Item: 8

Asset Management Sub-committee: 26 January 2021.

Information Technology Strategy.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the draft Information Technology Strategy for 2021-2024.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Information Technology Strategy 2017 to 2020 has been updated following internal consultation.

2.2.

The revised draft Information Technology Strategy, for the period 2021 to 2024, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

It is recommended:

2.3.

That the Information Technology Strategy, for the period 2021 to 2024, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

The Council has had an Information Technology Strategy in place for many years. The current version was approved by Council in July 2017, and is based on consultation, carried out between March and June 2017, with staff in all services and with elected members. The Strategy ran until 2020 and is now due for updating.

4. Updated Strategy

4.1.

Internal consultation on an updated Information Technology Strategy was carried out at the end of 2020, and the draft Information Technology Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, takes account of all feedback received. The basic approach and the fundamental principles remain the same. The draft Strategy has been updated to reflect the significant amount of progress made since 2017 and the work that will be needed to meet the anticipated challenges ahead.

4.2.

The Strategy seeks to:

- Continue to improve the Council's underlying infrastructure.
- Provide the foundations for the rapidly accelerating shift towards digital delivery and support the objectives of the Digital Strategy.

4.3.

The Strategy groups actions under the following themes:

- Cyber Security.
- Governance.
- Customer Focus.
- Digital Workforce.
- Infrastructure and Systems.
- Internal and External Communications.

4.4.

The Information Technology Strategy and the Digital Strategy are closely related. The Information Technology Strategy is a technical plan which underpins and supports delivery of the Digital Strategy and focusses on improving and sustaining the Council's IT systems and infrastructure The Digital Strategy sets the vision and objectives through which all services across the Council will harness digital developments to provide improved, more efficient services for the public. The Digital Strategy is also under review and should be ready for consideration by elected members in Summer 2021.

5. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

6. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and scrutiny and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

7. Financial Implications

7.1.

The report does not attempt to quantify the resource requirements associated with the Information Technology Strategy 2021 to 2024.

7.2.

The implementation of any strategy will be subject to the development of delivery plans in the future, which once fully costed will be duly considered, prioritised and resourced as appropriate.

8. Legal Aspects

The implementation of an updated Information Technology Strategy will help the Council to meet its obligation to secure best value.

9. Contact Officers

Gavin Bar, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, Email gavin.barr@orkney.gov.uk.

Hayley Green, Head of IT and Facilities, Email hayley.green@orkney.gov.uk.

Kenny MacPherson, IT Service Manager, Email kenny.macpherson@orkney.gov.uk.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Technology Strategy 2021 - 2024.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.

ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Information Technology Strategy 2021 to 2024

Contents

Introduction

In the course of the previous ICT strategy covering 2017 to 2020, the Council's ICT environment has undergone significant levels of transformation and renewal, which has delivered improvements in capacity, capability, connectivity, and resilience.

Of greatest significance has been the adoption of Microsoft365 cloud services as one of the principal components of the technology platform. This delivered a stable and secure e-mail platform to support the Council's communications. Not only did this return major improvements in service availability, but it provided the platform to allow the Council to continue to operate through the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, via the utilisation of secure, remote access and communications using Microsoft Teams.

The impact of the Covid-19 emergency is that previously normal practices have very quickly been superseded by the "new normal" and the public sector continues to understand and address these challenges as they continue to evolve. De-facto use of building and physical locations and local area networks is no longer adequate as many staff now work from home, from remote locations and offices.

While the emergency accelerated the shift to digital, this "Digital Shift" was already in progress. Service user expectation to engage with the Council through digital channels continues to increase but limitations in consumer connectivity in Orkney are still a constraining factor in progress and maintains a complementary demand for the traditional means of face to face and telephone.

This means that we must continue to support service delivery to match these demands, whilst at the same time recognising that for a good number of our customers, the more traditional methods are working well and need to be maintained.

We continue to provide cost effective secure ICT solutions for our staff and customers.

ICT, done well, reduces workloads, simplifies processing, supports better systems integration, and provides efficiencies.

Further to this, we will adopt a common approach to technology as much as is practical, so that solutions are repeatable, equipment is standardized, and economies of scale can occur by doing many things the same way as best we can. IT should not be a "pick and mix" solution and what works in one area should be broadly repeatable.

Simplifying IT sits at the heart of the successful adoption of digital solutions, ensuring good practice is well understood and ensuring secure practice. If it is hard to understand it is hard to support and hard to secure. IT needs to stay simple as far as practical.

Distributing this offering across the organisation and across the complex geography of Orkney is a growing demand, and meeting this need by providing an IT solution that is common, simple and everywhere underpins this strategy, along with the need to ensure and assure from a standpoint of privacy, security and governance.

We have established effective ICT governance, and an open communications approach, by regularly presenting our improvement plans to members and staff through news bulletins, seminars and committees. We have established an ICT culture of proactively asking for and listening to feedback on our services and have adopted a continuous improvement approach based on our customer's identified requirements.

This document outlines our direction, highlights our priorities and compliments our Digital Strategy. It reflects feedback from our consultations and aims at providing a strategy that will support a flexible modern agile approach to providing ICT services.

Cyber Security

Moving into the future, Orkney Islands Council will become increasingly dependent on the use of digital technologies to provide services and to communicate with its citizens. With the increase in the use of publicly visible technology, there is an increased risk of exposure to threats from criminal and other malicious parties. There has been a significant rise in the incidence of cybercrime in recent years with no signs of this trend abating. The Council must rise to the challenge of meeting this increased risk through implementation of strong security controls and raising staff awareness while at the same time enabling the use of innovative and progressive technological solutions where possible.

Cyber security is a term that encompasses the technological areas of Information Security and focuses on protective mechanisms and controls for ICT infrastructure and services. It is based on sections of the Information Security standard ISO27002 and the Cyber security standard ISO27032.

The purpose of the Cyber Security section within this Strategy is to maintain a secure physical and virtual environment, with a high degree of resilience and confidence, based on national standards, and to maximise the benefits to the Council and its citizens.

Strategic Targets

- To adopt recognised standards to counteract cyber threats including the UK Government Cyber Essentials scheme.
- To implement suitable security controls to support efficient functioning of OIC ICT infrastructure.
- To develop co-operative connectivity with public sector and third sector bodies.
- To develop a culture of security by raising awareness of personnel to vulnerabilities, risks and threats from cyberspace and the need to protect information systems.
- To actively participate in national initiatives for sharing intelligence.

Governance

Good governance helps to ensure that investment in ICT delivers benefits to the wider community as well as addressing corporate and service objectives. Our local plan will take account of national and local initiatives and developments. We continue to work closely with colleagues in the NHS and we will seek opportunities to work with other Orkney based partners.

Together with other Scottish Councils including Highland Council, Moray Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, we are members of the Pathfinder North Project and we are also in Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN). These partnerships provide a firm platform for deriving benefits from joint working, shared systems, and procurement.

Good governance requires us to be open and accountable. Feedback from stakeholders tells us that we need to explain our services and the value of changes to the business.

Strategic Targets

- Asset Management Sub-committee considers reports from ICT on a regular basis, including on the delivery of this Strategy, the ICT Capital Programme and the ICT Asset Management Plan.
- The Information Services Programme Board (ISPB) meets four times a year to review ICT Performance, consider significant change requests, agree the ICT Capital Programme and ensure strategic fit working with the Council's Asset Management Strategy.
- The Digital Member Officer Working Group will continue to meet as required and will include as part of their remit the need for effective ICT infrastructure and systems to support delivery of the outcomes in the Digital Strategy.

Customer Focus

What we do as a Council touches the lives of most people in Orkney. Much of the time it won't be noticed, which is how it should be. Our services are provided in the background, efficiently and there when they are needed. Our staff need ICT to support them in delivering these services. At the same time our customers have an increasing expectation to be able to use technology to interact with our services at a time and in a way that suits them.

Technology can be difficult to understand and use. ICT will use their expertise to work with Services to introduce ICT that has a stronger 'Customer Focus'. Any new system needs to meet the needs of our external and internal customers, with the design stage taking both into account as early as possible.

Strategic Targets

- ICT staff will continue to support the further development of the Customer Services Platform (CSP). This system provides an external internet-based service interface for our customers whilst providing staff with a platform to track and progress service requests efficiently.
- ICT will use feedback from customers and staff to deliver continuous improvements to our business processes.
- We will review our Service Charter and introduce new targets as appropriate to support our changing business needs.
- For staff, we will work with Customer Services to improve internal fault reporting and service delivery through the Service Desk, and make sure that all important information is communicated effectively and clearly to staff.
- For Services, we will continue to support and work with the Digital Champions network to shape our use of new digital technologies.
- We will encourage our stakeholders to work with the Digital Champions to discuss their issues and any planned ICT developments.
- Where available and appropriate we will use technology and user workshops to train and inform staff on our service technologies.
- We will concentrate on developing and updating user guidance with the aim to make our staff more technically independent on the systems they use.

Digital Workforce

Technology offers a tangible benefit to customers. ICT therefore needs to embrace emerging technology and deliver a service that meets our customer expectations. This also means supporting our workforce to develop their own digital skills and implementing hardware that supports a more digital workforce.

Staff currently use some inefficient paper-based processes that absorb both time and money needlessly. Along with staff and stakeholders, ICT needs to continue to streamline and improve these internal processes using available and emerging technologies and create a digitally educated and aware modern workforce. At the same time, and through effective implementation of service workforce planning, all teams have the opportunity to attract new staff who are likely to be more intuitive users of technology, and this will begin to tip the balance towards a more confident Digital Workforce.

Strategic Targets

- Support the introduction of new streamlined electronic processes and collaborative communications using available interactive technologies, such as Office 365, Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS), CSP and many other available ICT solutions.
- Demonstrate leadership behaviour that supports and fuels a digital culture among staff and customers.
- Listen to and support staff on how 'to get the best', from these systems through providing pro-active knowledge bases.
- Advise on appropriate training using available browser based interactive platforms such as provided by partners, iLearn, ICT Helpdesk and all other available resources.
- Improve and develop our staff's digital competency.

Infrastructure and Systems

The Council's ICT assets, both physical and data, need constant maintenance and investment to ensure they remain fit for purpose and can fully support the Council's business objectives. These systems must be resilient, secure, available and enable improved public services whilst supporting innovation and change.

When ensuring resilience, consideration must also be given to responsible and careful arrangements around the supply and consumption of energy. Making use of such technologies as Cloud services, server virtualisation and remote collaboration and conferencing will assist in achieving a 'power light' collaborative green digital strategy.

One of the key themes of the recent digital transformation is the move "out" of the buildings and beyond the normal perimeters of the council's local area network. Therefore, there is a challenge to be met in the continuing established of a OIC network without walls that provides access to IT systems widely, flexibly, securely and responsively.

Continuing partnerships and collaboration with other councils has provided further opportunities to understand, enhance and improve our digital approach and overall network capabilities. Such partnerships as the Society of Council IT Managers (SOCITM), Pathfinder and SWAN along with our own locally implemented improvements have provided an understanding that we can apply to expanding and linking our digital network to our users throughout our islands, premises, and schools.

Furthermore, our partnerships in the public sector, especially across Orkney, and our relationship with the technology economy across the isles, will be of importance. While we cannot merge infrastructure and systems across discrete organisations, we will seek to enhance our partnership and digital collaboration.

Strategic Targets

- We will continue our existing activities to 'harden' our local core infrastructure to provide an accessible, secure, and stable ICT platform for existing and future systems requirements.
- Ensure that our network fully enables access to electronic resources such as the Scottish Educational Digital Network (GLOW) and supports Council employees working in more flexible and mobile ways, including widening access to the Intranet.
- Continue to develop the use of Cloud technologies to enhance our ICT offerings to customers and staff on an enhanced expanded local to cloud based network infrastructure.
- Work with staff and partners in meeting their expectations and needs through identifying what systems and equipment are required; improve efficiencies by identifying and removing redundant systems on our infrastructure.
- Ensure our ICT Infrastructure represents 'value for money' and supports the council's business objectives.
- Improve our resilience and disaster recovery infrastructure through the successful implementation of our ICT Disaster Recovery and Resilience Capital Programme, which includes partnership working with NHS Orkney.
- Ensure that our data holdings are secure, accurate and available to services to derive maximum value from the data we hold.

Internal and External Customer Communications

Effective communications between our customers, partners and staff is an essential ingredient to provide high quality Council services. Balancing security and data protection obligations, while providing good ways to collaborate with partner organisations in the public sector and Orkney economy will be a theme for our enhancements in our digital offerings.

Documentation and access to documentation forms an essential part of effective technology based interactive services. It provides information to customers and staff required to deliver services. We will continue to support the ongoing development of Records Management solutions and governance standards being applied across the Council's data holdings both on-premise and in the cloud, which will help us produce a robust documentation infrastructure, while meeting our green targets.

Strategic Targets

- Continuously improve the Council's digital communications infrastructure and encourage its use, through providing facilities to support Council employees and customers to work and interact in a more flexible and mobile way, supporting sustainable communities.
- Introduce and promote digital document and record management to support effective, secure document creation and storage.
- Ensure easy access for staff and customers to information and meet our legislative data management requirements.

- Continuously improve our use of technology and work towards using systems that are used by others
- Work proactively with partner organisations and other councils to achieve the best fit technologies for our customers - do not re-invent the wheel.
- Assist Customer Services to improve the way we work and communicate with our customers. Continuously review the way we collect staff and customer feedback through surveys and providing information on our activities and plans to our customers and staff.
- Continue to develop our ITIL processes around IT support in incident management, service management, problem management, change management and asset management, including the creation of staff 'self-help'.

Delivery of the Strategy

Each key aspect of this Strategy will be allocated to a lead officer within the IT Management Team and they will be responsible for preparing a Delivery Plan to demonstrate how each of the Strategic Targets will be delivered.

These Plans will set out the operational targets, resources required and performance indicators to demonstrate improvement.

Scrutiny of this Delivery Plan with be through regular (twice a year) reports to the Information Services Programme Board (ISPB) and the Asset Management Sub-committee.

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan

Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Information Technology Strategy 2021 to 2024.
Service / service area responsible.	IT and Facilities, Corporate Services.
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Hayley Green.
Date of assessment.	07 January 2021.
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Replacement strategy.

2. Initial Screening

What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	The Information Technology Strategy 2021 to 2024 sets out a framework for Orkney Islands Council to provide cost effective, secure ICT solutions for staff and customers. To adopt a common approach to technology as much as is practical, and to simplify IT through the provision of successful digital solutions, ensuing good practice is well understood by all.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	Yes, the IT Strategy sets out the principles by which the Council will invest in an IT Infrastructure to deliver Council Services.
State who is, or may be affected by this function /	Elected Members, staff and members of the public who use technology to deliver or access council

policy / plan, and how.	services.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	There has been internal consultation and the updated Strategy has been agreed by the Information Services Programme Board.
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).	At national level there is a 'digital by design' strategy focused on redesigning government digital services to make them 'so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded'. This IT Strategy supports OIC's Digital Strategy in that providing a reliable and resilient IT Infrastructure is fundamental when any organisation is seeking to expand the services that can be delivered digitally. Poor digital connectivity is frequently cited as an issue affecting rural areas. Orkney Islands Council recognise the impact of not having access to resilient, effective and high speed digital communications and continue to commit to making improvements in this area. We have committed to maintain traditional methods of engaging with the Council and Council Services, to make sure that no citizens are disadvantaged by lack of connectivity. The push for digital is based on a requirement to make savings which could, over time, lead to the removal of traditional methods to engage with government. This may have an impact on citizen groups who are 'digitally disengaged'. Research indicates that these are likely to be older people, those with disabilities, and people without digital skills.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Interim Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	Age UK statistics suggest that people in higher socio-economic groups are more likely to use the internet than those in lower groups. Among those aged 75+, nearly two-thirds (65%) of those in group AB, and 42% of C1s, use the internet compared to just a fifth in the lower socio-economic groups (20% of C2s and 19% of DEs).
Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons).

1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	Improving the use of Information Technology support the facilitation of translating content into a variety of languages which will have a positive impact for users who do not have English as their first language.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Nationally ONS statistics suggest that for the 55 and over age group over 40% have never used the internet. It is however noted that improving the use of Information Technology that is fit for purpose, and which uses a continuous improvement approach in development phases, is likely to have a positive impact for users of all ages.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
8. Caring responsibilities.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
9. Care experienced.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	Impact is unlikely to be significant.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health) Some disabilities can have a significant impact on the use of Information Technology. These impacts can arise from the complexity and cost of assistive technology and the lack of easily understandable information and training for the needs. Whilst the Strategy seeks to provide Information Technology solutions that are fit for purpose and follow best practice including those around inclusion and accessibility, OIC continues to support reasonable adjustments for individual staff members as required.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	People in higher socio-economic groups are more likely to use the internet than those in lower groups.
13. Isles-proofing.	Poor digital connectivity is frequently cited as an

	issue affecting rural areas including our outer-isles.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	Yes.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	A detailed Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken for each digital service and information technology solution that is introduced.
	Digital Services should be, in as far as practicable, be accessible in the wider sense taking into account the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) Better Connected recommendation in order to ensure that user accessibility and friendliness is a priority.
	Digital Services should, in a narrow technical sense, also be compliant with W3C web usability standards ensuring that it is accessible to people with disabilities and offer to provide assistance to people needing help accessing content online or with filling in forms.
	The Council continue to follow best practice in regard to digital accessibility and use of Information Technology.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes.

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	Yes.
What action is to be taken?	Most of the actions needed to minimise negative impacts are contained in the Information Technology Strategy or should be identified through individual Equality Impact Assessments as services and solutions are developed and introduced.
Who will undertake it?	IT Services Manager, or lead Service Managers (subject to the issue)
When will it be done?	As required
How will it be monitored? (e.g.	Annually as the strategy is reviewed.

through service plans).	

Signature:

Date: 7th January 2021

Name: HAYLEY GREEN (BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk