Digital Strategy – *Customer First, Digital by Design*

1.   RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1   That the Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the Digital Strategy.

2.   INTRODUCTION

2.1   The Digital Strategy 2022/25 is the vehicle to guide NFDC through the next three years as it accelerates its digital transformation.

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   Previous ICT Strategies have focused on the creation of the secure and robust infrastructure that the council enjoys today. Alongside the development of the current environment principles have been established for the sourcing and procurement of IT systems that are sustainable and in step with the sector.

3.2   Having reached the end of the 2017-2022 ICT strategy and delivered the secure and robust infrastructure envisaged, as well as replacing several core systems, this strategy outlines how the council will retain the benefits of a contemporary ICT environment, as well as support the aspirations of the council now and into the future.

3.3   This strategy places our residents and customers first, putting the customer experience at the centre when designing our digital business processes. It also provides continuity by updating the streams of work that are now part of the council's vocabulary and sets clear goals:

Updated Strategic Stream	Goal
Resilience, Security & Smarter Working	Robust and reliable systems that underpin NFDC service delivery
	Contemporary working practices achieved through appropriate use of technology
Digital Services	Operate digital services that reduce operational costs and increase resident and customer satisfaction.

4.   STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSULTATION

4.1   To date the Digital Strategy 2022- 2025 has been drafted following discussion between the ICT Service Manager and peers across the council. The draft strategy has been through EMT with the feedback incorporated into the final draft presented with this report.

4.2   To be fit for the future, the council is developing a framework for council wide transformation. This digital strategy introduces live projects in train now that already align to the digital strategy and sets clear goals and objectives for other projects that emanate from the emerging Transformation Framework to align to.

4.3   As a live document it is available for update and refinement as the wider transformation programme of the council evolves. The Digital Strategy however also deals with the foundation stones of 'digital businesses' upon which the council can grow its 'Customer first, digital by design' services.

5.   SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

5.1   Once the strategy has been presented to the Cabinet and then Council for adoption. the process of communicating and embedding the strategy into the Council will begin with its presentation to Service Managers and their teams.

6.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

6.1   'Customer first, digital by design' is the ethos of the NFDC Digital Strategy (Appendix 1). With the following principles at the heart of the strategy:

1.   **All services will adopt full end to end digital business models**
2.   **All services will actively use data to inform decision making and report performance in real-time**
3.   **The council will develop its workforce to realise the business benefits of digital service delivery**
4.   **Services will continue to review their capabilities and capacity, reshaping services to leverage the business benefits of digital practices**

6.2   The customers of the council are entitled to efficient services that meet their needs. The council will therefore design its services around the needs of our customers, choosing effective and efficient digital solutions to fulfil those needs.

6.3   This may include consideration towards the use of robotics where customer behaviours and prescribed end-to-end journeys support this way of working. **We will also design our digital services to accommodate customers who need assistance, or who are unable to navigate our digital solutions.**

6.4   Whether assisted or self-serve the same digital solution will provide an efficient and effective service.
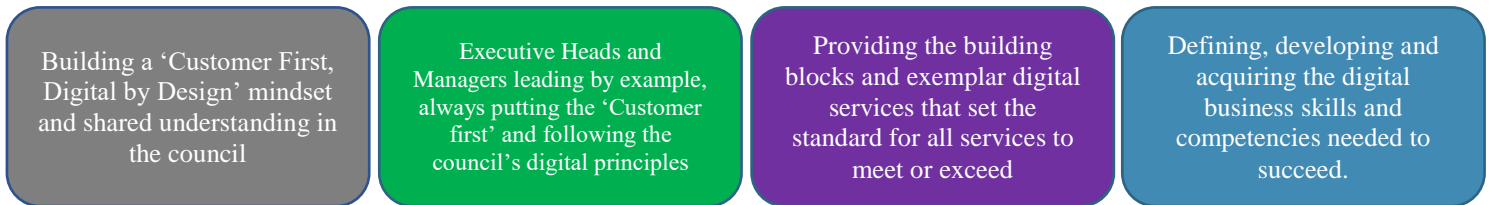
6.5   Through a 'customer first, digital by design' approach the council can offer services that are accessible to our customers twenty-four hours a day. Allowing our customers to apply for, pay for and report on issues at times that suit them.

6.6   Customer and staff expectations are such that the council will need to continuously innovate and be ambitious in its use of technology to reap the rewards and benefit for our customers.

6.7   The investment in technology to date has put the council in the enviable position of being able to remain contemporary by continuing to invest modestly on an annual basis in its digital architecture and support services.

6.8   To achieve the above the council will embark on a digital transformation that builds upon its existing investments in technology through services that are customer focused. Offering quick fulfilment, accurate information and an open 'digital door' to our customers. Bringing our customers closer to the council and the services that it offers.

6.9 The council will develop a culture that embraces 'Customer First, Digital by Design' through:

Building a 'Customer First, Digital by Design' mindset and shared understanding in the council	Executive Heads and Managers leading by example, always putting the 'Customer first' and following the council's digital principles	Providing the building blocks and exemplar digital services that set the standard for all services to meet or exceed	Defining, developing and acquiring the digital business skills and competencies needed to succeed.

6.10 The development of customer first, digital by design business processes will be facilitated through the provision of a core suite of building blocks. These building blocks will be used to deliver council services that ensure consistent, efficient and effective service delivery for our residents and customers. Whilst being capable of inter-operating with service specific software systems.

6.11 The building blocks will be available to all services providing the functionality that is universal in all service delivery. For example, all council services will use the same 'chip and pin' card payment solution, the same telephone solution for making and receiving calls, the same website for creating online presence.

6.12 This approach ensures consistency standards for customer engagement and clarity of what functionality is needed when purchasing service specific software
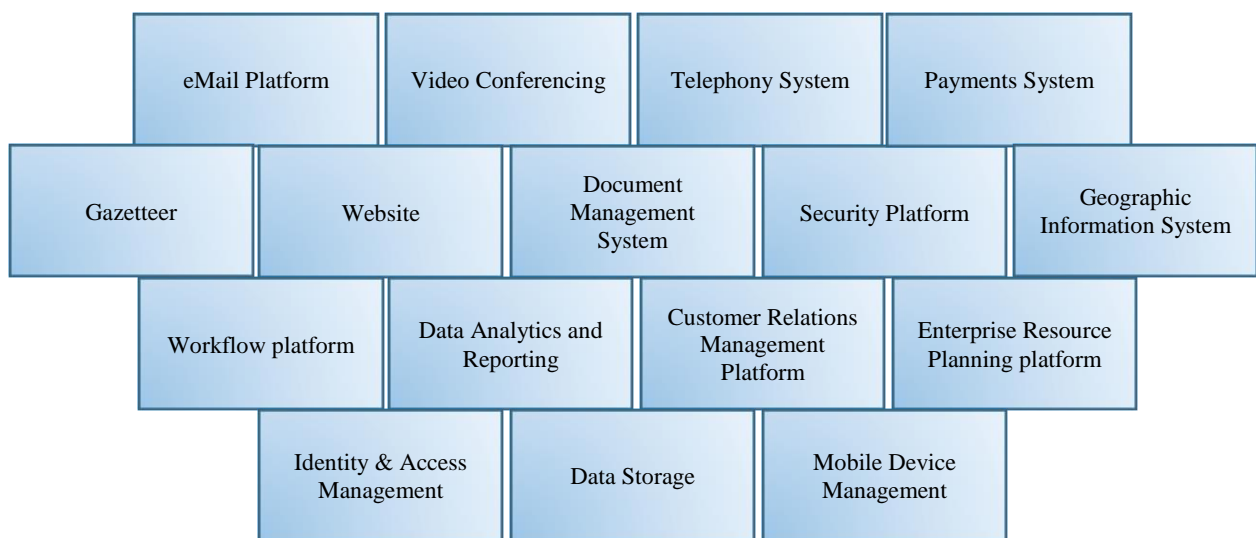
eMail Platform	Video Conferencing	Telephony System	Payments System

Gazetteer	Website	Document Management System	Security Platform	Geographic Information System

Workflow platform	Data Analytics and Reporting	Customer Relations Management Platform	Enterprise Resource Planning platform

Identity & Access Management	Data Storage	Mobile Device Management

Figure 1. Example of some of the NFDC core digital building blocks

6.13 Whilst the corporately provided functionality is delivered to support council services to engage with our customers. Service specific innovation and development will be encouraged through making funding available to projects that fulfil the following Digital Strategy goals and objectives:

Goal	Objective
Robust, reliable systems and support that underpin NFDC service delivery	Accreditation/compliance that affirm that NFDC meets industry standards for security and services

	Resilient ICT environment that provides high availability of systems
	Robust disaster recovery procedures
	Responsive digital/ICT support services
Contemporary working practices achieved through appropriate use of technology	Reliable end-User Devices (EUD) for secure access to council software systems, data and information
	Effective use and adoption of Microsoft 365 by staff and Members
	Digital enabled internal business processes to support flexible/hybrid working
Digital services that reduce operational costs and increase resident and customer satisfaction.	Full end to end digital business models in all '*customer*' facing services
	Responsive and effective organisational structures that support digital working practices
	Digital leading Council that uses technology for transparent and efficient, effective governance
	Data driven decision making

6.14 To manage the allocation of funds and monitor progress the Capital and Change Board will receive proposals, decide on fit with council strategy, allocate funding and receive regular reporting on progress

6.15 The capacity and capabilities of the council ICT resources, to support digital business practices will evolve as the council's digital maturity grows. The core ICT team will continue to be responsible for:

- **Robust, reliable systems and support that underpin NFDC service delivery. Including but not limited to:**
  - o **Communications**
  - o **Systems availability and performance**
  - o **Security**
  - o **End-User Support**
  - o **Supplier and contract management**

- **Contemporary working practices achieved through appropriate use of technology, including but not limited to:**
  - o **Training and adoption of digital working practices**
  - o **Supply of end-user devices**
  - o **Supply of collaboration technologies on council premises**
  - o **Data analytics and reporting services**

- **Digital services that reduce operational costs and increase resident and customer satisfaction, including but not limited to:**
  - o **Online presence**
  - o **Omni-channel access for customers**
  - o **Management software supporting council services**
  - o **Software integration services**
  - o **Business systems analysis and design**
  - o **Project and programme management for digital projects.**

6.16 The Digital Programme with its focus on delivering the core digital building blocks will grow to support the delivery of the transformational projects that will emerge through the life of this strategy. Ensuring that 'Customer first, digital by design' becomes reality for the council.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Digital Strategy is a significant building block in the emerging transformation framework. The Strategy accommodates the uncertainty that exists over what the future may hold for NFDC but puts in place the capabilities for the council to be agile, flexible and responsive to the challenges ahead.

7.2 Adopting the Digital Strategy now will kickstart the activities needed to take the next steps in building a 'Customer first, digital by design' council.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council's budget for 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Plan sets aside funding to 2024/25 to deliver projects aligning to this Digital Strategy (£625k x 3 years). Benefits realisation will be a key factor to project evaluation before funds are allocated to individual projects.

8.2 Regular updates on progress and forecast expenditure will be presented to the Council's Capital and Change Board, and well as 6 monthly updates through the Corporate Affairs and Local Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Alternative processes driven through digital technology have the potential to have a positive impact to the environment. The Council will be keen to develop proposals which can reduce the Carbon footprint of its customers, and of its employees.

11. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Council is aware of the need to provide ongoing support and non-digital communication channels to customers and residents who are unable to transact and communicate with the Council through digital media. Impact equality assessments will be considered where necessary on individual projects.

12. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The delivery of the Digital Strategy will continue to have upmost regard to the security and protection of personal data. It will also enhance the Council's compliance with the applicable legislative requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR.

13. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

13.1 The Council's Digital Strategy remains an important part of the changes necessary to deliver services in a timely and cost-effective manner. Not only did this help in enabling us to remain in contact with, and deliver services to our residents throughout the pandemic, but as we go forward it empowers our residents to transact business and contact us in a way and at a time that most suits them. A further and important benefit is the way in which it allows our staff to work in a more modern and productive format as well as helping to reduce the need to travel as we look, as an organisation, to reduce our carbon footprint.

13.2 Whilst this can only be good for residents, staff and the environment, there still remains a number of people within the community who have difficulty engaging with the Council through digital means or simply choose not too. For those residents we will continue

to ensure that they can contact us by telephone or in person and that they are not marginalised or excluded.

For further information contact:

Paul Downton
ICT Service Manager
02380 285877
paul.downton@nfdc.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Digital Strategy 2022/25