ICT Strategy – 2022/23 to 2026/27

Purpose of this strategy

To provide the direction and foundations to ensure that the council develops its technology and ICT systems sufficiently to be fully digital by 31 March 2027, in the process ensuring that the data held on those systems is held securely and can only be accessed by persons authorised to do so.

Themes and Actions

This strategy is made up of four key themes:

Maintenance and security of all ICT systems

Further measures will be introduced in order to prevent successful cyber-attacks. These measures are in addition to the recent introduction of software that constantly scans our software systems to ensure that any potential threats are nullified before they occur (Tenable).

Additional measures will be put in place that allow for the quick and structured recovery of ICT systems should we be the victim of a successful cyber-attack (additional servers etc., to be located at alternative venues).

We will continue to develop an ongoing maintenance and rolling-review/replacement programme in respect of our existing systems, ensuring that upgrades are carried out in a timely manner, thus removing the issues that arise from using outdated versions of software systems that are no longer fit for purpose or supported. The costs of replacing obsolete and outdated software will be met from the ICT reserve, a fund created specifically for this purpose. See appendix A for the current maintenance and replacement programme.

Wherever affordable and proportionate, we will look to move our ICT systems across to fully hosted/cloud-based services. This will help us better ensure that these systems are available and maintained to their maximum capacity with the least requirement for internal technical expertise.

Wherever it isn't viable to move to a hosted system, ICT Officers will be provided with training to ensure that they are better able to maintain those "in-house" systems.

Identification and implementation of new software systems to take our digital programme forward

To enable the identification and development of new software systems to meet our digital strategy objectives:

- a dedicated ICT Digital Programme Lead has already been recruited
- the numbers of ICT Applications Analysts have been increased from two to three

- the Contact Centre Systems team has been expanded in order to provide additional support for the development of new and existing software systems

The initial projects in our ongoing programme of new implementations have already been agreed and are underway:

- The procurement and implementation of a new telephony system;
- The procurement of an updated revenues and benefits document management system that will also be utilised by the Legal Services team and could be rolled out to others;
- The digitalisation of the various application forms and processes currently in use in the Licensing team via the Jadu CXM software system;
- The procurement and implementation of council tax inspection software that will allow for the electronic storage of information relating to new builds, renovations, extensions and remove the need for the creation and upkeep of paper records.
- Enhancing various functions on our website including the search and maps.
- Expanding the online booking system for events.
- Implementing Chip and Pin and replacing the current EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) system used by our theatres.

A mechanism and funding is in place for Services/Teams to present a digital business case via the Digital Transformation Board for its consideration.

The training and development of staff

The successful delivery of fully digital services depends very much on having staff that are trained and experienced in using digital systems. To ensure that this is the case a comprehensive training programme will be delivered that will ultimately enable all staff to proficiently operate corporate software packages including Office 365, Sharepoint and OneDrive.

A learning programme is to be developed for ICT staff in order to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and expertise to maintain and develop our software systems proficiently. This programme will also help address ongoing issues around "single points of failure" at the same time ensuring that succession plans are in place that cover all ICT posts. Annual cyber-security training will also form part of this programme.

The maximisation of our digital offering to residents

Having procured and implemented a new website and Citizen Portal in July 2021, we are now in the process of developing the system to its full potential in order to maximise access to online services for our customers.

We are going to develop our services further, so that online becomes our default way of communication and doing business. However, we will still maintain a traditional service provision i.e. phone and face to face for those of our residents that do not want to or are unable to transact with us online.

Wherever possible we will look to develop and implement the digital services our residents want and request. An important part of this will be regular stakeholder engagement which will involve surveys and focus groups etc., as required.