Cabinet – 2 April 2025

Digital Strategy 2025-2028

Purpose	For decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report provides the council's proposed digital strategy for 2025-2028. The current digital strategy expires in 2025 therefore it has been updated in line with the corporate suite of documents to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan, Transformation Strategy and Customer Strategy.
Recommendation(s)	**It is recommended that Cabinet:** **1. Recommend to council the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025-2028**
Reasons for recommendation(s)	To support the delivery of the corporate plan, transformation strategy, customer strategy and people strategy. To support the strategic vision for digital at NFDC and best position it for local government reorganisation.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Jeremy Heron – Finance and Corporate
Strategic Director(s)	Alan Bethune – Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer)
Officer Contact	Rich Bird Data, Development and Delivery Manager Rich.Bird@nfdc.gov.uk

Kim Gray
ICT Operations Manager
Kim.Gray@nfdc.gov.uk

Sponsored by:

Alan Bethune
Strategic Director Corporate Resources &
Transformation
Section 151 Officer
alan.bethune@nfdc.gov.uk

Rebecca Drummond
Assistant Director - Transformation
Rebecca.drummond@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The Digital Strategy 2025 – 2028 has been developed following the adoption of and in support of the Corporate Plan, Transformation Strategy and Customer Strategy. This inward facing strategy enables the implementation of these outwardly focused strategies by setting out focused digital principles and to leverage new modern technologies to support our residents, staff and members in our digital journey.

2. The proposed strategy will run from 2025-2028 with a mindful focus on activities and priorities in line with local government reorganisation (LGR).

3. The digital strategy enables the delivery of the six digital principles:

    a. Principle 1 - Customer first, digital by design

    Customer needs will be at the heart of the digital services that we deliver using full end to end digital process models.

    b. Principle 2 - Data driven

    All services will proactively use data to inform decision making and report performance.

    c. Principle 3 – Digital transformation

    Digital Transformation will deliver modern digital technologies, automate manual processes and enhance our digital culture

d. Principle 4 – Secure by design

Digital services will be secure by design to protect the council's data, systems, people and residents.

e. Principle 5 - Robust and resilient infrastructure

The core foundations of our digital services will be robust and resilient to ensure we are working, and our services can be accessed, in the right place, at the right time and with the right device.

f. Principle 6 – Digital skills for all

Digital skills for all will support our staff and members through learning and development to safely benefit, effectively contribute to and access the councils' digital services.

4. Our digital strategy is mindful that the technology landscape can change quickly in today's modern digital world and to support local government reorganisation (LGR), so it will remain agile in its activities through regular strategic review points and the supportive guidance of the council's governance groups.

5. The proposed approach to digital is consistent with many other organisations, public and private. The development of the strategy considered the best practices currently being adopted across public and private sectors as well as needs and ideas unique to NFDC.

Corporate plan priorities

6. The digital strategy supports delivery of the Future New Forest programme.

7. The digital strategy aligns with the 'Customer and digital services' theme within our Transformation strategy.

8. The digital strategy links closely to our customer strategy with alignment throughout.

9. The digital strategy supports the 'empower' theme within our people strategy including a 'Digital skills for all' programme.

Options appraisal

10. The current digital strategy expires in 2025 and therefore required a refreshed strategy.

Consultation undertaken

11.   The digital strategy is a joint delivery by the ICT Leadership team sponsored by the Strategic Director Corporate Resources and Transformation (Section 151 Officer) and Assistant Director - Transformation.

12.   Assessment against other public sector strategies was undertaken.

13.   Internal consultation with our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) contributed to the strategy content.

14.   Internal consultation with the Executive Management Team (EMT) contributed to the strategy content.

15.   The strategy was considered and supported by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel in March 2025.

Financial and resource implications

16.   The annual ICT budget and Transformation business case will be funding the activities of this strategy. Transformation for example refers to the digital transformation projects and associated resources.

17.   No additional resources are being requested at this time beyond what was included in the original transformation business case. A point in time review of skills and resource needs was completed in February 2025 with confidence in the approach and roles to be recruited. Future resource needs will be agile and proportionate.

18.   All proposed resources are still required. Operational and Delivery activities continue to progress with resources being diverted to the highest priorities and a realistic and proportionate approach to timelines, quality and task completion.

Legal implications

19.   None arising directly from this report. Applicable digital strategy activities will be appropriately assessed and taken under advisement of the Council's Legal team.

Risk assessment

20.   Recruitment of the right skills and in a timely manner remain a challenge across the public sector.

21. The ICT service maintains and regularly reviews its service risk register to feed into the corporate principal risk register. Individual ICT projects maintain a risk log detailing specific tactical risks.

22. The technology landscape often changes at an accelerated pace and our strategy will remain agile to evolving internal and external factors such as LGR. We will prioritise, be open to opportunities and strategically review our direction to realign if needed within the guidance of our governance processes.

23. We will need to prioritise delivery of new digital solutions, whether planned or unplanned. The ICT work programme highlights regular strategic review points to align on strategic priorities and the service follows a demand management process.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

24. Recycling of old ICT equipment is embedded within ICT Operational processes.

25. Digitising processes and reducing manual paper prints contribute to a positive climate and environment.

26. Adoption of cloud-based systems reduces the on premise footprint and usage of power and air conditioning as examples.

27. Through the provision of online self-service options, we facilitate reduced travel to our offices and therefore reduced emissions from vehicles.

Equalities implications

28. The digital strategy includes the 'digital skills for all' programme in partnership with the transformation strategy to promote a workplace where the digital training needs of all our staff and members are inclusive and considered.

Crime and disorder implications

29. None arising directly from this report.

Data protection / Information governance implications

30. None arising directly from this report. Changes impacting the collection and use of personal data will be appropriately assessed and taken under advisement of the Council's Information Governance team.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

31.   None identified

Appendices: **Background Papers:**

Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy 2025-   None
2028 v0.5