it appropriately;
- Provide thorough training to ensure all staff understand the importance of protecting information appropriately

Current actions:

- Review the Information Asset Register originally created in 2018.
 - Map information assets against physical assets so that we can understand where our information is stored.
 - Map data flows so that we can understand how our data traverses the various networks.
 - Ensure that information is encrypted at rest and in transit where appropriate.
 - Provide targeted data protection training to identified information asset owners as well as general training to the workforce at large.
 - Identify critical information assets and ensure that these are adequately protected and can be recovered within an acceptable time frame to an acceptable point.
 - Regularly review accounts and permissions to ensure that access to information assets remains appropriate
 - Monitor cyber security intelligence agencies to be aware of current and emerging threats and respond appropriately
- Policy review
 - Review of data transfer/sharing protocols and methods
 - Behaviour Campaigns
 - Regular IT Health Checks
 - Maintain PSN assurance



I have the knowledge and skills to manage information

We will ensure that all officers have the knowledge, skills and support they need to manage information and use it appropriately. We will build Information Management capability within the organisation and delivery partners through:

- a range of development opportunities;
- a culture that recognises IM skills;
- the development of information owners;
- continuing to strengthen the business intelligence and insight discipline within the council.



We will provide development opportunities to ensure that:

- Information Management awareness is reflected in the council's induction process and refreshed regularly;
- Staff have the skills to use new technology, such as collaboration tools, to their maximum potential;
- Staff develop the IM skills appropriate for their roles through training and guidance which is relevant to their responsibilities;
- All staff have completed the mandatory e-learning training in respect of information security, records management, freedom of information and data protection
- Staff are clear on their responsibilities in relation to information management;
- Managers take a lead in cultivating good IM practice and knowledge sharing activity which staff can emulate;
- Directorate and service area champions are encouraged to promote good IM and knowledge-sharing practices.

We will generate a culture of good IM practices by:

- Working to create an environment where IM and business intelligence skills are recognised and valued, and seen as core skills within the council;
- Working towards recognising IM skills and behaviours in the performance management process. Similarly poor IM skills or behaviours will be addressed and training needs identified.

We will strengthen the business intelligence discipline within the council by:

- Ensuring that staff know whom to contact when they require advice and guidance on Information Management and ensure that help is readily available. This support will be provided by the Information Management Team in respect of governance and compliance, and the Business Intelligence Team in respect of extracting best value from the council's data assets;
- Build on the skills and knowledge of staff working in IM-related roles, providing opportunities for sharing knowledge and best practice
- Work with service areas to ensure that the importance of essential IM and Business Intelligence roles, including that of Information Asset Owners, is understood;
- Ensure that our network of Information Asset Owners has the tools needed to support them and have completed the necessary training;
- Raise awareness and facilitate the use of networked sources of support and guidance;
- Encourage staff and services to involve experts early when managing specific types of information, so that it is used appropriately and maximum benefit is derived from its use



I know what is expected of me when creating information

We will ensure that officers fully consider the implications of creating new data sets, particularly when gathering personal information and are guided by best practice. Our officers will understand the implications of continuing to retain information long after it has ceased to be useful, or keeping information that cannot easily be identified and retrieved when we need it. We are mindful that storage is a valuable commodity and we must be efficient in the storage space we consume.



We will instil an understanding that:

- Officers are not at liberty to create their own private sources of personal information that do not appear on the Information Asset Register;
- Officers need to take a wider view when collecting information and consider in particular who else may benefit from the data that we are proposing to capture and who may ask for it in the future;
- Personal information we process does not belong to us, it belongs to the individual data subjects and we must engender trust in those data subjects by demonstrating that we can manage it appropriately.



In addition, we will ensure that officers:

- Understand what is classed as an information asset;
- Know where to store the various different types of information they use and which tools are best suited to manage that information;
- Are provided the information that allows them to track the quantity and cost of storage consumed at an individual, team and directorate level;
- Understand what to keep, how long to keep it for *and how to ensure that it can be identified, retrieved and erased later*;
- Can identify when information constitutes a formal council record;
- Understand the obligations with which they are required to comply under the various legislative frameworks including the Data Protection Act, the GDPR, the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations as well as under statutory guidance such as highlighted in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

I recognise the implications and risks of keeping information that we no longer use

We recognise that if we don't revise our data retention practices to reduce the overall data held, and by extension the data that is backed up, we face a huge sanction risk for noncompliance as well as the impacts associated with an eventual data breach.



We recognise that we have a problem in this area which we will address by:

- Acknowledging that this is a challenge which cannot be addressed as part of business as usual activity and which will require the principles of breakthrough thinking to address
- Recognising that the problem has been 20 years in the making and will not be resolved overnight
- Ensuring that we apply suitable meta-data that fully describes each new record we create including the date by which it can be erased
- Moving all of the unstructured electronic data we hold into a new structured environment we will create using the tools which we have already deployed across the organisation
- Allowing flexibility for services to keep information where they find it easy to access rather than be forced to comply with the restrictions of a single, central corporate record management system
- Linking our currently disconnected retention policy to tools which will automatically apply the policy across our records
- Revising our approach to storing physical records to one which does not encourage uncontrolled record growth

In addition, we will ensure that officers:

- Are given the training they need to ensure they understand the value of the controls we will put in place to prevent the growth of redundant information
- Always apply realistic retention dates to records
- Contribute to the analysis of legacy records and help identify those which we should no longer hold however we recognise that we require automated tools to assist us in the process of reducing the information we retain.



I have the IT that I need to manage information

We will ensure that all staff have the technology they need to support the good practice and behaviours outlined in this strategy. We will achieve this by:

- utilising a common IT infrastructure and reducing down the amount of different software, systems and websites used in the council;
- ensuring that IM requirements are key to IT decision making;
- giving staff access to appropriate technology and providing appropriate information repositories that maximise data transparency and sharing whilst minimising cost.



We will:

- Further develop the common ICT infrastructure to make it easier for staff to access, re-use and share information and collaborate within and outside the council;
- Provide an ICT platform that is secure and provides a sufficient level of protection to safeguard information assets;
- Further develop/replace software systems to facilitate easier remote working and better customer self-service;
- Continue to develop opportunities to share services.

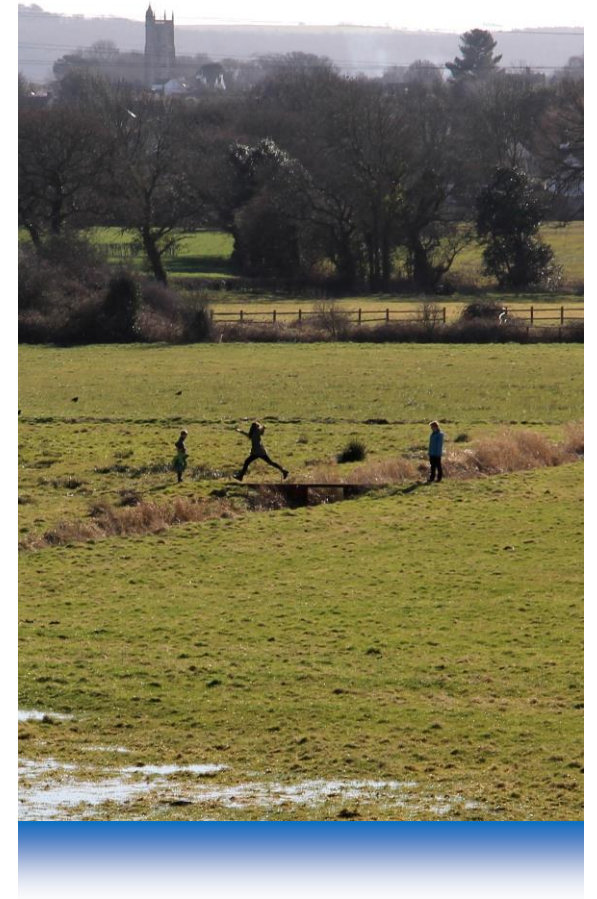
The council's ICT will:

- Enable staff to manage, use and share information and knowledge;
- Support effective search, retrieval and re-use;
- Support the needs of business and adapt to changing requirements
- Enable us to embrace the opportunities presented by using new technologies, such as social media, securely for business purposes;
- Support flexible, remote and collaborative working;
- Incorporate information assurance and cyber security requirements enabling us to protect our information;
- Support compliance with the GDPR;
- Provide reliable management information to inform decision making.



The application of our Records Management Policy and use of electronic data repositories will provide the following benefits:

- Staff should know what information we have and where it is stored;
- Information can be shared where appropriate and re-used;
- It supports us in being transparent to the public;
- It reduces the risk of duplication - a single copy of a document is held centrally, rather than multiple copies held locally;
- The latest version of a document is easily identifiable
- Appropriate retention and disposal rules can be applied;
- Information is stored securely and protected via access controls;
- Information is not lost when a member of staff moves on;
- Using the prescribed corporate and service specific repositories reduces costs.



I understand the value of the information we hold and know how to exploit it

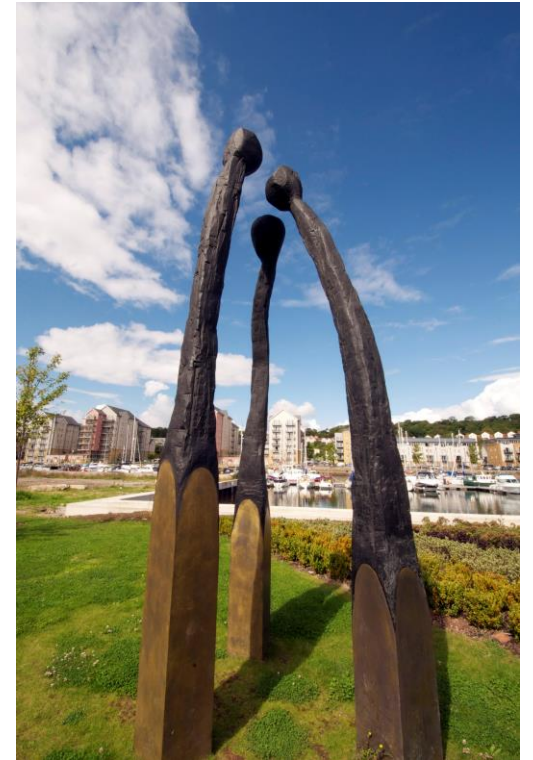
We view data as a valuable asset.

- We will ensure that we exercise good data governance that helps staff to use the right data in the right way, to generate business insights correctly and take sound business decisions.
- We will look to integrate and automate systems and data flows to ensure accuracy, to provide holistic and intelligent reporting of data that provides the organisation and others with timely returns, information and insight.
- We will ensure that that the council identifies and protects its knowledge and data assets.



We will:

- Reinvest some of the money we currently spend on storage and maintaining legacy systems in the development of knowledge management using the latest generation of tools and technologies
- Ensure that our data is of a requisite quality
- Look to reduce down multiple versions of the same data
- Identify the root causes of data challenges and seek to address these.
- Embed a culture of ownership, control and accountability for our data sets.
- Maximise data sharing, analysis and reporting to increase business intelligence and insight



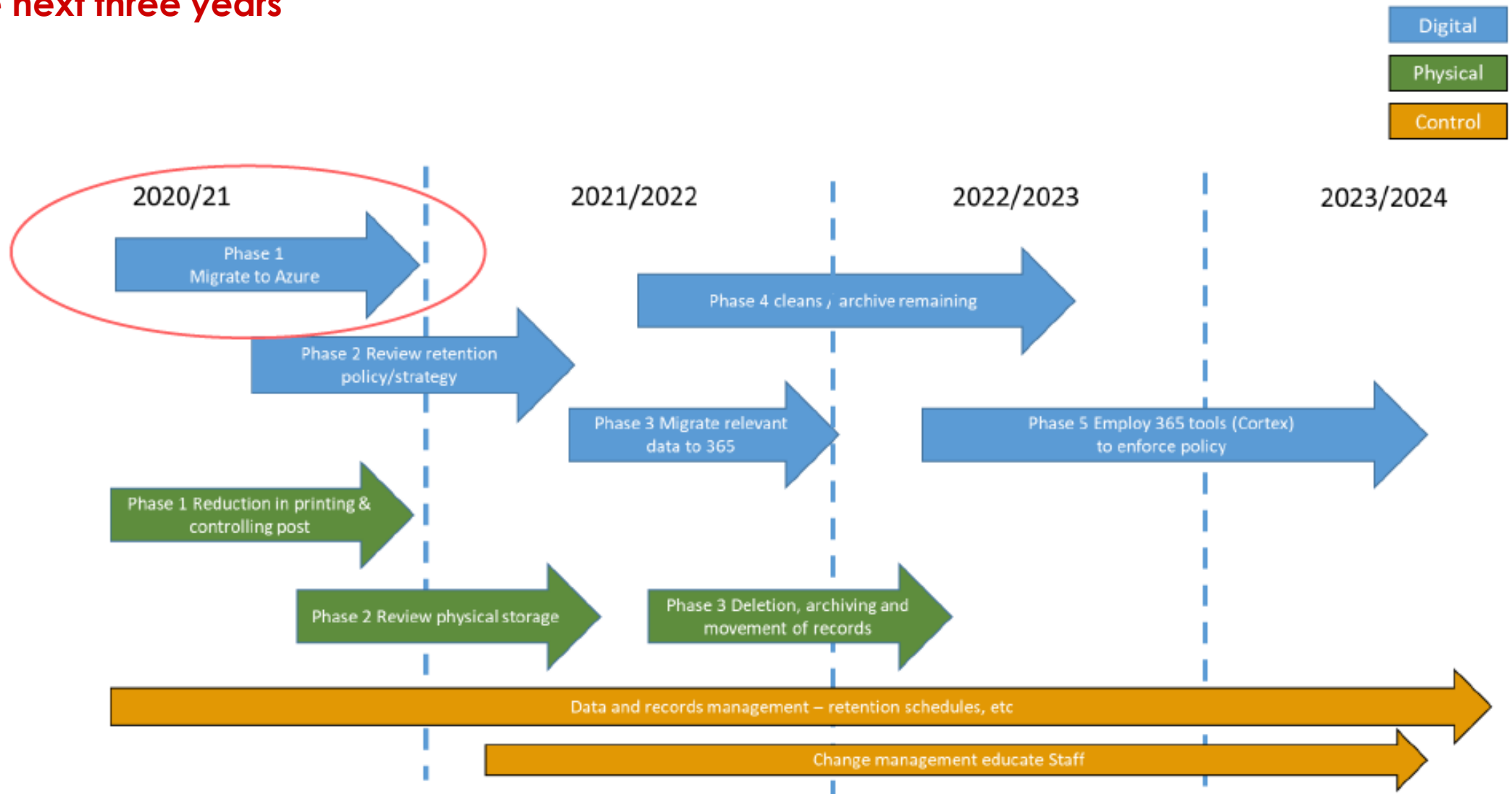
Delivering the strategy

We recognise that the strategy represents a long-term ambition which will not be delivered quickly, however there some key steps are already underway, including

- planning for the new information management platform in the Microsoft Azure environment;
- a review of the hard copy records held in the council's long-term archive, and
- deploying a new information management and security training platform

Whilst investment will be necessary to bring about the change, we will look to reinvest the savings that we can realise from reducing the amount of information we store and by using the more cost-effective approach of the public cloud.

The next three years



The next twelve months

We recognise that we need to rely more on automated tools and processes to help us manage our information, particularly in identifying and removing our legacy records. To this end we will:

- Create a new environment in which we can manage our information
- Construct the basis of a knowledge management platform which draws on the information we keep in the new environment
- Develop skills within the workforce to ensure the integrity of the principles outlined in this strategy.