

**CABINET
24 MARCH 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY 2020-2025

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR IAN ALBERT

CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

NEW COUNCIL PRIORITY: BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the I.T. Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That Cabinet adopts the I.T. Strategy

2.2. That authority to make amendments to the Strategy in light of changing technology or business requirements be delegated to the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance & IT.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To enable the Council to move forward with its planning for IT development and expenditure over the next five years.

3.2 To ensure the Service is modern, fit for purpose and able to adapt to and support the ever-changing software solutions, and hardware that service departments are required to use.

3.3 To prioritise the work on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to improve the service to customers and make efficiencies.

3.4 To ensure the IT Infrastructure has the highest levels of security to ensure it is protected against the ever-increasing Cyber and Virus Security threats.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. The Strategy presented is considered to be the best option having considered many different possible options during its preparation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's Senior Management Team, the Executive Member for Finance & I.T, and Deputy Executive Member for Finance & I.T. Members of the MOD.GOV Group were invited to respond.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 7 February 2020.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The first I.T. Strategy for the period 2015-2020 was approved and adopted by Cabinet on 29 September 2015. This is now in need of updating in view of advances in technology, greater threats from cyber crime and a revision of the Council's Strategic Objectives.
- 7.2. Since the original I.T Strategy was adopted in 2015, there has been and continues to be a large increase in Cyber Security attacks, making this a high priority moving forward.
- 7.3. Since the last I.T. Strategy was adopted, there have been advances in technology, particularly around AI and RPA, which can provide a platform for the Council to improve access to services for customers, make processing quicker and make savings resulting from fewer customer contacts.
- 7.4. The Council has made a start on this work and is currently working on a Channel Shift Strategy and Business Case for the implementation of AI and RPA, which will be presented to Cabinet later in the year. Implementation of this will be a high priority for the IT Team and the wider Council moving forward and may require a review of the Strategy in due course to reflect this.
- 7.5. Prior to the introduction of the original I.T. Strategy, the Council had a General Fund Reserve for I.T. from which purchases were made to replace obsolete kit. This was removed in 2014 and the I.T. Service is now required to make capital bids for equipment replenishment each year. This Strategy sets out, as far as is possible, the expected capital spend on equipment for the next five years and explains the policy now to retain (sweat) assets for a much longer period than previously.
- 7.6. During the life cycle of the current I.T Strategy, Cloud hosting or even Full Managed Services (SaaS) has been very prevalent and adopted within several service areas with the latest department being HR with the new I-Tent Payroll solution.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The new Strategy needs to ensure that the Service is fit for purpose for the next five years and that it concentrates on working with users to ensure that systems are secure and that the objectives of user departments and the Council are met.

8.2 Priorities for the next five years include:

- Continuation of the work to support the Channel Shift initiative
- Implementation of Customer and Councillor Portals
- Ensuring that systems remain secure
- Ensuring equipment is refreshed and kept up-to-date
- More work to mitigate against potential data protection breaches
- Ensuring that solutions are environmentally friendly

8.3 There is particular emphasis on developing solutions that sit on Smart Phones, Androids Tablets and IOS technologies which will promote self-help for customers and thereby create efficiencies. The integration of GIS mapping into solutions will also make it easier for customers to report matters such as fly-tipping, missed bins etc. and promotes greater use of mobile working.

8.4 I.T. is clearly a quickly developing industry in both Hardware and Software solutions so it is with some difficulty that accurate predictions can be made five years in advance. Almost certainly there will be advances in technology during the life of this Strategy of which the Council will likely take advantage and consequently this is a document that will need to be updated.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Section 5.6 of the Council's constitution states:

The Cabinet may exercise the following functions:

By Resolution

5.6.1 To prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Any I.T. implementation has to be supported by a fully costed business case and it is therefore for service departments to ensure that any developments are fully funded.

10.2. The capital costs associated with the replacement of hardware are detailed within the Strategy as far as it is possible to predict.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. The Strategy sets out the service requirements and philosophy adopted by the I.T. Service in addition to its commitment to support colleagues in meeting their business needs. As such this provides clarity on what is required by service departments when considering any projects where I.T. is concerned.

11.2. The Strategy also covers the on-going needs to mitigate against the risks of cyber attacks and the need to ensure that the Council manages its data to ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. The ability for faster and more simplified logging in access will potentially improve access to council services for customers. The added flexibility of accessing services outside of office hours may also increase the interaction to the benefit of residents.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no Human Resources implications to this report.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1. I.T Strategy
- 15.2. I.T Strategy Appendix 1 – I.T Structure
- 15.3. I.T Strategy Appendix 2 – I.T Team Responsibilities
- 15.4. I.T Strategy Appendix 3 - Corporate I.T. Risks

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1. None