

REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE - 3 DECEMBER 2020

ABERDEENSHIRE'S DIGITAL STRATEGY

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 Committee is asked to consider Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy as part of the consultation process in shaping the strategy.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider Aberdeenshire's draft Digital Strategy in relation to the council's priorities and provide comment to Business Services Committee.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2021-2025 builds on the achievements resulting from 'Innovate Aberdeenshire' 2015-2020.
- 3.2 The Strategy is to be considered by all Area and Policy Committees, with final approval being sought from Business Services Committee in January 2021.
- 3.3 The Strategy is being reviewed in line with Part 4B of the Scheme of Governance – Policy Development and Review Framework.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy sets out the priorities and commitment to further embedding our Digital approach for Aberdeenshire. Underpinned by a set of guiding principles, the strategy will contribute to the Council's vision to support the delivery of the council's strategic priorities and continue to support the council as it adapts and recovers from Covid-19.
- 4.2 A short-life working group, with cross service representation, have shaped this strategy by building on the success of the previous digital strategy 'Innovate Aberdeenshire' 2015-2020. It is recognised the success of that strategy enabled customers to access services in new ways and supported improved working practices contributing to improving the quality of service delivery and overall council efficiency. It is recognised that these foundations placed the council in a strong position to quickly adapt to Covid19 resulting in governance and support for our communities continuing from the outset of lockdown.
- 4.3 Building on these strengths, the aim of Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy is to continue driving forward, challenging and building capacity across the area. Integrating digital sees the organisation embrace the view that digital is owned by and for everyone improving outcomes and the user experience.

- 4.4 The strategy sets out four themes –
- Our Citizens and Communities
 - Our Employees
 - Our Information
 - Our Services

This sets out the ambition for each realising our digital aspirations. Each of the themes, and the digital / technology decisions taken will be built on a set of guiding principles ensuring shared leadership across the organisation.

- 4.5 Acknowledging the financial climate, the strategy focuses on the shorter term, building resilience, and through a 5-year delivery Roadmap contributing to building a modern, effective, financially sustainable organisation utilising technology to ensure Best Value.
- 4.6 In developing the Roadmap it is the intention to continue engaging with services and through the short-life working group identify the council's digital priorities that will shape the action plans to determine the programme of work. The Roadmap will be the basis for presenting a business case to Council to secure the investment in delivering the priorities identified to realise Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy.
- 4.7 Area Committees are being asked to consider and provide comment to Business Service Committee as part of the consultation process. The draft strategy is also being shared with Policy Committees between November 2020 – January 2021. During this time the short-life working group will steer the direction and shape of the Roadmap through engagement with services to understand their digital priorities whilst also determining the governance structure within which Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy will sit.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 Our People - Education and Health and Wellbeing.
Our Environment - Infrastructure and Resilient Communities.
Our Economy - Economy and Enterprise and Estate Modernisation.
- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing	X		
Equalities	Draft EIA attached as Appendix 1		
Fairer Scotland Duty	Draft EIA attached as Appendix 1		
Town Centre First		X	
Sustainability		X	
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	

- 5.3 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 1** and identifies a number of impacts on different groups with protected characteristics. These are detailed within the draft EIA at Appendix 1. This

is a living document and will be updated and as the review of the strategy proceeds and finalised alongside the report seeking approval of the final strategy.

- 5.4 The financial implications will be the need for investment in digital technology being an enabler to building a modern, effective, financially sustainable organisation. The business case to secure investment in delivering the priorities identified will be presented through appropriate governance for approval.
- 5.5 The following [Corporate Risks](#) have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:
- ACORP001 – budget pressures
 - ACORP002 – changes in government policy, legislation and regulation (including Education reforms and potential impact on integration of children’s services; Brexit)
 - ACORP004 – business and organisation change (including ensuring governance structures support change; managing the pace of change)
 - ACORP007 – social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty and social inequality, demographic changes, crime and anti-social behaviour)
 - ACORP008 – data protection and cyber security

The following [Risks](#) have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- BSSR001 Balancing the books
- BSSR002 Estate Rationalisation
- BSSR005 A Workforce Fit for the Future
- BSSR006 Digital Innovation
- ECSSR004 Support Inclusive, Vibrant & Healthy Communities
- ISSR002 Regeneration
- ISSR008 Economic Development

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 Audit Committee (21 May 2020) noted the comments stated within the Internal Audit report would inform the scheduled review of the Digital Strategy on which significant further consultation, including with Elected Members, was planned. Committee is able to consider and provide feedback on this item in terms of the Section E6.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance to identify and where appropriate to make recommendations to Business Services Committee to improve the performance of services in respect of any function within its remit with reference to the relevant Performance Indicators in terms of Scheme of Governance| 35 Part 2A - List of Committee Powers Version 01/02/2020 Performance Management.

Ritchie Johnson, Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Donna Redford, Business Change Manager
Date: 16 November 2020

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 2: Draft: Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2020-2025

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EIA Version	Date	Author	Changes
0.1	03/11/20	Donna Redford	
Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).			
Service	Business Services		
Section	Customer and Digital Services		
Title of the activity etc.	Aberdeenshire’s Digital Strategy		
Aims and desired outcomes of the activity	<p>Aberdeenshire’s Digital Strategy sets out the priorities and commitment to further embedding our Digital approach for Aberdeenshire. The strategy will contribute to the Council’s vision to support the delivery of the council’s strategic priorities and continue to support the council as it adapts and recovers from Covid19. Of the four themes within the strategy theme one relates to citizens and communities, and theme two – our employees.</p> <p>Theme 1 – Citizens and Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to all relevant services online, at a time and on a device that suits them. • Use a single login to get joined-up access to services. • Have fast, reliable internet access at home or at a local council building. • Receive cohesive and efficient frontline service delivery, learners are digitally enabled where blended learning is facilitated through the council’s estate for connectivity and digital skills. • Benefit from infrastructure that supports economic growth. • Feel supported to use technology to transact and communicate with us in ways that work best for them. <p>Theme 2 Our Employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in an environment which provides solid reliable and innovative technology solutions. • Work flexibly and in a mobile way which removes avoidable travel and unproductive time. • Use devices which are best suited to the way that they live and work. • Have secure access to all appropriate systems and information to allow them to do their jobs efficiently and effectively without being constrained by technology or location. • Collaborate with other staff and partners to share information and knowledge, improve decision-making, streamline service delivery and enable co-production of innovative solutions. • Have the digital skills they need to make the most of technology. 		
Author(s) & Title(s)	Donna Redford, Business Change Manager		

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.

Evidence	What does it say?	What does it mean?
<p>Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).</p>	<p>Aberdeenshire’s Equalities Mainstreaming and Outcomes Progress Report 2019 as reported the largest percentage of employees fall into the age range 40-49 and 50-59. The number of employees in the 40-49 category increased by 2.8% since 2016. The number of employees in the 60-64 category increased by 10.28% and this appears to be a continuing trend.</p> <p>The number of employees with a disability had decreased in 2018 when compared to 2017. The number of applicants identifying as having a disability remained consistently low at 4.3% in 2018. And a slight increase in attendance at development sessions for those with a disability was reported</p> <p>Education Authority Age The highest number of teaching employees by 2018 was in the 30-39 age category and there was also an increase in the 40-49 age category. The number of employees under 40 had increased to 40.5% in 2018. The largest age category for non-teaching employees 2018 was 50-59.</p> <p>Disability the number identifying as disabled with number of teachers (113) and non- teaching (626) remaining consistent with previous years.</p>	<p>Improved digital skills gained from delivering online teaching, preparing for blended learning across schools contributed to increasing confidence levels amongst school-based employees – any additional areas of development required to support professional development will be identified through the Roadmap.</p> <p>The numbers of employees stating a disability remains consistently low, as does the take up of development courses. With the move to more digital working from home, and online course delivery there is the potential to retain and attract employees with a disability increasing opportunities for improved access to employment.</p>

<p>Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.</p>	<p>Office Space Strategy Ways of Working Survey 1767 respondents indicated:</p> <p>Support required to continue working effectively from home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% help with Office365 • 18% access to IT systems • 8% increased line manager support <p>Most preferred training options - recorded video tutorials (31%) and live sessions (24%).</p> <p>A high number of respondents requested basic support across the range of tools listed, with more advanced support requested in respect of SharePoint & Teams, this is perhaps an indication of more people having to access these platforms due to the increase in homeworking, also there may well be a percentage of respondents who are unsure of some of these tools or have never used them before.</p> <p>Broadband/Internet/IT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor internet access is my biggest problem living in a rural situation. • The main challenge is I live in an area with very poor internet connection which makes virtual meetings, planned skype appointments, saving records can be an issue. • The technology in my workplace works intermittently which leads to a lot of frustrations and anxiety. 	<p>The Digital Strategy is a vital element to delivering the Council Plan with digital skills and confidence being an increasingly important factor to delivering services as these are transformed.</p> <p>Building on the success achieved from the move to digital working from home presents significant learning to inform actions required through the Roadmap. Building the skills base within the organisation will be a critical activity delivered through Digital Champions and provision of additional support through various learning resources.</p> <p>Poor connectivity in pockets/locations impedes effective digital working – identifying solutions with partners to address connectivity issues will be progressed through the Roadmap.</p>
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<p>External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).</p>	<p>The Community Impact Assessment reported to Council on 7 October 2020 reflected residents views. Of those participating:</p> <p>Age distribution 10% were age 65+, 20% 55-64 and 45-54 accounted for 28%, 29% aged 35-44, 11% aged between 25-34 and 2% < 25.</p> <p>Employment 71% were employed/self-employed, 3% unemployed, 2% students, 2% unable to work, 11% retired 6% looking after home/family 5% other.</p> <p>Household Income 15% < £20k, 21% £20-40k, 22% > £60,000, 17% £40-60k</p> <p>Housing Tenure 84% owner occupied 7% social rented, 9% private rented/other</p> <p>Disability 6% and 2% prefer not to say</p> <p>Impacts identified resulting from Covid19</p> <p>Negative Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lost income 28% more worried about jobs – higher proportion of people than before are concerned about their finances and job security/concerns over the end of furlough, increased unemployment, pay cut Limited broadband affects rural business <p>Positive Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased use of digital technology People are positive about their experiences of working differently through the pandemic Employers saw productivity could be maintained with employees working flexibly at home. It must also be recognised that through ECS 4000 devices were issued to households, HSCP Clondyke funding £100k brought in additional resource with kits being distributed to the vulnerable and those shielding. <p>Brexit The role that Brexit will play in the social and economic future of Aberdeenshire whilst not clear will</p>	<p>People are concerned about their jobs and education. Deeper data analysis will identify locations where additional support may be necessary to address vulnerabilities in terms of accessibility (including age/disability), affordability, and capability (confidence and skills)</p> <p>The economic impact in both the short term on individual income and concern with medium/long term effect on the local economy requires actions to be identified through the Digital Strategy and Roadmap to increase opportunities in learning, supporting and creating the environment to attract and grow businesses to support the local economy growing jobs.</p> <p>Noting the concern that there was too much reliance on digital communication, likely to be a continuing factor as we respond to the ongoing Covid19 pandemic will likely further exclude people who either do not have access to the internet, have a poor connection or limited confidence/skills. Addressing this through actions identified in the Roadmap, working in partnership to develop solutions to increase the skills, confidence and access to equipment/connectivity – which may also be compounded by affordability.</p> <p>Poor connectivity in pockets/locations impedes effective access to working digitally, accessing learning</p>
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	hamper recovery from the impact of the pandemic. The combined impact of these effects on businesses are significant.	and online resources – identifying solutions with partners to address connectivity issues will be progressed through the Roadmap. The Digital Strategy and Roadmap will identify actions in partnership with others to address the challenges experienced recognising particular challenges for those with high vulnerability through age, disability, poor health, low income households and areas of high unemployment.
External data (census, available statistics).		
Other (general information as appropriate).		
Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.		
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	Yes – additional data gathering will be sourced through consultation and engagement with stakeholders.	
Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	Consultation with Elected Members through Area Committees	Nov-Dec 2020
	Consultation with Elected Members through Policy Committees	Nov-Dec 2020
	Digital Inclusion Working Group	Nov-Dec 2020
	OSS Engagement Activity	Nov-Dec 2020
Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas?		
These should be included in the action plan.	Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?	
Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?		

Overall vulnerability resulting from Covid / Age Health / Economic / Other Socio-Economic factors with particular areas identified in the north of Aberdeenshire and urban areas tend to be more vulnerable, according to the various indicators and themes identified. Some of the more rural areas, whilst vulnerable in certain respects due to geographic remoteness and poorer internet connections, tend to be less vulnerable. Areas to the west and south of Aberdeen City are among the least vulnerable in Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy has citizen and communities as a core theme – this has the potential of having a positive impact in mitigating the challenges which have become more prevalent resulting from Covid19 and Brexit – as highlighted below.

- Digital Exclusion/Vulnerability During the pandemic many organisations and partners found that there was a need for a rapid shift to signposting and online delivery of support creating greater challenges for the more deprived and vulnerable groups who are digitally excluded and would not have access to a smart phone or a computer. The strategy aims to work, in partnership, to building capacity amongst households increasing accessibility and confidence in the use of digital technology.
- Digital would not be the first-choice communication method of many vulnerable groups who tend to opt for face to face advice however during the pandemic this was not possible during the pandemic and high-demand periods. Digitally vulnerable areas are likely to contain relatively high rates of child poverty, pensioner poverty, single person households and households without access to a van or a car. They are also likely to contain a relatively high proportion of the population in receipt of Personal Independence Payments suggesting that the recipients may be more at risk from COVID-19 and require additional support or assistance.
- The strategy aims to work, in partnership, to building capacity amongst households increasing accessibility and confidence in the use of digital technology. Affordability within households is an additional factor for consideration and the need to determine solutions with others to address this will be a recognised action within the Roadmap.
- Impact on Inequalities A key feature of the crisis is how it is impacting differently on different groups. The higher rate of health impact on Black and Minority Ethnic populations have been widely documented these differences are also stark across different socio-economic groups. For example, COVID-19 job disruption is likely to have a disproportionate impact on women's employment, as a result of low-paid women being particularly affected by job disruption; and women are potentially faced with an increase in childcare responsibilities as a result of school and nursery closures in the shorter term.
- The Institute for Public Policy Research notes that young people are also likely to be hit hard in Scotland, as they are disproportionately concentrated in the sectors most affected by the economic shutdown, and so face heightened exposure to job loss or furlough. The IPPR estimates that 41% of young people in work in Scotland were furloughed in April, compared to 22% of all workers in Scotland. This is similar to research from the IFS3 that has found that workers under the age of 25 are two and half times more likely than those aged 25 and older to work in sectors that have been shut down and is reinforced by work from the Resolution Foundation for the Nuffield Foundation that estimates that youth unemployment could rise by 600,000 across the UK, affecting the least qualified the most.
- The oil & gas sector has recovered and reinvented itself through innovation. But as the extent of damage wrought by COVID-19 becomes apparent, the situation appears different with the uniqueness of this crisis – combination extreme volatility, acceleration of underlying trends - growing momentum of environmental, social and governance (ESG) themes, and energy transition. North Sea staffing

levels are down 40% to 7,000 according to trade association Oil & Gas UK, refiners are scaling back, the energy transition and a move to ESG investing have been underway for some time, but COVID-19 may provide the impetus to accelerate these trends.

- The role that Brexit will play in the social and economic future of Aberdeenshire is not clear. The transition period is scheduled to end on 31 December 2020 - new economic modelling by the Scottish Government indicates that ending the transition this year would result in lowered Scottish GDP of between £1.1 billion and £1.8 billion by 2022 (0.7 to 1.1% of GDP), compared with ending transition at the end of 2022. That would be equivalent to a cumulative loss of economic activity of between nearly £2 billion and £3 billion over those two years. This will clearly hamper recovery from the impact of the pandemic. The combined impact on businesses already severely affected by COVID-19 could result in widespread business closures and job losses over and above those resulting from COVID-19 alone. In terms of the impact on the economy are anticipated as being:
 - increased cost of living since the EU referendum in 2016.
 - Businesses reported that they had made operational changes to their business plans as a result of a decrease in job applications from EU nationals.
 - Brexit may have a detrimental impact on the local economy and noted that the hospitality and tourist industries were a vital part of these local economies.
 - Employability and Skills - initiatives which support disadvantaged people into sustainable employment and/or ensure that there is a skilled workforce in place to meet the needs of the local economy.
 - Poverty - initiatives which support people living in or at risk of living in poverty, with a particular focus on rural deprivation and pockets of deprivation in small towns.
 - Connectivity - initiatives which improve digital and transport infrastructure in rural areas and/or increase accessibility to reliable, regular and sustainable transport.
 - Regeneration, Rural Services and Facilities - initiatives which regenerate physical infrastructure in villages and towns and/or enhance local services.
 - Business Development and the Social Economy - initiatives which directly support businesses, including social enterprises, to grow, innovate or export and initiatives which support the development of priority sectors with a particular focus on diversification opportunities.

Stage 7a:

Are there potential impacts on protected groups?

The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how?

Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age - Older	Yes	Yes		
Disability	Yes	Yes		

Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)	Yes			
Religion or Belief	Yes			
Sex	Yes			
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes			
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)	Yes			
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)	Yes			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Yes			

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g. access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • Single parents and vulnerable families • People on benefits • Those involved in the criminal justice system • People in the most deprived communities • People who live in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioners • Looked after children • Carers including young carers • Veterans • Students • Single adult households • People who have experienced the asylum system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness • Homeless people • People with low literacy/numeracy • People with lower educational qualifications • People in low paid work • People with one or more protected characteristic
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Please complete by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Socio-economic disadvantage				
Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	Yes			
Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	Yes			

Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	Yes			
Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work	Yes			
Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income, educational achievement.	Yes			

Stage 8: What are the positive and negative impacts?

Impacts.	Positive	Negative
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	With over half of respondents (51%) agreeing they were concerned about future employment for themselves or a member of their household and 7% unsure by working with partners there is the potential to build digital confidence and skill levels improving employment opportunities, improving connectivity contributing to improving the environment for business and economic growth.	Vulnerable citizens will be concerned with the transition of services to online. Identifying actions to mitigate this will be captured through the Roadmap eg working with external organisations to explore broader opportunities.
	As 39% of respondents were concerned about the impact on future training or education the Digital Strategy and Roadmap will determine actions to support learners of all ages addressing multiple vulnerabilities.	Employees may be concerned with changed ways of working impacting on jobs and with new skills required. Employees will be supported to develop digital skills.
	People who reported to have household income below £30,000 pa were much more likely to be concerned about their future financial situation along with younger respondents were more likely to be concerned about future employment and education opportunities. The Digital Strategy and Roadmap will ensure digital is considered a central part of the solution across partners to address vulnerabilities.	
	Whilst there is a positive uptake in the use of technology during the pandemic, more is to be done for the digitally excluded with actions identified through the Roadmap.	

	Through partnership and working with businesses the Digital Strategy and Roadmap will identify any actions to support economic growth.	
	Digital technology will be core to transforming models of service delivery resulting in more effective and sustainable provision aligned with the Council Plan and Priorities. Employees will develop new skills and increased opportunities to work closer to home may attract/retain employees with disabilities.	

Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or consulted?

If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	Data extracted from the Community Impact Assessments and OSSWG survey. Further engagement through Area and Policy Committee consultation, partners, employees and Elected Members will continue to be progressed in shaping the Roadmap.
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Stage 10: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?

These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
	Developing employee skills – providing access to learning resources and supported through Digital Champions – the approach is currently being refreshed.	January 2021
	Specific actions will be identified through the Roadmap	February 2021

Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal

These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	Benefits identification, tracking and reporting evidenced through stakeholder engagement activity.
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Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?

Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain.* Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.

Citizens with multiple vulnerabilities may be concerned at the way services will change and the subsequent impact in the way services are accessed – mitigating actions will be developed. Employees may be concerned due to the potential impact on ways of working and the change to the way in which services are accessed. Employees will be supported to develop skills to prepare for the changes.	
3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Aberdeenshire’s Digital Strategy sets out its 5-year action plan – an important aspect stated within the Council Plan.
Focus on digital: digital technologies have been fundamental to the business continuity of the Council in our response to Covid. Digital is a primary focus for the Council in delivering the new priorities and we are actively looking at how we can channel technologies to improve our business, enable economic growth, support the environment and benefit residents while at the same time ensuring that no one is left behind.

Focus on services not buildings: the range of issues faced by the Council requires us to develop new models for service delivery, often in conjunction with our partners and utilising new technologies. In order to maintain those vital services which address the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities, we will move to self-service coupled with building personal and community resilience.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Customer and Digital Services	
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Aberdeenshire’s Digital Strategy	
	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Donna Redford Position: Business Change Date: 3 November 2020 Signature: D Redford	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Date:		

	<p>5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service</p>	<p>Name: Kate Bond Position: Head of Customer and Digital Services Date: 4 November 2020</p>	<p>Name: Position: Date:</p>
	<p>6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee.</p>		<p>Date: 4 November 2020</p>
	<p>7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk</p>		<p>Date:</p>



Action Plan					
Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Develop Roadmap	9 /11/2020		Donna Redford	Roadmap to deliver the Digital Strategy	A business case will be prepared for replacement business systems
Reviewing Digital Champions	1/9/2020		Donna Redford	An action within the Roadmap will deliver a revised approach where Digital Champions will feel more supported and accessible. Employees will recognise Digital Champions as a source for support and guidance	Within resources

Appendix 2

DRAFT: Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy 2020-2025

Why a new Digital Strategy?

This strategy sets out our priorities and commitment to optimising digital technology to improve our business, enable economic growth, support the environment and benefit residents whilst ensuring no one is left behind. Our digital approach for Aberdeenshire is underpinned by a set of guiding principles, to help us continue to achieve the Council vision, delivering our six strategic priorities stated in our Council Plan. The impact from the Covid-19 pandemic has increased our focus on the potential for change and the pace that we can achieve building on our learning and community feedback evidenced through our Community Impact Assessments.

The work of our previous digital strategy 'Innovate Aberdeenshire' 2015-2020 paved the way for customers to access and use our services in new ways, and facilitated new internal working practices which improved the quality of our services, whilst contributing to the overall efficiency savings for the Council. These strong foundations stood us incredibly well in the face of unprecedented challenge in responding to the COVID19 pandemic. We were able to fulfil our democratic obligations with the relatively smooth transition to virtual committees so that our focus was firmly on service delivery and supporting the organisation to help our communities from the outset of Lockdown.

We want to build on our achievements, the experiences, innovation and lessons learned during the COVID19 pandemic, with an eye to the future. We want to ensure we keep driving forward, challenging and building our capacity. However this strategy also recognises the difficult financial climate we see ourselves in as a nation and as an organisation - so our focus, in the shorter term, will be to build resilience, strengthened foundations in alignment with our Council Plan and Recovery Strategy.

Digital penetrates all aspects of our daily lives. Digital will be a core element to developing new models for service delivery, in conjunction with our partners where the user experience for our citizens, partners and employees alike will contribute to achieving improved outcomes. With our aspiration towards achieving a digital first principle our leadership commitment and support, through Councillors and officers, will be central to achieving our vision whereby technology is considered as an integral part to reinventing services to make them more personal, accountable, adaptable, effective and sustainable.

This five-year strategy, accompanied by a delivery roadmap, will ensure we continue to build a modern and effective local authority; one that is resilient and that we make financially sustainable use of technology to ensure Best Value.

Integrating digital within Aberdeenshire sees the organisation embrace the view that digital is owned by and for everyone. It moves the organisation into a space that sees digital as part of our culture, our mindset, and is embedded in all services and ways of working.

Moving Forward 2020-2025

This Strategy encompasses 4 themes of service delivery for the Council.

Our Citizens and Communities

Our Employees

Our Information

Our Services

Our Citizens and Communities

- Can access all relevant services online, at a time and on a device that suits them.
- Use a single login to get joined-up access to services.
- Have fast, reliable internet access at home or at a local council building.
- Receive cohesive and efficient frontline service delivery.
- Learners are digitally enabled where blended learning is facilitated through the council's estate for connectivity and digital skills.
- Benefit from infrastructure that supports economic growth.
- Feel supported to use technology to transact and communicate with us in ways that work best for them.

Our Employees

- Work in an environment which provides solid, reliable and innovative technology solutions.
- Work flexibly and in a mobile way which removes avoidable travel and unproductive time.
- Use devices which are best suited to the way that they live and work.
- Have secure access to all appropriate systems and information to allow them to do their jobs efficiently and effectively without being constrained by technology or location.
- Collaborate with other staff and partners to share information and knowledge, improve decision-making, streamline service delivery and enable co-production of innovative solutions.
- Have the digital skills they need to make the most of technology.

Our Information

- Is accurate, joined-up and secure, to support integrated, efficient service delivery and enable collaboration with partners in healthcare and other services to drive performance and improve outcomes for our citizens.
- Is managed effectively and stored efficiently to reduce processing and storage costs.
- Is available as Open Data whenever possible, allowing information to be used, re-used and shared by all.
- Is widely available and used to improve decision making and support early intervention.

Our services

- Are people-centred, accessible and efficient.
- Our use of data will enhance public accountability, drive performance improvement empowering local communities to play an increased role in the design and delivery of local services.
- Technology is used to streamline service delivery, building capacity and reducing pressures.
- We will continue to increase the number of transactions that can be completed online and improve the online transaction experience.
- Innovation and improved services will be based on the analysis of real-time information flows to quickly identify trends.
- We will work with NHS Grampian to provide seamless access to digital services across health and social care services and provide better integration between health and social care services.
- We will explore opportunities to expand the use of digital engagement tools which allow people to have video calls with our service professionals, and utilise technology to enable better customer service.
- We will explore opportunities for innovation that can help people to live independent lives.

Our Guiding Principles

An important element of this Strategy is a set of guiding principles, based upon which all our Digital and Technology decisions should be made. These principles underpin our approach and will ensure shared leadership and mindset, across our organisation where integral to the delivery of our Digital Strategy will be our commitment to contributing to net zero and the Council's Circular Economy:

1. The Council's approach to technology will be driven by the needs of our customers as valued partners in the design and transformation of services, and, we will contribute to improving digital capability within communities to make best use of technology.
2. We will champion the introduction of new and innovative technological and digital opportunities, and ways of working with our internal customers, with a continuing commitment to developing the digital capability of our workforce enabling greater worker mobility.
3. Through an effective governance model prioritisation for investments will be based on the Council's strategic priorities with clarity and transparency in decision making, with IT resources focused on major systems, transformational change and organisational resilience and where the potential for shared opportunities are explored with other organisations.
4. Data security and integrity will be critical to establishing a single version of the truth with citizen and property data being at the forefront of all digital development, and Open Data principles being applied to all non-identifiable data.
5. We will actively participate to secure the connectivity required to realise our digital ambition.

Roadmap

A clear roadmap to support the implementation of this strategy will be developed in conjunction with services, partners and reflecting our shared ambition as we work towards becoming a digital council.

How will we know if we are getting it right?

- Aberdeenshire Council is a resilient organisation with most of its transactions online.
- Our customers and citizens communicate and get help from us in a way that suits them but which encourages a digital first approach wherever possible.
- A modern organisation with a focus on efficient accessible service delivery and democratic processes.
- Benefits are realized.
- Success would be that digital delivery is embedded across services, meaning there is no longer a need to develop digital strategies.