Item: 23

Policy and Resources Committee: 19 September 2023.

Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.

Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan for the period 2023 – 2026.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 22 February 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended that the updated Digital Strategy 2022 to 2026 be approved.

2.2.

That a delivery plan, which details actions to deliver on the aims and outcomes of the Digital Strategy 2022 – 2026, and those of the Council Plan 2023 – 2028, has been developed.

It is recommended:

2.3.

That the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan 2023 – 2026, attached as Appendix 3 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

On 2 February 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended that the updated Digital Strategy 2022 to 2026 be approved.

3.2.

The Strategy sets out three core strategic priorities:

- Digital Communities and Wellbeing.
- A Digital Islands Economy.
- Digital Local Government and Services.

3.3.

Each of the core strategic priorities has associated measures, with each measure containing a number of objectives. A full overview of the structure can be seen in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.4.

The Digital Strategy 2022 – 2026 has since been further considered in the context of the new Council Plan 2023 – 2028, and its associated Delivery Plan.

3.5.

Work has already taken place to progress the objectives from the Digital Strategy through a number of workstreams, and Appendix 2 sets out which workstream is contributing to the progression of each objective.

3.6.

A key link is with the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan, which sets out to deliver the maintenance and continuous improvement of the Council's underlying digital infrastructure, providing the foundation for the actions in the proposed Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.

3.7.

The proposed Digital Strategy Delivery Plan aims to progress both the objectives from the Digital Strategy as well as deliver projects from the Council Plan Delivery Plan.

4. Developing the Council's Digital Services

4.1.

The need to develop the Council's digital service delivery is broadly acknowledged and the Council has made significant progress in recent years. Citizens now expect, rightly, to be able to interact digitally with the Council, and that their data will be stored and used in case management systems which are secured, properly maintained and updated, and fit for purpose.

4.2.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the Council to digitalise services at pace and there are now a number of ways that citizens can interact with the Council digitally through the online Customer Service Platform, and a number of internal services have benefitted from digitalisation for example through the use of Microsoft Teams.

4.3.

Although officers moved quickly to digitalise service delivery and citizen interaction, the underlying business processes have not yet been fully developed to utilise digital capabilities, and digital progress is not underpinned with a clear strategic direction, setting out how technology will be used to deliver services in the future.

4.4.

In addition, a clear direction has not been set for all of the core corporate systems to ensure that they meet the needs of citizens. While some of the corporate systems are up-to-date and secure, others are built on software and underlying technology which is nearing the end of its life and the Council services using those systems do not have a clear roadmap for updating and maintaining them.

4.5.

The proposed Digital Strategy Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix 3 to this report, sets out a number of actions to ensure progress on both of these fronts.

4.6.

Officers will build on the work delivered through the 'modernising IT' Change Programme project. It is intended to re-convene and expand the previous System Development Working Group, with a focus on progressing operational requirements and standardising processes for carrying out routine system maintenance, upgrade and testing. The working group will feed in to the work to develop a Corporate System Development policy, which will include a framework for developing the Council's digital systems.

4.7.

The proposed System Development Policy will also establish a process of governance for the Council's digital development, setting out key roles and responsibilities for officers and the process of governance through the Information Services Programme Board and on to Council where appropriate.

4.8.

These actions will ensure that the core corporate systems are kept up to date and that senior officers have the assurance that maintenance and upgrades follow best practice and service design principles.

4.9.

Testing will be carried out with new technologies which are already accessible through the Microsoft Power Platform, to explore the possibility of using these technologies to improve and enhance core business processes.

4.10.

Core business processes will be reviewed and proposals developed for digital solutions for consideration by the Information Services Programme Board.

4.11.

Beyond this, in the medium term, other technologies on the market will be reviewed, to look at whether the Council is making the most of technology.

4.12.

The outcomes from the Delivery Plan will be reviewed and this will provide key learning which will influence the next Digital and Data Strategy from 2026 onwards.

5. Island Communities Impact

As the service being developed in terms of this report has been assessed as being unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in Orkney, a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

6. Links to Council Plan

6.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Transforming our council.

6.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority T6 of the Council Delivery Plan, Improving our processes through the development of our systems.

7. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Local Equality.

8. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from the actions outlined in the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan. The actions set out in the Delivery Plan should be met from approved budgets, or have additional funding secured.

9. Legal Aspects

There are no legal aspects which need to be addressed as a consequence of the actions outlined in the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.

10. Contact Officers

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of Digital Strategy outcomes.

Appendix 2: Overview of links to other plans and workstreams.

Appendix 3: Proposed Digital Strategy Delivery Plan 2023 – 2026.

Appendix 1 – Overview of Digital Strategy Objectives

Strategic Priorities	Digital Communities and Wellbeing			A Digital Islands Economy		Digital Local Government and Services	
Measures	Connected Communities – Access of All	Ethical and Sustainable Digital Islands	Thriving Digital Communities	Enterprising Digital Communities	Supporting Orkney's Digital Technology Sector	Public Service Partnership and Collaboration	Digital Transformation and Delivery
Objectives	Continue to develop and implement the Orkney Digital Connectivity Strategy, to ensure that all citizens and businesses can access the fastest and most reliable digital connections possible. Ensure all newly publicly-funded infrastructure is future-proofed for data requirements. Provide equipment and digital skills training to those in need. Ensure everyone can access services. Ensure infrastructure can deliver services – ensure there is adequate availability (Common, Simple, Everywhere, Inclusive) Lobby Government and regulators to overcome market failure and gaps in the delivery of essential services to Orkney	Build public trust in data. Open up access to data. Use digital technology to increase community engagement and participation. Ensure that Orkney engages with confidence on the national and international stage. Balance digital rights with the responsibility to be accountable for our actions. Explore ways to use our digital capability to help to address climate change targets	ensure digital knowledge and skills has a place in education. Improve and strengthen the digital infrastructure in schools, to support learning and teaching. Support and develop our skilled digital workforce. Support upskilling and reskilling opportunities. Support and encourage diversity in the digital skills pool.	Enable our local economy to adopt and optimise new and resilient digital technologies. Support and encourage diversity and work with industry to tackle digital skills shortages. Make more of our data available openly where appropriate and easy to find	Establish Orkney as an attractive location for green data centres. Support and encourage diversity in the digital workforce. Support the growth of the capability and capacity of local businesses who deliver technology and connectivity infrastructure and services. Sustainability and diversity in approach implement the Strategic Framework for a Cyber Resilient Scotland	Support the use of the Scottish Approach to Service Design across the public sector. Ensure that all public services are designed through the lenses of isles proofing and inclusion more broadly Ensure that public services are secure and resilient Participate in common platforms to be adopted across the public sector where appropriate	Develop cultures and working practices required to be successful in the digital age. Be open to innovation to meet our Island need Adopt common digital and data standards. Continue to work with NHS Orkney, where appropriate, to integrate and strengthen systems in use by Orkney Health and Care Work with third partners to support a digital third sector. Explore the potential for technology to better enable elected council members to engage with constituents remotely. Identify how to develop better analytical platforms to make our data more usable and accessible
OPOP Priorities	Improve Connectivity Drive innovation Stimulate Economic Recovery Enable Full Potential	Inspiring Culture Drive innovation Enable Full Potential	Enable Full Potential Drive innovation Inspiring Culture Strategic Development	Drive innovation: Stimulate Economic Recovery	Drive innovation Stimulate Economic Recovery Improve Connectivity Strategic Development	Enable Full Potential Improve Connectivity Drive innovation Strategic Development	Delivery Model: Improve Connectivity Drive innovation: Enable Full Potential
NPF Outcomes	Education Poverty Communities Environment	Human Rights Children & Young People International Communities	Fair Work & Business Education Economy Poverty	Fair Work & Business Education Economy International	Environment Fair Work & Business Economy International	Health Communities Poverty Children & Young People	Poverty Economy Communities Culture

Strategic Priority: Digital Communities and Wellbeing

Connected Communities – Access of All

Objective	How this is being addressed
Continue to develop and implement the Orkney Digital Connectivity Strategy, to ensure that all citizens and businesses can access the fastest and most reliable digital connections possible.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Council Plan Delivery Plan (digital connectivity I5) and ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.
Ensure all newly publicly-funded infrastructure is future-proofed for data requirements.	This item is a general principle of delivery with work towards this objective also being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan and the Council Delivery Plan.
Provide equipment and digital skills training to those in need.	Work towards this objective being carried out by the Organisational Development service through the People Plan.
Ensure everyone can access services.	Implementation through the Customer Service Platform and similar portal-based tools.
Ensure infrastructure can deliver services – ensure there is adequate availability (Common, Simple, Everywhere, Inclusive)	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.
Lobby Government and regulators to overcome market failure and gaps in the delivery of essential services to Orkney	While political lobbying is not covered by delivery plans directly some elements of this are link being carried out through the Council Plan Delivery Plan digital connectivity (I5) project.

Ethical and Sustainable Digital Islands

Objective	How this is being addressed
Build public trust in data.	This is more of an overarching aim with work towards this objective being achieved through effective delivery of the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.

Objective	How this is being addressed
Open up access to data.	Work towards this objective being carried out as part of various Service Plans, e.g., through online publication of Freedom of Information Requests and Business Rates Data.
Use digital technology to increase community engagement and participation.	This work is being led by the Service Manager (Strategy and Partnership) with the aim to develop an online consultation portal.
Ensure that Orkney engages with confidence on the national and international stage.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Communications Strategy.
Balance digital rights with the responsibility to be accountable for our actions.	Mandatory corporate training available on Data Protection/GDPR and Information Security.
Explore ways to use our digital capability to help to address climate change targets	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Council Delivery Plan.

Thriving Digital Communities

Objective	How this is being addressed
Ensure digital knowledge and skills has a place in education.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Education service as part of curriculum development including work outlined in the Council Plan Delivery Plan (Improve Education Standards (C4)).
Improve and strengthen the digital infrastructure in schools, to support learning and teaching.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.
Support and develop our skilled digital workforce.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.
Support upskilling and reskilling opportunities.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.
Support and encourage diversity in the digital skills pool.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.

Strategic Priority: A Digital Islands Economy

Enterprising Digital Communities

Objective	How this is being addressed
Enable our local economy to adopt and optimise new and resilient digital technologies.	Work towards this objective being led by the economic development service and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, including the national Digital Boost initiative, Digital Development grants to businesses and sector-specific support e.g., the programme of support for Destination Orkney including digital skills support.
Support and encourage diversity and work with industry to tackle digital skills shortages.	Work towards this objective being led by the economic development service and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, including the national Digital Boost initiative, Digital Development grants to businesses and sector-specific support e.g., the programme of support for Destination Orkney including digital skills support.
Make more of our data available openly where appropriate and easy to find	Work towards this objective being carried out as part of various Service Plans, e.g., through online publication of Freedom of Information Requests and Business Rates Data.

Supporting Orkney's Digital Technology Sector

Objective	How this is being addressed
Establish Orkney as an attractive location for green data centres.	Work in this area was completed by Microsoft looking at submerged data centre testing.
Support and encourage diversity in the digital workforce.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.
Support the growth of the capability and capacity of local businesses who deliver technology and connectivity infrastructure and services.	Potential local opportunities through the delivery of the Council Plan Delivery Plan digital connectivity (I5) project

Objective	How this is being addressed
Sustainability and diversity in approach	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.
implement the Strategic Framework for a Cyber Resilient Scotland	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.

Strategic Priority: Digital Local Government and Services

Public Service Partnership and Collaboration

Objective	How this is being addressed
Support the use of the Scottish Approach to Service Design across the public sector.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions Directorate Delivery Plan.
Ensure that all public services are designed through the lenses of isles proofing and inclusion more broadly	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions Directorate Delivery Plan, in addition to the embedding of the Islands Community Impact Assessment within existing processes.
Ensure that public services are secure and resilient.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan and the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.
Participate in common platforms to be adopted across the public sector where appropriate	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan and Orkney Health and Care System Development Project.

Digital Transformation and Delivery

Objective	How this is being addressed
Develop cultures and working practices required to be successful in the digital age.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the People Plan.
Be open to innovation to meet our Island need.	This item is a general principle of delivery as embodies in the 'creativity' staff value. In addition, work towards this objective being supported by delivery of the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.
Adopt common digital and data standards.	This item is a general principle of delivery by aligning with appropriate standards. In addition, work towards this objective being supported by delivery of the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.
Continue to work with NHS Orkney, where appropriate, to integrate and strengthen systems in use by Orkney Health and Care	Work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan and Orkney Health and Care System Development Project.
Work with third sector partners to support a digital third sector.	There is not a specific work stream in this area at this time.
Explore the potential for technology to better enable elected council members to engage with constituents remotely.	Work towards this objective being carried out through the Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions Directorate Delivery Plan and Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.
Identify how to develop better analytical platforms to make our data more usable and accessible	This item is a general principle of systems development delivery with work towards this objective being carried out through the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan and the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan.

Digital Strategy Delivery Plan

2023 – 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the Orkney Islands Council Digital Strategy Delivery Plan. This plan covers the three financial years from 2023/24 to 2025/26 and sets out actions we will take to develop our digital systems and infrastructure during that time.

The actions we set out in this plan support the aims and objectives from the Council Plan 2023 – 2028 and serve both our internal and external customers by using technology to improve our internal processes and our interactions with customers.

Link to our Other Plans

This Digital Strategy Delivery Plan follows from the Council's Digital Strategy for 2022 – 2026, approved by elected members in February 2022.

The Digital Strategy's three core strategic priorities are:

- Digital Communities and Wellbeing,
- A Digital Islands Economy, and
- Digital Local Government and Services.

The Digital Strategy has since been superseded by the Council Plan and Council Delivery Plan 2023 – 2028, which detail the Council's aims and outcomes for Orkney, grouped into three priority themes:

- Growing our economy,
- Strengthening our communities, and
- Developing our infrastructure.

These aims and outcomes are supported by a number of priorities under a fourth overall theme - Transforming our council – to provide the foundations for staff to deliver outstanding customer service and performance.

The actions in this Digital Strategy Delivery Plan support the priority themes from the Council Plan, and the core priorities in the Digital Strategy.

Our Digital Infrastructure and Systems

Our **digital infrastructure** includes the physical infrastructure we rely on to provide our services, such as servers and network cabling, as well as our software infrastructure such as the Microsoft Windows network and firewalls.

Plans for the ongoing maintenance and development of our digital infrastructure are set out in the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan, and the development of all of our other digital systems depend on the successful progression of that plan.

Our core **digital systems** comprise both those corporate systems used council-wide, such as our Integra Finance system, and those used by the individual council services to support specialist activities, such as the Education and Housing management systems.

One of the key outcomes of this delivery plan is to ensure that our core digital systems are updated to an appropriate version, and are kept up-to-date, ensuring

the correct level functionality to meet changing business needs, in addition to ongoing support from software vendors.

Our first step in ensuring that our digital systems are kept up-to-date will be to work to identify the most crucial systems for service delivery, which we will classify as tier one systems, and those other systems important for service delivery which we will classify as tier two systems.

We will prioritise the upgrade of tier one systems in the first year of this plan to ensure that, where possible, by March 2024 all tier one systems are at the required version.

We will ensure that our digital systems remain fit for purpose by setting out a development roadmap for our each of our tier one systems which will detail how we intend to develop those systems to improve existing functionality and incorporate new functionality.

Our Business Processes

Another key outcome of this delivery plan is to modernise our core business processes, particularly some of our administrative processes, to ensure that we use available technology to automate processes and workflows where we can and make the best use of our limited resources.

In the first year of this delivery plan, we will work to identify which of our core business processes would benefit from digital improvement, and we will trial different technologies we already use to design proof-of-concept solutions for sample business processes to demonstrate the potential of these technologies and ensure we understand their use cases and limitations.

In years two and three we will design and build digital solutions for the business processes which our Corporate Leadership Team has decided we will see the most benefit from.

Other Technologies

In years two and three of this delivery plan we will undertake a review of available technologies, by looking at the market for local government technology through software vendors, and by benchmarking with other councils and external partners such as the Improvement Service.

System Development Policy

To ensure that we effectively manage our development of corporate systems and our build of solutions for digital business processes, we will design and embed a System Development Policy during year one of this delivery plan, which will include a framework for future system development work.

The framework will provide a standardised and consistent methodology for managing the system development lifecycle, including

- setting out the business case for developments,

- building, testing and implementing developments,
- developing users' digital skills to ensure successful uptake,
- defining the roles and responsibilities of the various council services, and
- measuring the benefits delivered by developments.

The System Development Framework will be used as a tool to manage future system development projects.

Roles and Responsibilities

Information Services Programme Board

The Information Services Programme Board (ISPB) is responsible for the approval, oversight and scrutiny of the actions carried out to implement the Digital Strategy Delivery Plan and the ICT Strategy Delivery Plan.

ICT Service

The ICT service is responsible for providing the underlying technological infrastructure on which corporate and service systems operate, including physical infrastructure such as servers and base corporate software such as the Microsoft 365 suite and corporate firewalls.

The ICT service will carry out upgrades to the infrastructure underlying corporate and service systems where required to maintain ongoing functionality, or where the existing infrastructure configuration requires upgrade to mitigate a risk to security or continuing vendor support.

The ICT service has overall responsibility for data security and the Information Security Officer will provide advice and guidance with respect to security on specific development projects.

System Development Team

The council's System Development Team, which sits within the Improvement and Performance service, is responsible for engaging with council services to assess development needs and recommending development priorities to the Information Systems Programme Board.

The system development team will assist services to design solutions using existing or new technologies based on service requirements, in line with the system development framework, with a focus on outcomes and benefits.

The priorities that the System Development Team support are directed by the Information Services Programme Board.

System Development Working Group

We will create a System Development Working Group with representatives from the System Development team, from the ICT service and from various council services.

The working group will look to progress the actions in this delivery plan, to align development across the council and to share best practice.

Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring the appropriate user(s) for each of their systems engage with the working group.

Updates from future working group meetings will form the basis of reporting on the current position of digital systems development to Directorate Management Teams and to the ISPB.

Governance of Digital Systems

Overall accountability for digital systems sits with the Head of Service responsible for the main user(s) of the system, and the responsible Head of service is the owner of both the digital system and the data held within it.

For some critical corporate systems, ownership may sit with a Director/Chief Officer, or with the ISPB.

System owners are responsible for ensuring that their digital systems are kept up-to-date in line with:

- Changing customer expectations and requirements,
- Regulatory changes and best practice,
- Vendor support requirements, and
- Advice and guidance from the ICT service, in particular to address infrastructure and security issues.

The System Development Team and the ICT service will provide advice and guidance where appropriate on carrying out upgrades to digital systems.

System owners are responsible for ensuring that any contracts with software vendors comply with the council's Contract Standing Orders, and should seek appropriate advice and guidance from the Procurement service when considering procuring new software, or extending or renewing an existing contract.

Contracts with software vendors, where required, should receive sign-off by the relevant chief officer, on the advice of the Procurement service.

System owners are also responsible for ensuring that the developments to existing systems and the procurement of new systems are highlighted through the System Development Working Group to allow reporting to the ISPB on an organisational basis.

Governance of Development Projects

System development projects prioritised by the Information Services Programme Board will be project-managed by the Improvement and Performance service where applicable, and will follow a defined project structure with a Project Manager reporting to a Project Board.

A Project Board will normally comprise the system owner and other senior officers representing users of a system.

An initial project plan will set out development activities during the life of the project, with each development deliverable comprising a product within the project plan.

Project Managers will provide highlight reports to Project Boards at a frequency proportional to the project, and will provide exception reports where an exception or risk of exception with project progress occurs.

Project Boards will ensure that Project Managers have access to the board through regular board meetings and additional informal discussions at a frequency proportional to the nature of the project.

Progress Reporting

The Head of Improvement and Performance will provide a report of the progress against the actions set out in this plan to the quarterly meeting of the ISPB.

The Head of Improvement and Performance will provide an annual briefing note to elected members on progress against the actions set out in this plan, or report to the relevant committee where changes to the plan or policies are recommended

Summary of Actions

Our Intended Outcomes	Actions we will take	By when	Responsible Officer(s)
Ensuring consistency in our approach to digital development and sharing of best practice Co-ordinating development of our core corporate systems	Establish System Development Working Group Corporate system development policy with development framework approved	October 2023 March 2024	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance) Service Manager (Improvement and Performance)
Meeting our business needs through the development of our systems	Identify tier one systems Identify tier two systems Upgrade of tier one systems to required version	November 2023 March 2024 March 2024	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance) Service Manager (Improvement and Performance) Heads of Service, Service Managers
Improving our core business processes through the development of our systems	Identify core business processes which require system development support Design proof-of-concept digital solutions for sample business processes Present prioritised list of planned developments for core business processes to Corporate Leadership Team for approval	March 2024 March 2024 September 2024	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance), Service Manager (Corporate Administration and Customer Service) Service Manager (Improvement and Performance) Service Manager (Improvement and Performance), Service Manager (Corporate Administration and Customer Service)

Our Intended Outcomes	Actions we will take	By when	Responsible Officer(s)
	Develop digital solutions for core business processes selected for development	March 2025	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance), Service Manager (Corporate Administration and Customer Service) Head of Improvement and Performance
Ensuring we adopt cost-effective technologies with the potential to improve our services.	Review of available technologies which can enable improved service delivery	December 2024	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance)
Ensure our digital development continues to progress beyond the life of this delivery plan	Review delivery plan outcomes Develop Digital and Data Strategy 2026/27 – 2028/29 and present to elected members for approval	March 2025	Service Manager (Improvement and Performance) Service Manager (ICT) Head of Improvement and Performance