North Somerset Council

Report to the Partnerships, Corporate Organisation and Overview Management Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 3 March 2023

Subject of Report: Delivery of the ICT Strategy Action Plan

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Stuart Anstead, Head of Support Services

Key Decision: No

Reason:
Whilst supporting public-facing projects such as those detailed in the Digital Strategy, the ICT Strategy is primarily inward-facing, setting the strategic direction for the development of ICT within the council.

Recommendations
That the panel notes the progress that has been made to date in delivering the actions identified in the ICT Strategy and takes the opportunity to explore areas of particular interest in more detail.

1.   Summary of Report
As a strategy formally approved by the Executive, the ICT Strategy is monitored on a quarterly basis through the corporate performance monitoring framework (which is also published on the council's website) and at a frequency considered to be appropriate by the policy and scrutiny panel.

This report provides a detailed list of the commitments made in the ICT strategy and the progress being made in delivering the associated action plan.

2.   Policy
The council's dependency on technology to deliver its front-line services and business transformation activities ensures that the ICT Strategy directly or indirectly impacts all of the aims and priorities shown in the Corporate Plan.

3.   Details
The ICT strategy outlines the aims and ambitions of the council for the period 2021-24 and groups activities into the following themes:

- Supporting the workforce
- Maintaining security
- Server estate management
- Infrastructure management
- Devices

- Applications
- Information management
- Delivering projects

Whilst the ICT strategy has been written more at a technical level than is usual, it still recognises the primary need for the investment we make in technology to support the workforce in driving business transformation as we seek to reduce costs and improve service accessibility and delivery.

Implementation of all of the council's strategies is monitored at a high level through the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Framework. A Q3 extract from the framework of the 42 project activities arising from the ICT strategy appears in Appendix A and a summary of this is shown in the following table:

Category	Status	Projects
Project timeline	On track	19
	Minor delay	5
	Significant delay	1
	De-prioritised	6
	Completed	11
Project budget	On budget	25
	De-prioritised	6
	Completed	11
Overall project status	Red	0
	Amber	1
	Green	24
	De-prioritised	6
	Completed	11

Six of the activities outlined in the strategy have been de-prioritised for 2022/23 on account of the current resource constraints needed to be able to deliver everything in what was an ambitious programme of work. This does not mean that these activities have been dropped completely, however, where we have insufficient capacity, it is only right that we prioritise those activities that will have the greatest impact. Once we have delivered higher priority projects, we will return to those that are currently showing as having been de-prioritised. Officers are also considering whether the existing team could be supplemented from one off resources in order to accelerate delivery against the strategy and support transformation.

4.   Consultation
Prior to its adoption the ICT Strategy went through a rigorous process of internal consultation involving:

- Directorate Engagement Boards
- ICT Architecture Board
- Corporate Leadership Team
- Executive Member
- PCOM scrutiny panel

It was not considered appropriate for the ICT Strategy to be subject to external consultation. Public interest in technological developments in North Somerset is primarily covered in the Digital Strategy and the public was consulted on this document.

5. Financial Implications

Each of the projects arising from the strategy is subject to its own financial approval process and for each, its business case must be considered to be viable. The scope of this report however is to report on the progress of the activities which includes whether or not the individual projects are predicted to remain within their approved budgets or not and this information can be seen in the table in section 3.

Costs

Not applicable to this report.

Funding

Not applicable to this report.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Not applicable to this report.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Some of the key activities aimed at reducing the impact on the environment have already been completed either directly as a result of specific projects commissioned from the ICT Strategy, such as turning off some infrastructure during the evening and at weekends, or indirectly as a result of other factors, such as the introduction of virtual meetings to eliminate the need to travel.

8. Risk Management

Each of the projects arising from the ICT strategy is subject to its own risk management arrangements which are managed as part of the normal activities of the associated project governance board.

9. Equality Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment will be conducted for each project arising from the ICT Strategy where it is considered appropriate to do so.

10. Corporate Implications

As an essential enabler for the entire organisation, the ICT Strategy underpins the delivery of all services across the council.

11. Options Considered

Not applicable to this report.

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Appendices:
Appendix A – Progress of individual projects arising from the ICT Strategy

Background Papers:
ICT Strategy 2021-24
https://nsomerset.sharepoint.com/sites/the-source.authoring/Documents/ICT%20Strategy%202021-24.pdf#search=ICT%20Strategy

Appendix A – Detailed List of Activities Arising from the ICT Strategy

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Supporting the Workforce	Deliver IT solutions that support the new workstyles and the accommodation programme	Green	On track	On budget	We have technical solutions and business processes in use to support each of the identified workstyles. Four workstreams are supporting the accommodation programme: 1. Desk equipment configuration 2. Desk booking system 3. Meeting room refurbishment 4. Castlewood decommissioning 500 new monitors are currently being procured as part of early works to re-equip the Town Hall.
Supporting the Workforce	Reducing the latency experienced in real time applications such as Microsoft Teams	Completed	Completed	Completed	The version of Teams released by Microsoft that is optimised for virtual desktop environments significantly improves performance during virtual meetings and calls. Monitoring of 8x8 call quality indicates that improvements to the network have also significantly improved matters here too. Further improvements are likely to be seen when the core network upgrade project completes in June/July 23, but monitoring will continue in the meantime.
Supporting the Workforce	Giving our partners and other agencies outside of the council access to our collaboration tools	Completed	Completed	Completed	Our Microsoft 365 platform is enabled for guest access which means that external partners can participate in multi-agency teams and collaborate on NSC documents.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Supporting the Workforce	Making mobile equipment easier to use in the field	Green	On track	On budget	Part of a service improvement plan sponsored by CLT. Many improvements have been carried out including opening up some previous restrictions on wireless networks. The new Microsoft device management suite, InTune has been implemented meaning that many applications no longer need a VPN to be running to use.
Supporting the Workforce	Improving the performance of wireless networks in the office environment, particularly for roaming	Green	On track	On budget	Improvements to the wireless network infrastructure have been completed however full benefits will not be seen until completion of the core network upgrade in June 23. Removing some restrictions on the office wireless networks has seen marked benefits for officers.
Supporting the Workforce	Providing access to information and suitable tools to highlight problems on home networks and broadband connections	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23.
Supporting the Workforce	Enabling the use of a wider range of peripherals which do not create information governance issues for example by allowing transfers of sensitive data to personal devices	Green	On track	On budget	Part of a service improvement plan sponsored by CLT. Many improvements have been carried out e.g., bluetooth headsets now in the service catalogue and we continue to react as new requests are made.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Supporting the Workforce	Enhancing the range of training material available to officers and elected members	Green	On track	On budget	Amalgamated all training material together under the *Making IT Better* teams channel which now includes information from the *Smarter Working* team. Work continues to enhance the material available.
Applications	Establish a managed refresh programme with a rolling five-year view to allow us to budget appropriately for system replacements	Green	On track	On budget	Five year rolling review programme is in place and being managed through business-as-usual activities. The programme feeds into the overall governance process which involves CPPDB for monitoring capital spend, the new Portfolio Board and the ICT Architecture Board,
Applications	Deploy licence tracking tools to ensure that we have the optimum number of licences available for each application.	Completed	Completed	Completed	Snow has been deployed successfully. Most software is now deployed on a commercial subscription basis and as a result tools like Snow offer reduced benefits for licence tracking however software usage is also tracked by other tools such as Aternity.
Applications	Testing continuity and recovery plans for each major application in use.	Green	Minor delay – likely to be brought back into programme	On budget	This is an extremely resource-intensive activity however it is being tackled on a priority basis with critical applications being assessed first.
Information Management	Complete the work to replace the legacy extranet with an updated solution based on SharePoint Online	Completed	Completed	Completed	The legacy instance of SharePoint 2010 has been commissioned and all Extranet services have all been transitioned to SharePoint online, part of the Microsoft 365 services.
Information Management	Include the ability to create multi-agency teams in our M365 environment	Completed	Completed	Completed	Multi-agency teams are now available and being used across the authority in all directorates.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Information Management	Migration of unstructured and semi-structured information currently held in files and folders on shared network drives into a structured Microsoft environment	Green	Minor delay – likely to be brought back into programme	On budget	Activity commenced late Q2. Business case now being written to enable mass-migration of 40TB of data held in network shared drives to SharePoint.
Information Management	Development of a knowledge management platform to allow us to extract more value from the information we hold	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23.
Information Management	Development of tools to improve the flow of information across the council and with partners whilst significantly reducing the quantity of email in use	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23.
Information Management	Deploy intelligent analysis tools to categorise and index information we need to retain and alert us to that which we should destroy.	Amber	Significant delay	On budget	Re-phased as we need to complete the migration of data into SharePoint in order to make best use of the tools identified. Anticipate this work being done in 2023/24.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Delivering Projects	Working with our Agilisys colleagues to explore ways to increase project resources	Green	On track	On budget	Much work done in Q3 on improving the project experience with some changes being made to resources deployed by Agilisys. Two new project managers have been recruited to the client team to improve change management and engagement activities.
Delivering Projects	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	Green	On track	On budget	Forms part of the business-as-usual activities to identify such projects however some improvements are still needed and are being monitored by the client team.
Delivering Projects	Reviewing the project governance arrangements to improve the visibility of progress through the system, involving customers at each stage.	Green	On track	On budget	Much work done in Q3 on improving the project experience with some changes being made to resources deployed by Agilisys. Two new project managers have been recruited to the client team to improve change management activities.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Devices	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	Green	Minor delay – likely to be brought back into programme	On budget	Performance of real time applications is much improved using the technical solutions available like Powerline adapters to overcome local issues such as poor domestic wi-fi performance. Device strategy will be reviewed in the spring. Following an extended IT incident in October, for reliance purposes it is unlikely that we will be able to reduce the ratio to 80:20 however this does not alter the commitment to improve performance of the virtual desktop environment.
Devices	Maintain the Windows 10 virtual desktop as an evergreen platform on which to work	Green	On track	On budget	Windows 10 being maintained as required as part of business-as-usual activities. Microsoft has however changed its desktop operating system strategy and released Windows 11 hence we will need a future migration project once end of support for Windows 10 is announced. This features in the five-year forward programme of investment.
Devices	Review mobile device policy in light of inter-operability developments in recent years and the introduction of new applications, particularly for elected members	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Devices	Formalise a centralised refresh programme for assets based on a realistic, real-world approach that extends device life without compromising security or performance	Green	On track	On budget	Completed for desktop devices, and for replacement of mobile phones and iPads that are out of support. Final part of the plan is to adopt a policy for the central provision of mobile equipment for new starters.
Devices	Improve the usability of mobile devices by reviewing the restrictions enforced through the mobile device management platform	Completed	Completed	Completed	Devices are now largely unlocked for use off-network for office applications. Access to back-end case management systems still requires the use of a VPN and we have an ongoing project to make the existing VPN access arrangements easier to operate.
Devices	Establish formal accessibility criteria for all ICT projects	Completed	Completed	Completed	Accessibility is a formal assessment criterion for all IT projects and sits alongside information security and data protection.
Infrastructure Management	Replacement of the existing IP telephony platform with a cloud-based service similar to that which we use successfully in our contact centres	Completed	Completed	Completed	The previous office-based Cisco telephony platform has now been decommissioned and replaced by 8x8 which supports remote working through the use of virtual telephones running on the Windows desktop. The contact centres started to use this technology prior to the pandemic.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Infrastructure Management	Upgrade the core, distribution and access layers of our network to provide the capacity required of modern applications	Green	On track	On budget	The core network project is still awaiting delivery of equipment and is scheduled to commence installation in March. Supply chain difficulties were understood from the start and programmed in. Key elements of the access layer will be upgraded in the summer with an anticipated project completion date of July.
Infrastructure Management	Maintain our compliance with security standards including PCI DSS and PSN and add Cyber Essentials Plus	Green	On track	On budget	All compliance programmes are currently being followed as required. The first Cyber Essentials accreditation submission will be made in February. Continued accreditation represents an annual activity.
Infrastructure Management	Implement a managed post and print service using a commercial supplier to reduce costs and improve information security	Green	On track	On budget	Project with Agilisys progressing on schedule.
Infrastructure Management	Replace and simplify the remote access VPN, improving the functionality for mobile devices without sacrificing security.	Green	Minor delay – likely to be brought back into programme	On budget	Some technical issues have been experienced largely as a result on dependencies on other projects. Two factor authentication will shortly be transferred to Microsoft which will realise savings as the existing solution can be decommissioned. We continue to work towards a solution which will see automatic connection to the correct wireless network and automatic establishment of the VPN.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Server Estate Management	Migration of the existing estate to the Microsoft Azure environment	Completed	Completed	Completed	All servers previously located in the Agilisys private cloud have now been migrated to Microsoft Azure. Completion of this project represented the first step of preparation for the IT service post-2025.
Server Estate Management	Review of assets supporting critical services and deployment of disaster recovery as a service	Green	On track	On budget	Feasibility work has been completed and we have costed solutions which will allow the objectives to be met however lack of budget to support ongoing costs may prevent us from implementing a solution except in isolated.
Server Estate Management	Improve predictive analysis of impending failure of assets	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23.
Server Estate Management	Seek supplier-hosted managed services for our major back-office applications	Hold	De-prioritised	De-prioritised	This action has been de-prioritised for 2022/23 however where systems are being refreshed, we will explore a cloud-first approach.
Server Estate Management	Realise energy savings by reducing server capacity during periods of low demand.	Completed	Completed	Completed	Servers that are not needed for 24x7 access such as testing and training environments have been set up to follow power management programmes. These are shutdown between 7pm and 7am and at weekends.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Maintaining Security	Submit annually to external review through the PSN assurance process and whatever follows once the PSN is decommissioned	Completed	Completed	Completed	The PSN compliance process is managed through the year as part of a Security as a Service offering from Agilisys. The assessment process conducted by the Cabinet Office occurs annually which for 2023/24 will be in April.
Maintaining Security	Achieve Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation	Green	Minor delay – likely to be brought back into programme	On budget	We will achieve Cyber Essentials accreditation in 2022/23 however Essentials Plus will drop into 23/24. Redevelopment of the security policy framework has overrun by a month, and this will knock on into the Cyber Essentials work.
Maintaining Security	Enhance the training material available to the workforce and elected members and make refresher courses mandatory	Green	On track	On budget	Training material is deployed via Learning Pool and via the MetaCompliance training portal. In the latter case the material is integrated into Teams which makes it a lot easier to access for the workforce.
Maintaining Security	Continue to participate actively in local intelligence sharing groups such as SW WARP	Green	On track	On budget	This is progressed as a business-as-usual activity.
Maintaining Security	Conduct peer review of information security management system	Green	On track	On budget	Scheduled to have completed in December however this work is going to drift to the end of February.
Maintaining Security	Move towards certificate-based authentication to enhance security at the network edge	Green	On track	On budget	Project with Agilisys progressing on schedule. User acceptance testing of new laptop configuration is complete and roll-out has commenced across the organisation.

Theme	Activity	Status	Schedule at Q3	Budget at Q3	Commentary
Maintaining Security	Refine and improve cyber incident management response plans	Green	On track	On budget	A cyber incident management exercise has been set up for 20 April and will include CLT and other senior officers.