

Draft Hillingdon Digital Strategy

Committee name	Corporate Resources and Infrastructure Select Committee
Officer reporting	Matthew Wallbridge, Digital & Intelligence Services
Papers with report	Appendix A - Digital Strategy
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report presents the council's Digital Strategy for the next three years.

Building upon the full Council Strategy 2022-2026, approved by Cabinet in October 2022, the Digital Strategy will support our five commitments to residents, in particular our aim to be a digital-enabled, modern, well-run council.

The strategy sets out the council's vision for delivering digital change, which aims to improve the way the council delivers services to residents by utilising technology. We will put residents first by enabling them to access the services they need quickly and at their own convenience, whilst also delivering more efficient and effective processes for council staff. This report to cabinet seeks to obtain approval for the Digital Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee acknowledges the draft Digital Strategy and provides comments as appropriate prior to its submission to Cabinet on 2 October 2024.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. Hillingdon Council's ambitions is to strive to be an efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents.
2. Becoming a more digital council will help improve our resident, visitor, business and staff experiences through access to modern and more efficient services and tools. The strategy sets out the steps to improve the way the council delivers services to residents by utilising technology. Becoming a digital council will enhance the experiences of residents, visitors, businesses, and staff through improved services and tools. The strategy aims to improve the way residents are able to transact with the council and find information by providing quick and convenient access to services, while also streamlining processes for council staff.
3. The report from the Finance and Corporate Services Select Committee presented at Cabinet in February 2024 referred to the Digital Strategy being key to delivering a number

of proposals; being closely aligned to service transformation and focused on leveraging technology to further enhance and streamline the council's business operations, alongside promoting self-service models internally and externally. To achieve the council agreed on 22 February 2024, to an investment of £15,816m for a Corporate Technology and Innovation budget, to drive the digital savings outlined in the council's saving programme. .

4. This investment is to deliver the Digital Strategy, and as described in the Cabinet report it is 'closely aligned to service transformation and focused on leveraging technology to further enhance and streamline the council's business operations, alongside promoting self-service models internally and externally'. The £5,270m is earmarked in the council's savings programme in relation to this investment.
5. To ensure the Digital Strategy and the associated savings are delivered at pace, delegated authority is sought for the expenditure of the Corporate Technology and Innovation budget (including all capital expenditure and contract awards).
6. Our approach to guide all our digital, technology and data transformation work will be guided by four principles:
 1. Prioritising customer needs
 2. Carrying out an agile approach to delivery
 3. Delivering new business models driven by data
 4. Taking a One Council approach.
7. Over the last few years, a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to lay the foundations for the council's digital journey and this strategy. Some specific examples of this are:
 - a. Hillingdon were the first UK local authority to deploy an automated voice and web chat solution at scale. This has allowed residents to better self-serve and get a quicker resolution to their enquiry.
 - b. Delivery of a modern and flexible infrastructure, as well as a reduction in the number of IT applications.
 - c. Implementation of hybrid working, allowing for quick adoption post the pandemic.
 - d. Ongoing delivery of a programme of connectivity improvements, increasing bandwidth across all of our sites and across the borough. When the Digital Connectivity Project started in November 2020, the council was at 5% Full Fibre. The council is currently at 75.27%, and in the top half of London Boroughs.
8. The council has been accelerating its digital journey over the past few months by :
 - a. Starting to roll out new devices and the learning and development to utilise them across the organisation so the workforce can be as productive as possible
 - b. Starting a six-week pilot programme with 100 staff using Microsoft Copilot to explore its potential to enhance processes by using prompts and digital data to produce solutions to help improve productivity, efficiency and save time in key service areas.

- c. Enhanced business intelligence across the organisation with the delivery of a single view of the household, and dashboards for our key services to understand performance and manage demand.
 - d. Improving our applications and systems in the areas like social care, HR, finance, procurement and housing.
9. To support the delivery of the Digital Strategy, five workstreams have been developed:
1. Building services online by default - Residents expect services to be online and available on any device. People should be able to pay online, and experience seamless services from us. In turn this will improve resident experience' on our customer access team and business areas, and improve our resident, visitor and business experience.
 2. Better data, better decisions - All local authorities have a lot of data, but often lack the insight to make good decisions both internally and for residents. Better data, and the ability to use it wisely, brings a huge amount of opportunities from better decisions by understanding resident needs across multiple systems.
 3. Modernise our infrastructure and systems – to be an efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council is a modern forward thinking, a modern infrastructure with systems that talk to each other, highly reliable hosting and platforms, the best of commodity technology and modern, cloud-based and application programming interface driven architecture.
 4. Build digital capability and inclusion - A highly skilled digital, data and technology resource which can be deployed to support our ongoing transformation needs. We also need to upskill our employees to be confident with technology and use this to implement the digital elements of service delivery to better meet the needs of residents and support those who do not have digital access. And in turn, ensure residents are supported to have access to and use digital devices, or supported if they can't. This will be supported by the council's Digital Inclusion strategy.
 5. Create a digital place - There is also an important role for the council in facilitating the use of digital technology to bring about further improvements within the borough, and the way it functions. This is increasingly important as Hillingdon, like many other areas, faces challenges from population growth, automation, congestion and the climate crisis.
10. Hillingdon Council is committed to being a 'digital-enabled, modern, well-run council' as demonstrated by the investment made by the council this year. This investment will ensure a better digital experience for residents and the ability to transact with the council 24/7 365 days. The council will improve its website so residents can get the information they need more quickly, and transactions will be automated so that we can divert our resources to the people that need our help the most. And through investing in tools for staff, as the Microsoft CEO (Satya Nadella) described "we will improve the productivity of our staff by removing the drudgery of process at work, and speeding up the time to human ingenuity by removing the productivity drain in what people spend their time doing".

PERFORMANCE DATA

Objective 1: To reduce the volume of resident facing contact and channel shift to online.

Measure 1: Contacts offered (calls, emails and face to face).

Objective 2: To increase take up and maximise resident self-service.

Measure 2: Total Contacts that are self-service/digital.

Objective 3: To reduce the spend on customer experience by reducing demand both over the phone and face to face

Measure 3: Total spend on customer experience

Objective 4: To reduce the officer time for business areas spent on back-office processing, through better systems integration and automation

Measure 4: Total spend on business support

Objective 5: Reduced paper usage, helping to meet the council's climate commitments

Measure 5: Total spend of printing and postage

RESIDENT BENEFIT

The three-year Digital Strategy presented in this report provides the vision and a comprehensive framework of commitments to residents which seek to continue to enhance the borough and continuously improve council services to be modern, represent value for money and meet residents' needs.

Residents will have a vastly improved experience when interacting with the council in accessing services and information. They will be able to carry out simple transactions quickly and easily, with a more joined up approach ensuring they only need to make contact once.

The council will have a better understanding of our residents, through the smarter use of joined-up data. We will be using modern technology to join data sets and get insights which allow us to continuously improve our services and make better decisions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and the draft Digital Strategy, noting that the ambitions set out for both Residents and the council will inform ongoing development of the Medium-Term Financial Forecast and Budget Strategy. As noted above, there are no direct financial implications arising from the development of and consultation on the draft council Strategy.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services confirm that there are no legal impediments to the council adopting the proposed strategy which is in accordance with the outcome of the consultation.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Council Strategy 2022-2026](#)

APPENDICES

Digital Strategy