Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	6 October 2022
Subject:	Digital Inclusion Strategy		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report seeks to present to Cabinet the Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 -2025 for Sefton. It will set out how it has been developed, and the proposed next steps in terms of programme development

Recommendation(s):

That the Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025 be approved

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To ensure that a clear strategy and programme of work exists to support Digital Inclusion across Sefton to deliver the following vision;

To develop a place where Sefton Residents and organisations understand the benefits of digital, feel safe and confident online and are supported to develop their skills and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

Not applicable

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

No direct cost implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where costs are to be incurred for specific programmes of work the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated spend.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

Financial:
No direct cost implications due to the delivery of the Strategic Documentation, where costs are to be incurred for the delivery of specific projects the appropriate decision-making process will be followed to obtain approval for any associated spend.

IT:
The strategy complements and supports the overarching Digital Strategy of Sefton Council

Staffing:
Not applicable

Assets:
Not applicable

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications

Equality Implications:

Please refer to the attached equality impact assessment.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will

Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

The report predominately focuses on the use of existing digital tools or resources by residents of Sefton and increasing the skills, abilities and access to such resources across Sefton. The focus is therefore upon equality of access to existing digital resources rather than new resources, thereby having a neutral affect upon the climate change agenda.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:

This strategy aims to ensure that the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available and known to everyone.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

This strategy describes a partnership approach to service delivery, ensuring alignment to key principles of inclusion as well as recognising the role of voluntary organisations.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The strategy sets out a strategic direction and clear priorities for digital inclusion over the next three years
Place – leadership and influencer: The strategy supports the wider 2030 vision for Sefton and Sefton's Digital Strategy
Drivers of change and reform: This project supports the delivery of the Council's ambitious change programme and 2030 vision and Sefton's Digital Strategy.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The strategy is aims to support residents of Sefton to obtain Digital skills to support not only general access to services available online but to improve employment opportunities.
Greater income for social investment: The potential for added Social Value will be included within the underpinning work programmes where appropriate
Cleaner Greener This strategy will not have a direct deliverables in relation to Climate Change.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A)   Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6951/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.5151/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

Executive leaders Directors across the Council and Cabinet Members have been consulted on the content of this report feedback incorporated where relevant.

(B)   External Consultations

To ensure alignment of the strategy to the wider Liverpool City Region, (LCR) the author has reviewed associated strategies from LCR colleagues as well as local and regional strategic documentation and consulted on the Strategy Document with the LCR lead for Digital Inclusion.

To ensure alignment to the Integrated Care Programmes associated with Digital Inclusion the author has consulted with the ICS Lead for Digital Inclusion

To ensure alignment to Sefton Place priorities consultation has taken place via partnership engagement meetings.

Further consultation has taken place with key partner agencies via email including; One Vision Housing, the Department for Work and Pensions, VOLA, Sefton CVS and the ICS.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022

Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022 Easy Read Version

Digital Inclusion Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

The following background papers, can be accessed on the Council website:

The Digital Strategy for Sefton 2021/2023

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Access to services and information digitally is becoming the norm for many, however recent data tells us that over 5% of residents in Sefton have either never used the internet, or not used the internet in the last three months. The Covid-19 Pandemic has exacerbated the marginalisation of those without either the basic skills and/or financial or practical means to access digital connectivity. During the pandemic we have seen a significant digital shift, with large organisations moving to offer online only services, moving away from face-to-face provision. This journey had already begun, but the pandemic provided a significant catalyst in speeding up this transformation.

1.2 The Digital Strategy for Sefton 2021-2023 outlined the following actions in relation to Digital Inclusion within Theme Two, Empowering Residents:

- 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

1.3 This Digital Inclusion Strategy outlines the following key principles, which have been endorsed by key partners ;

- Put people at the heart of everything we do
- Design for the outcome and be inclusive to build trust
- Test assumptions, make, learn, and iterate
- Do the hard work to make it simple
- Ensure staff and volunteers understand what basic digital skills are and provide opportunity to learn and improve on their own basic digital skills
- Commit support and resources to a co-ordinated approach to Digital Inclusion and Digital Skills activities across Sefton
- Share best practice to ensure digital inclusion activity impact is maximised and measured.
- Leave no one behind by ensuring there is support for those who cannot or choose not to use online to enable equal opportunity for everyone to use our services
- Provide a framework which enables residents to have access to digital equipment, skills training, and opportunities for them to learn and have support
- Promote the benefits of digital in ways that residents can see how this will help them
- Keep things simple by using common language and create trust with our online services
- Ensure our residents understand how to protect themselves online
- Where possible, use our responsibilities under the Social Value Act to use commissioning as a tool to drive Digital Inclusion
- Maximise and align funding opportunities that could progress Digital Inclusion
- Ensure that our strategy is fit for purpose, supporting the radical changes in technology, demand, and skills by committing to annual reviews

Process of Development

2.1   Significant engagement activity has been undertaken to ensure alignment of the key priorities within the strategy to local and regional priorities. The strategy is deliberately aligned to a three-year document, due to the rapid pace of change in this area.

2.2   This Strategy for Sefton has been developed in close partnership with key partners including, Liverpool City Region, the Integrated Care Service, Health, DWP, Housing Organisations and the Voluntary Sector.

2.3   Over the next three years the delivery of the Strategy will be reflected in the development of a programme of work linked to the action plan within the strategy, as detailed on pages 14 and 15 of the strategy.

2.4   The progress and impact of the strategy will link to the governance in place for the overarching Digital Strategy, which is being driven through Digital Programme boards, each chaired by a member of SLB accountable for the delivery of the key programmes and projects documented with the strategy. Quarterly reports on progress of all programmes, including Digital Inclusion are presented to the Executive Leadership Team, with regular updates provided to Cllr Lappin, Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and Overview and Scrutiny.

3 Conclusion

3.1   As highlighted within this paper, digital access and skills are now becoming a universal requirement to access many services, including key services such as Health and Benefits.   Therefore, in line with Sefton Digital's Strategy this Digital Inclusion Strategy outlines the work needed to ensure that all residents are enabled to take advantage of the potential digital brings both at home and in work.

3.2   Following strategy approval a programme of work will be developed to support the detailed action plan, which will include measurable outcomes to evidence impact and improvement, the development of the programme as a multi-agency place based priority should remove duplication of effort and ensure the efficient deployment of local capacity.