

Report Title: Digital Strategy

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| Date of meeting: | 6 February 2025 | | |
| Report to: | Cabinet | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director of Corporate and Commercial Services | | |
| Portfolio: | Corporate Services | | |
| Wards affected: | All | | |
| Is this a key decision: | Yes | Included in Forward Plan: | Yes |
| Exempt/confidential report: | No | | |

Summary:

This report seeks to present to Cabinet a revised Digital Strategy for Sefton Council. It sets out how it has been developed and seeks approval for its publication.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet approve the publication of the revised Digital Strategy.

1. The Rationale and Evidence for the Recommendations

- 1.1 Sefton published its first Digital Strategy in 2021. Since its launch the Council has achieved a great deal, with the deployment of Cloud Services, a new Customer Experience Platform, and a redesigned website, as well as supporting back-end automation of routine repetitive tasks by deploying RPA (Robotics). The achievements are outlined in full within pages three to five of the enclosed Digital Strategy document (Appendix A).
- 1.2 The pace of change in relation to digital continues to be significant with many experts indicating that the world has been going through its fourth industrial revolution, a term often used to describe the rapid technological advancements we have seen in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics and the Internet of Things. These changes have not only changed customer expectations but have also provided opportunities for Sefton to transform the way that services are delivered and in turn how residents are supported.
- 1.3 The revised Digital Strategy for Sefton over the next three years is intended to be an overarching plan which articulates the council's ambitions and is based on key priorities identified within the Corporate Plan.

1.4 This high-level strategic document is split into five themes

- Developing Sefton as a Digital Place
- Create Strong Digital Foundations
- Supporting an enhanced Customer Journey
- To develop our Data and Intelligence
- Support the Workforce of the Future

1.5 These themes each have priorities within them which seek to

- Ensure that residents and businesses are enabled to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by digital technologies.
- Ensure Sefton has the core infrastructure and associated services in place to maximise the opportunities afforded by digital, including capitalising on existing investments to ensure value for money.
- Make sure that all residents can access services via a method most convenient for their needs.
- Empower our staff to transform data into intelligence by equipping them with the digital tools, skills, and training that they need to make better use of the information and data we collect to inform the delivery of core services and the ambitions within our Corporate Strategy.
- Support staff to achieve their full potential and deliver great outcomes for the residents of the Sefton.

2. Process of Development

2.1 Engagement activity has been undertaken with Executive Directors to ensure alignment of the key priorities within the strategy to core business deliverables and the priorities within the Corporate Plan, Further consultation on the key themes and priorities for delivery has also taken place with officers via our network of ICT Champions.

2.2 To ensure alignment to regional and national strategies work has been undertaken to make sure that the ambitions within Sefton's Digital Strategy align to the regional strategy and projects underway across the Liverpool City Region, including work being undertaken by Integrated Care Board. Links have also been made to national strategies and guidance where these exist for example: NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) Cyber Guidance, the NHS Digital Strategy and national guidance and strategies from the Local Government Association and the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM). The document is deliberately a three-year strategy due to the rapid pace of change in this area.

2.3 Over Summer 2024 public consultation took place on the proposed Strategy, with most respondents agreeing with the core themes and issues identified. A summary of the consultation feedback along with the Council's responses to issues raised can be found within Appendix C of this document.

2.4 Over the next three years the delivery of the Strategy will be reflected in the development of key programmes of work and associated governance structures. The progress and impact of the strategy will be driven through a programme boards, which will be accountable for the delivery of the key priorities and projects documented with the strategy. Regular updates on delivery will be

provided directly to the Executive Leadership Team. An annual report on the delivery will also be provided to Overview and Scrutiny alongside the Annual ICT report, with regular updates also provided to the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Commercial Services, with reports to wider Members as required.

3. Financial Implications

There are 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.

4. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

5. Risk Implications

There are no direct risk implications due to the delivery of the strategic documentation, risk in relation to programme delivery will be managed in line with the Council's Risk Management procedure.

6 Staffing HR Implications

There are no direct staffing implications due to the delivery of the strategic documentation, should specific projects have an implication on staffing then the appropriate process will be followed for that specific project.

7 Conclusion

7.1 As highlighted within this report, digital supports many projects within Sefton's Corporate Plan, given the many interdependencies and priorities it is essential for the Council to have a clear strategy and plan, to ensure the delivery of both the technology and cultural changes needed. Thereby ensuring that services can be delivered more efficiently, residents are enabled to take advantage of the potential digital brings both at home and in work and that local businesses are empowered to take advantage of new markets to grow and thrive.

7.2 Following strategy approval each priority will have a programme of work and associated action plan developed, which will include measurable outcomes to evidence impact and improvement. These programmes of work will link to the overarching Liverpool City Region's Digital Strategy, as relevant, thus removing any duplication of effort and ensuring the efficient deployment of local capacity.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Alternative option, not to have a strategy is rejected given that digital is a key enabler for service delivery across the Council.

Equality Implications:

An equalities impact assessment was completed prior to the formal consultation, this was reported to the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel in May 2024.

It is expected that each programme and project will have its own equalities impact assessment to ensure that each project takes account of protected characteristics as necessary, completion of these will be picked up via the appropriate governance board.

Impact on Children and Young People:

The strategy includes objectives to support the Children's Improvement Plan, the integrated care agenda and a specific aim to support our young people to be ready for the jobs of the future.

Climate Emergency Implications:

The recommendations within this report will have a positive impact. The last iteration of the strategy included core deliverables such as cloud migration, which reduced local emissions associated with the operation of a local data centre. This new strategy includes a specific section to reduce where possible the carbon associated with the delivery of the ICT Service

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**(A) Internal Consultations**

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 7884/25) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 5884/25) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report. In addition, as outlined within section 2.1 of this report wider consultation has taken place with Executive Officers, Staff Groups and members.

Further to the above in line with paragraph 6.13 of the Executive Scrutiny Protocol the revised strategy document, and consultation feedback was presented to Overview and Scrutiny on the 20th of January 2025, where members accepted and noted the contents of the report.

(B) External Consultations

As detailed within section 2.3 of this report public consultation took place over the summer of 2024, the results of which can be found within Appendix C.

Implementation Date for the Decision:

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Cabinet decision.

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:

Appendix A Sefton's Digital Strategy

Appendix B Sefton's Digital Strategy Easy Read Version

Appendix C Digital Strategy, Consultation Comments and Council Responses from the Questionnaire

Background Papers:

Digital Strategy 2021 – 2023, which can be found within the following location

[Sefton Council Digital Strategy 2020-2023](#)