



Digital Strategy

2021-2023

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Overview

Sefton’s Digital Strategy has been developed in the context of our partnership 2030 vision of Sefton as a borough connected by people, supported by technology and the Council’s Core Purpose. Working with our partners the Council will develop approaches that will see our communities and businesses benefit from new digital technologies that keep people informed and connected.

This strategy outlines our vision to become a place connected by people, supported by technology, with connected communities that thrive; with support for local people and businesses that are empowered to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by digital technology.

Digital and technology is recognised as a key enabler to deliver a step change in the way that local services are accessed, delivered and consumed. We are all living in a time of unprecedented change; the growth of consumer technology is changing the way we all live, work and play and as a local authority we must ensure that local people and business are empowered to take advantage of innovative technology to support both personal and economic growth.

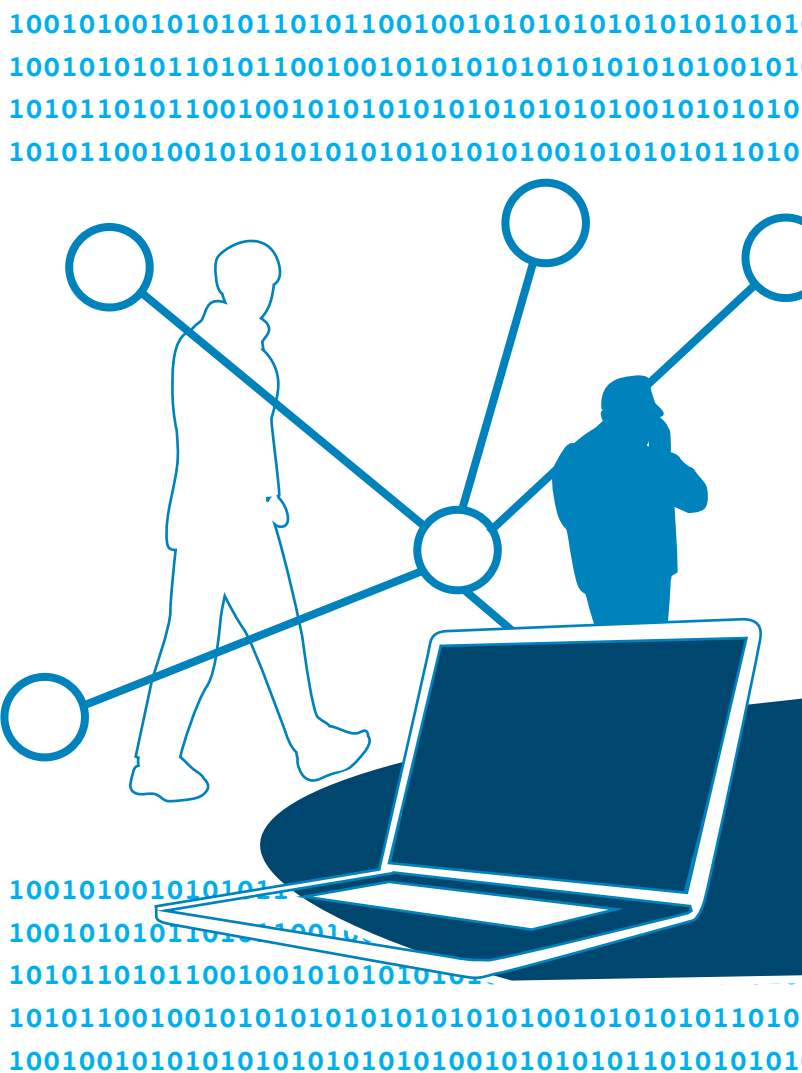
Digital spans all generations and many aspects of life; from supporting our children to have the best start, enabling them to learn and grow, ensuring that they are ready for work to our older people, again enabling them to learn, work and stay connected. As well as protecting our most vulnerable residents and helping all residents to live healthy fulfilled and independent lives.

The COVID 19 pandemic will have a material impact on what the Council does over the forthcoming 2 years and beyond. The Council has undergone operational transformation in

a matter of days when, before COVID-19, it would potentially have taken years. The council will retain some of the excellent activity and new ways of working that have been required to respond to the pandemic, which will benefit residents, businesses, partners and staff. The vision, activities and outcomes articulated in this Digital Strategy will underpin the Council’s initiatives in this regard.

Sefton’s Digital Strategy is based around three core themes;

This strategy document will outline all three themes in detail.



Guiding objectives and vision

This Digital Strategy outlines the direction of travel for the Council’s digital services provision for the period 2021 to 2023, with the intention of supporting council services and officers delivering quality services to the citizens and businesses within the borough of Sefton.

Guiding objectives

Its guiding objectives are as follows:

- An offer that supports the Council’s overarching Digital ambitions and emergent customer access/ channel shift/digital inclusion strategy
- A strong ICT strategy and architecture focusing on the Council’s medium-term corporate objectives
- Information architecture and governance that supports data sharing and the systematic use of business intelligence to improve service delivery
- A clear focus on enabling cost savings across the Council, in line with the Framework for Change programme, Council of 2023 programme, 2030 Vision agenda and the Council’s savings targets

Vision

The above guiding objectives will be the core drivers behind the following high-level vision for the Council’s Digital Strategy:

Theme	Vision statement
Connected Council	We will use digital technology and solutions to transform and improve how the Council operates
Empowered Residents	We will use digital technology to consolidate and transform the relationship between the Council and its residents so that residents have better access to online services and benefit from improved digital inclusion.
Business Growth	We will ensure that Sefton businesses benefit from high-speed internet connectivity, access to digital skills learning and can leverage the opportunities afforded from digital technologies

Alignment to Core Principles and strategies

This vision will support Sefton Council’s 2030 Vision and Core Principles:

- Protect the most vulnerable
- Facilitate confident and resilient communities
- Commission, broker and provide core services:
- Place-leadership and influencer
- Drivers of change and reform
- Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity
- Generate income for social reinvestment
- Cleaner and Greener

It will also support the following Council programmes:

- Council of 2023
- Growth and Strategic Investment
- Demand Management programme

This strategy is supported by the following Council strategies:

- Customer Interface Strategy
- Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Business Intelligence Strategy
- Web & Social Media Strategy

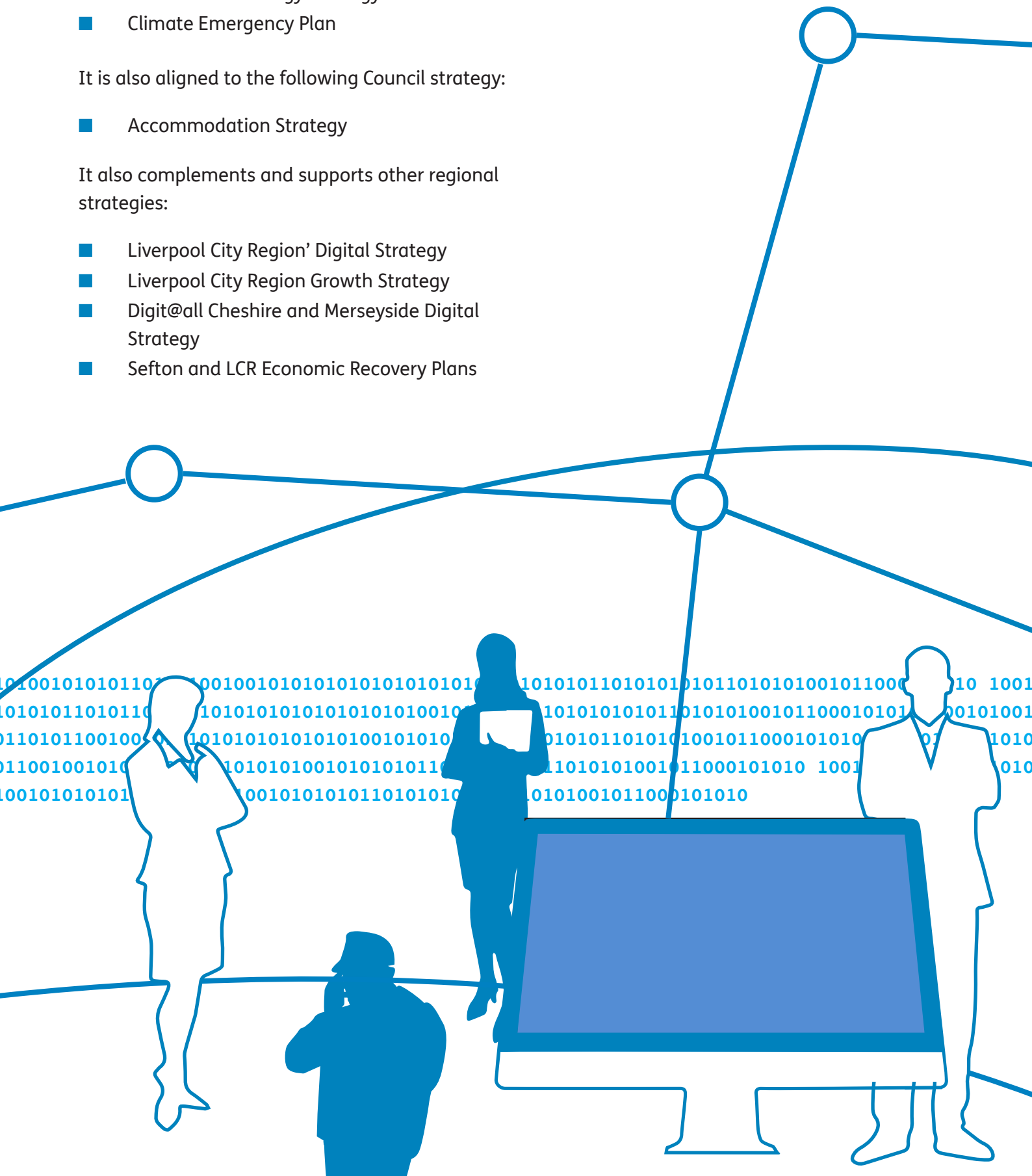
- Print Reduction Strategy
- Assistive Technology Strategy
- Climate Emergency Plan

It is also aligned to the following Council strategy:

- Accommodation Strategy

It also complements and supports other regional strategies:

- Liverpool City Region' Digital Strategy
- Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy
- Digit@all Cheshire and Merseyside Digital Strategy
- Sefton and LCR Economic Recovery Plans



Theme 1: Connected Council

We will use digital technology and solutions to transform and improve how the Council operates

Desired outcomes

- Council staff have access to appropriate end user devices and systems, which will enable them to work smarter and more efficiently.
- Council staff can work in an agile way, which means they can work from multiple locations and achieve a healthy work-life balance
- The Council's use of technology will allow us to rationalise buildings
- All digital projects implemented by the Council provide value for money and have clearly defined outcomes
- Council staff have access to data intelligence tools to inform decision-making, service design and manage demand
- The Council can take preventative action in the management of its assets due to the use of smart sensor technology
- The Council's use of technology supports delivery of an improved customer experience.

Where we are now

Sefton Council is now in the second year of a five-year partnership agreement with Agilisys Ltd for the provision of IT services to the Council. This agreement has enabled the Council to reduce the annual costs of ICT services, and it will also allow the Council to benefit from the innovation and best practice which Agilisys has implemented for other local authorities.

Between 2018 and 2020, Sefton Council has implemented an ambitious ICT Transformation

Programme, which has seen the deployment of new and upgraded end user devices to officers, the introduction of collaboration software such as Office 365, SharePoint and Skype for Business, and the initial migration of several systems and data to cloud hosting. This programme supports the Council's plans for agile working, and the reduction and rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation.

Councillors have been issued with new mobile devices and technology which allows them to conduct their duties more efficiently by granting access to key information and electronic communication with citizens whilst on the move. This has resulted in a reduction in the use of paper and printing for Council meeting documentation.

What we will do

Business Requirements

- ICT and technology developments will be led by the requirements of the business
- It is accepted that the business needs to understand the art of the possible afforded by new and emerging technology to define their requirements, and as such, there must be a symbiotic approach between business requirements and ICT solutions

Information Management

- The Council must make better use of its data and information for the benefit of its customers and of the organisation
- ICT must support the efficient collation,

compilation and re-appropriation of data in line with the Business Intelligence Strategy, supporting continuous improvements in efficiency and consistency

- This will include provision of data between Council systems, and where appropriate, the systems of partner organisations to enable a shared approach to service delivery
- Support the ongoing development of the Council's data warehouse to enable better use of data for better decision making, demand management and service delivery

Applications

- The authority will adopt a Cloud First approach to the provisioning of all applications deploying multi-cloud solutions as appropriate.
- The Council will continue to choose proprietary systems above in-house development where appropriate
- The authority will look to lever the functionality of existing solutions prior to any procurement or development activity
- All ICT development will be linked to a business process review to generate efficiencies
- The authority will adopt Government Digital Standards to ensure interoperability and integration as appropriate
- All solutions will be device agnostic
- The authority will seek to ensure best value, making use of government procurement frameworks where possible

Infrastructure

- The Council will look to implement a multi-cloud model, whereby greater use of cloud technology and services is made (where appropriate)
- The multi-cloud model will enable a scalable and resilient infrastructure that can flex in line with business requirements

and provide resilience to ensure business continuity

- Where appropriate network segregation will be implemented to support commercial operations.
- Infrastructure development will factor in collaboration with partner organisations, and any connectivity required as part of the Liverpool City Region devolution agenda

End user computing & agile working

- A standard range of devices will be provided to meet different business requirements
- A fully managed desktop provision will be in place, which is locked down, fully packaged, with roaming profiles enabled and standardisation of software versions where possible
- VPN access will be available to enable remote access to Council systems and data via Council-issue devices

Operating system & collaboration software

- The Microsoft Windows 10 operating system will be upgraded and updated in line with the Microsoft release schedule
- Microsoft Office 365 will continue to be the Council's core productivity and collaboration tool, with rollout of additional elements of the Office 365 suite to be explored
- Colleagues across the organisation will be empowered to take advantage of technology deployed by the provision of appropriate training and support
- The ICT Client team will work in partnership with wider colleagues to ensure that digital tools are embedded within normal operating procedures of all teams and that users are engaged and empowered to support the transformation of service delivery

Network and connectivity

- The upgraded IPVPN wide-area network provides wide-ranging and robust connectivity between Council sites
- Consideration will be given as to how the wide-area network can be joined up with neighbouring local authorities if required to support the Liverpool City Region devolution agenda
- Use of GovRoam will allow Sefton staff to directly access the Council network from partner sites (where these partners also participate in the GovRoam scheme)
- Enterprise mobility management solution will allow staff secure remote access to Council systems and data via Council-issue devices
- Public, guest and corporate Wi-Fi to be available in key Council buildings

Voice and telecoms

- A modern telephony solution will be implemented to enable unified communications and enhance agile working
- Mobile phones will only be issued subject to business need

Information Governance & Security

- ICT will continue to work with the Council's Information Management Group and Business Intelligence Team to ensure a joined-up approach to data security
- The Council's Security Incident and Event Management (SIEM) service will continue to monitor and protect the Council network to prevent or mitigate any suspicious activity
- Access to up-to-date, expert cybersecurity resource will be available
- Reliable patch management processes in place ensuring that security compliance is maintained

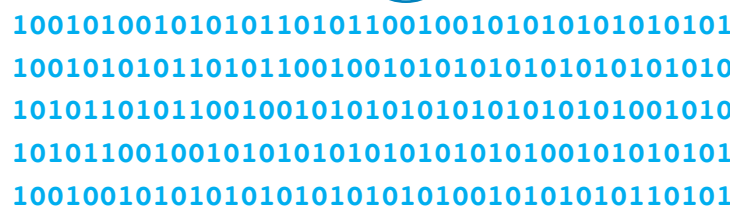
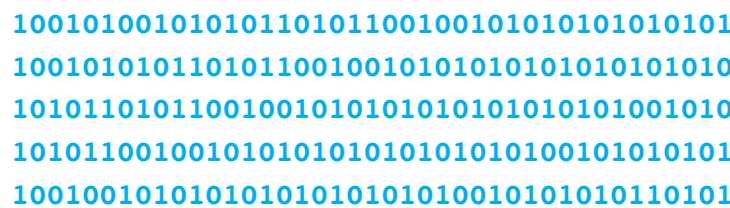
- The Council will remain fully compliant with PSN, PCI-DSS and other such requirements

Automation

- The authority will look to implement and support automation technology to enable the business to automate high-volume repeatable processing tasks.

Partnership Working

- Sefton will with partner organisations such as other local authorities, health bodies, schools, faith, charity and voluntary organisations to ensure that technologies are aligned to facilitate data sharing to aid service provision



Theme 2: Empowered Residents

We will use digital technology to consolidate and transform the relationship between the Council and its residents so that residents have better access to online services and benefit from improved digital inclusion

Desired outcomes

- Customers are empowered to manage their own interactions with the Council for all services, using the Council's digital Customer Experience Platform
- The Council's website is easy to use, easy to read and easy to understand, offering a consistent user experience and meeting all accessibility standards
- Customers can receive notifications and alerts on topics they find relevant
- Internet of Things technology is used to keep residents safe, healthy and able to live independently
- Council residents have increased access to digital, so they can benefit from the consumer, learning and social opportunities available via the internet
- Council residents can develop their digital skills to enhance their social and employment status

Where we are now

The Council is implementing a new digital Customer Experience Platform, which will enable greater and improved self-serve options for residents and businesses.

Sefton Council is finalising the upgrade of its public website, which will include a redesign of its look and feel, improvements to accessibility and revised content.

The Council has implemented a virtual contact centre solution, which allows contact centre advisors to work in an agile fashion.

The Council has conducted a digital inclusion scoping exercise, to understand digital exclusion in the borough and the initiatives in place to reduce this. This scoping exercise will inform a Council digital inclusion strategy, as well as facilitating a partnership approach with other public-sector partners, commissioned providers, schools and voluntary organisations across the wider borough.

The Council is refreshing its public use IT kit in libraries and One Stop Shops.

The Council is scoping requirements regarding the introduction of digital assisted living technology to support residents in living independently, with a focus on older and/or vulnerable adults.

What we will do

Digital Inclusion

- Form a digital inclusion partnership with relevant partner organisations to develop a joint digital inclusion strategy for the borough
- Work with faith/voluntary/charity sectors to ensure that Sefton Council's digital offer meets the needs of different groups.
- Ensure that participation in digital skills training is monitored to identify and shape the offer too hard to reach groups
- Improve the end user devices and software available for public use in Libraries
- Ensure that Libraries staff are suitably trained to support customers

- Work with partners to improve internet access and access to digital skills training across the borough
- Explore opportunities for public Wi-Fi in town centres

Web services

- Implement a new digital Customer Experience Platform to enhance and further enable self-serve options for customers
- Redevelop and re-design the Sefton Council website to ensure it is easy to use and easy to understand and meets the requirements of vulnerable groups

Health & Social Care

- Work with key partners, to understand the opportunities afforded by new digital technologies. From wearables, automation, robotics, apps and beyond to improve or transform the way that services are accessed and provided to enable people to stay safe, healthy and live independent lives
- Build in opportunities for digital solutions and consumer choice when services are developed or redesigned.
- Develop an innovation hub to explore new opportunities and ways to support different groups of people

Schools

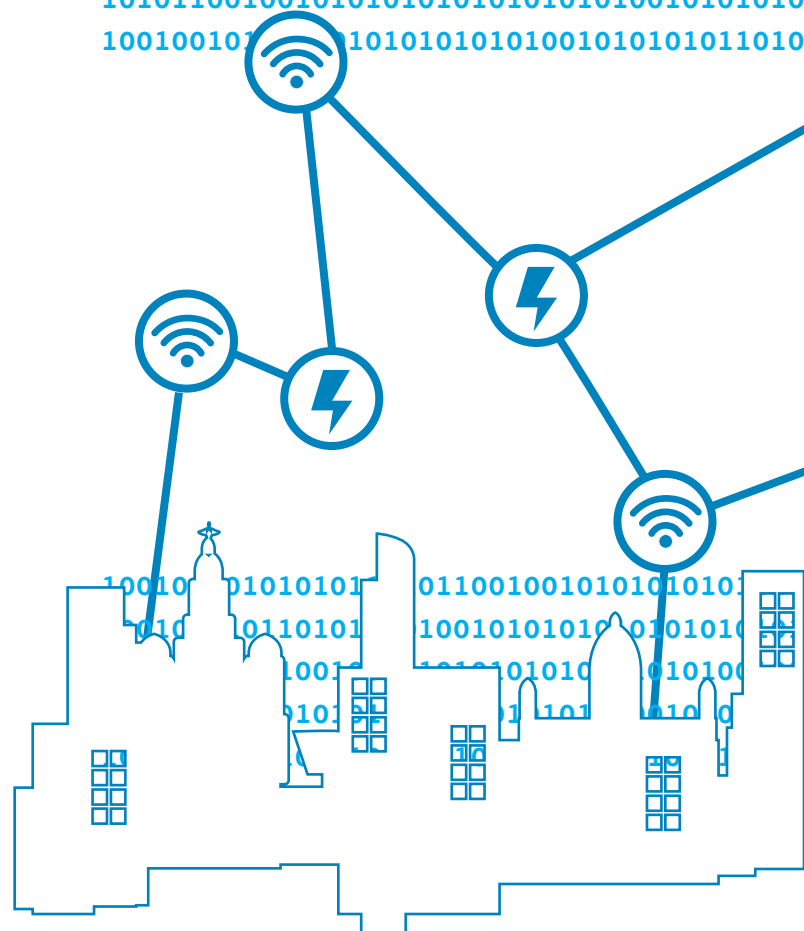
- Support schools with the adoption of technology to improve the education experience and to aid the development of digital skills for all pupils
- Work with schools and wider partner organisations to ensure equality of access to digital education resources.

Smart Technology

- Explore the opportunities offered by Internet of Things technology (such as smart lighting, digital charging hubs and

- low-cost sensor solutions) to monitor environmental factors, improve local transport and maintain community safety
- Develop and deliver an ongoing programme of small-scale Internet of Things initiatives in the public realm
- Encourage and (where appropriate) collaborate with property developers to incorporate digital services into residential and commercial developments as the fourth utility
- Explore the development of a Sefton LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) which is a Low Power, Wide Area (LPWA) networking protocol designed for the Internet of Things

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Theme 3: Business Growth

We will ensure that Sefton residents and businesses benefit from high-speed internet connectivity, access to digital skills learning and the ability to leverage the opportunities afforded by digital technologies.

Desired outcomes

- Sefton has robust digital connectivity infrastructure, including high-speed broadband internet and mobile network connectivity, to support businesses, residents and the public sector
- Sefton harnesses the opportunities afforded by Open Data to drive economic growth and innovation
- Local businesses are empowered to exploit the economic opportunities provided by digital technology and take advantage of wider markets outside the boundaries of the Borough.
- Sefton residents have the right digital skills to prosper in the employment market, with local businesses having access to suitability skilled local candidates
- Sefton is an attractive location for businesses large and small, and an attractive location in which to live and work, with emphasis on the digital and creative sector
- Sefton’s visitor and tourism strategy takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by digital to attract new visitors and improve the customer experience.

Where we are now

Sefton’s Economic Strategy Action Plan outlines the authorities’ priorities to deliver Sefton’s Vision 2030 Partnership ambitions for sustainable economic prosperity, including priorities for digital investment.

Over 99% of Sefton already has access to Superfast Broadband providing a firm foundation to future growth into Ultrafast Broadband. In addition, Sefton is a partner within the wider Liverpool City Region Digital Connectivity Programme which aims to enable gigabit connectivity across the entire Liverpool City Region and exploit the potential of key strategic assets to facilitate business growth and increased business exports.

Sefton Council is open to working with partners regarding potential deployment of digital infrastructure across public land, buildings and assets in the borough of Sefton and is at an early stage in its engagement with private sector delivery partners to explore opportunities to improve connectivity across Sefton including the possibility of hosting of small cell technology on council owned assets, such as street furniture including street lights and CCTV columns to facilitate the large scale rollout of 5G.

The recommendations of the Area Based Review for a single Sefton College and the merger of the existing four institutions through a two-stage process will help to shape the future curriculum to meet priorities for growth, higher level skills, and encourage greater specialisation. The plans in place to grow Level 3 participation in support of skills for priority sectors including the visitor economy, engineering, IT and digital, and health and social care will support the economic priorities of the Borough.

In addition to the above Sefton has a strong Sefton@Work programme which delivers advice and guidance to residents aged 16+, including advice, guidance, digital access and skills and paid work experience. Furthermore, Sefton’s libraries offer a range of IT and digital support courses and staff and volunteers provide bookable one to one support for residents that require assistance. This is in addition to the following provision from private sector partners including:

- Basic IT course provision from Include IT Mersey and Barclays Digital Eagles
- Coding course and job clubs
- Scam Awareness Courses (online safety and security) from Natwest

What we will do

Connectivity

- Capitalise on the GTT Atlantic high-speed internet cable located in Southport Business Park to accelerate the rollout of ultra-fast broadband to help local businesses trade and innovate.
- Influence and support the delivery of the Liverpool City Region Digital Connectivity Programme, ensuring that maximum benefit is realised for both residents and businesses
- Work in partnership with the private sector to ensure that Sefton is 5g ready
- Exploit opportunities for the provision of improved connectivity, free WIFI and hotspots in Bootle and Southport Town Centres.
- Ensure alignment of all Sefton growth projects with the digital strategy

Digital Skills

- Develop the digital skills offer across schools and all training providers in partnership with active employer

involvement to ensure that digital skills match employer aspirations and inspire young people from primary school.

- Link to existing forums with local businesses to identify the skills needed by local organisations and the best means of developing them, including providing targeted digital skills training to facilitate business growth, mentoring support, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities.
- Ensure that Sefton businesses are aware of and linked into the training available the Liverpool City Region such as the Test and Learn pilots on Basic Skills and Business Ready Digital Skills

Digital Businesses

- Ensure that all Sefton’s businesses are fit for the future and aware of the potential opportunities presented by new and transformative technologies. Digital requirements and opportunities should form a key component when supporting any business.
- Explore options to develop a digital accelerator hub to foster digital and creative start-ups and small businesses to create a new digital economy
- Exploit the opportunities afforded by digital to attract new visitors to Sefton with an enhanced customer journey supported by data and intelligence to shape future investments.
- Ensure that digital innovation is part of the bi-annual Sefton Economic Forum
- Work in partnership to further develop an Open data framework and platform

