

Title: Work Programme Update – Digital Strategy
Lead Officer: Head of ICT
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Tracey
Wards of the District directly affected: None

Summary

To summarise the current progress being made towards Digital Transformation and the Council's Digital Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That the contents of the reported are noted.
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1 Background/Information

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 In December 2021, the Cabinets of both Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick District Council's considered and approved the creation of a Joint Digital Strategy for South Warwickshire.
- 1.1.2 The intention of the proposed strategy was to embed digitalisation as a component of service integration; ensuring that as services from the two Councils were brought together, digital was at the forefront of the revised delivery methods.
- 1.1.3 The strategy focused the Council's activities on customer centric digital outcomes, through investment in service design, training, infrastructure, effective operational technology and several key digitalisation initiatives.
- 1.1.4 Unfortunately, when the merger process was aborted in April 2022, the Joint Digital Strategy also ended. This report provides an update on the key workstreams which were undertaken, the ongoing workstreams at Warwick District Council and key item that will be considered in a revised Digital Strategy.

1.2 Progress to Date

Key

-  Significant progress made / ongoing project with a plan and resources.
-  Some progress made / ongoing project requiring review.
-  Limited progress made / project requires significant review.

1.2.1 *Supporting Agile Working* ●

Our People and Priorities workstream included an initiative to continue support for agile working and wherever possible, remove requirements for paper within processes. Two initiatives within this area have been undertaken:

- *eSignatures*

The Council has introduced a solution where documents requiring a traditional “wet” signature can be signed electronically. The solution, DocuSign, was procured in conjunction with SDC, where it was intended to be used significantly by the Legal Service – being the only solution on the market capable of dealing with virtual document sealing.

- *Hybrid Mail*

WDC successfully trialled the use of Hybrid Mail within several service areas. Hybrid mail is essentially a printing system which electronically transfers letters to a 3rd party provider, who then autonomously prints, envelopes and dispatches them.

During the trial, participants were very positive about how the hybrid process worked, the flexibility it provided for them and the speed at which large mailing runs could be completed. A more widespread rollout of the system was agreed by SLT in June 2022.

Roll Out Plan:

The eSignature and Hybrid Mail solutions will be rolled out together starting in Q2 2022, with an anticipated duration of 12 months.

The roll out will be integrated with a larger project to include optimising our printed materials to use less paper, transferring communications to electronic means wherever possible, and in situations where a signature is needed, converting this to an electronic workflow. This is not an overly complex project, but it is time consuming due to the level of involvement required to analyse and improve our current situation.

1.2.2 *The Local Land and Property Gazetteer* ●

The LLPG is the Council’s core address database, detailing every addressable unit within the Warwick area. As part of the Digital Strategy it was intended that the LLPG become the address data source for every major Council system – to improve data management, future integration opportunities and ensure a consistent geographical base.

The first solution to include the LLPG following the sign-off of the Joint Digital Strategy was the Council’s new waste service, which uses LLPG data within the CRM, online forms, in-cab devices, and back-office applications. The Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) ties all these systems together, allowing simple communication based on a location rather than a person.

The revised Digital Strategy will continue to prioritise the use of the LLPG as a core address database. It should be noted that the quality of WDC’s LLPG is very high and in May 2022, the GIS team were awarded gold status by Geoplace (who

look after the National Land and Property Gazetteer). This was in recognition of the improvements the team had made to our data quality.

Roll Out Plan:

There is no set roll out plan for the LLPG, as this is a supporting dataset for other initiatives.

1.2.3 Risk Management

Our Digital Service by Design strategy theme included an initiative to work with the Council's Risk Management function to introduce a better risk framework for ICT and Digital. The intention was to improve how we prioritised our resources, provide more consistent identification of significant risks and ensure we implemented effective controls in a timely way.

Whilst work with SDC did not continue, a new Risk Management application is being used across ICT at WDC. Discussions are also underway within the Senior Leadership Team and the Council's Risk Manager, to identify how this system could be of benefit to other areas of the authority.

Roll Out Plan:

The Risk Management application used by ICT will be considered by the Council's Senior Leadership Team in August 2022.

If after evaluation it is decided that wider usage would be beneficial for the Council, resources could be put in place to facilitate this, starting in September 2022, for completion within six months.

1.2.4 Service Design

The Service Design workstreams of the Digital Strategy were intended to be used as part of the integration processes. The strategy also included initiatives to develop "ways of working" methods for repetition within other service areas. Neither of these workstreams were progressed following merger ending, however a small number of initiatives were already underway.

The chargeable garden waste process was one such example. Intended to be delivered digitally from the start, online signup forms were integrated seamlessly with (SDC's) CRM, payment portal, waste management system and with the 3rd party sticker creator. The input forms could be used by contact centre operators to manually trigger a process and to deal with customer queries.

This solution was designed using SDC's CRM system and since launch, more than 85% of the service sign-ups have been completed entirely online. Similar online processes have been created at WDC for other services such as reporting fly tipping (using the Arcus platform) and improving how noise complaints are managed. The principles of digitally focused, user-centric design feature in all solutions and WDC will continue to prioritise this in the future.

The revised Digital Strategy will still suggest a major project of service design review, emphasising the importance of focusing on user's needs and using digital delivery methods to accommodate these efficiently behind the scenes.

Lesson Learned: The Change Management elements of service design cannot be underestimated. This has to be led from the top of the organisation and the vision of providing better services has to be embedded amongst all involved.

Roll Out Plan:

Service Design will be covered within the Council's revised Digital Strategy. This is anticipated for submission to Cabinet in September 2022. Design methodologies, guided by principles from the Government Digital Service, will be implemented within the first 12 months of the Digital Strategies life.

1.2.5 *Combined Telephony* ●

One of the first digital strategy projects to commence was the introduction of a combined telephony system. This workstream had made significant progress; ICT had identified potential solutions and was engaged with several suppliers to take proposals forward.

Our intention was to use Microsoft Teams Telephony and expand SDC's Mitel Contact Centre software into WDC. The decision to cease merger operations effectively drew this workstream to a close in its previous form. Fortunately, no contracts had been signed and all input from suppliers had been on a goodwill basis rather than consultancy.

Some aspects of the work undertaken continue to be used – SDC's handling of WDC's waste and recycling calls for example is facilitated through the redirection of SIP trunk traffic – a technique explored during this workstream.

The forthcoming Digital Strategy will continue include a project to review WDC's telephony, as our existing Cisco platform still requires replacement and there are a number of features in newer systems that we currently cannot accommodate. ICT have already begun to engage services to ensure we continue to have a good understanding of their requirements as this project moves forward.

Roll Out Plan:

Renewed Telephony will be picked up in Q3, 2022 and is anticipated for completion within 12 months.

1.2.6 *Creation of a Digital Team* ●

A priority outcome in the Joint Digital Strategy was the creation of a dedicated Digital team to support other Council services. The intention was to resource this largely from existing ICT staff, following a re-alignment of their workloads in recognition of the combined service. Financial provisions were also made for an additional two temporary Project Manager posts and a Business Analyst.

A revised ICT structure had been agreed by the Programme Board, which included a Digital Team, and job roles were being specified in advance of launching a staff consultation. Unfortunately, without the merger resources, this workstream was unable to progress any further in its previous form.

Proposals are currently being drawn up (as part of a revised Digital Strategy) to revitalise the creation of a bespoke Digital Team. It will not of course be possible

to move resources around within ICT in quite the same way, but it is not anticipated that this will cause significant difficulties.

Currently, WDC's projects are being progressed by the Transformation Lead and are being technically supported by ICT's Application Support group.

Lesson Learned: Effective Project Management and Business Analysis resources are essential and any Digitalisation initiatives will most likely fail without having these core resources in place.

Roll Out Plan:

The Cabinet report for a revised Digital Strategy will include a recommendation to establish a dedicated Digital Team. If accepted, it is anticipated that the team will be in place within three to six months, depending on recruitment outcomes.

1.2.7 Introduction of a Customer Relationship Management System ●

Introducing a single corporate CRM system was a cornerstone digital project, required to underpin most other strategy workstreams. Work started in December 2021 to review both Council's existing CRM systems (SDC's in-house platform and WDC's Jadu and Salesforce/Arcus systems) but this was paused shortly after launch.

In January 2022, as work gathered pace on the digital aspects of the waste management contract, a request was made by the (then) Head of Customer Services and Head of Waste and Recycling to pause work on the CRM review. It was not felt that there was capacity to participate in this workstream, whilst also completing the work required for the waste integration, which had to be ready for testing by April.

At the request of the aforementioned Heads of Service, all integration work for the new Waste and Recycling service was completed using Stratford's in-house CRM system. In the aftermath of the merger, SDC have continued to develop the digital waste provisions (within their CRM) as a service for WDC to consume. This has worked well, but this does limit WDC's ability to access customer information and the associated waste management portal.

At WDC, work is currently underway to review the Arcus platform and assess its suitability for more widespread usage – particularly its CRM and self-service capabilities which are built on Salesforce technology.

As a part of the revised Digital Strategy a new project will be put forward to introduce a corporate CRM system which will remain a cornerstone project. Consideration will be given to our existing platforms and the current Arcus review will give us a head start on completing this due diligence exercise.

Roll Out Plan:

A business case for a corporate CRM system will be produced in Q3, 2022. If accepted, it is anticipated that the first services will be rolled out in Q1 2023 (accounting for selection, training, implementation and development). Other customer facing online services (where appropriate) will migrate to or integrate with the CRM platform over a two year period.

1.2.8 *Application Consolidation*

As part of the merger process, a significant workstream to review the Council's application estate was due to be undertaken. Initial priority areas had been identified which included Customer Services (CRM), Development and Building Control (Accolade/Uniform), Finance (CIAnywhere/Civica) and Revenues and Benefits (Civica/Civica).

Other than agreeing a prioritisation matrix, examining the potential costs involved with some systems and agreeing a running order, no other work on this stream was completed.

WDC's revised Digital Strategy will continue to focus on ensuring that staff have the right tools for the job, including the line of business applications they use. We will continue to look at consolidation opportunities and review how our existing applications are able to meet our future needs, as part of an integrated, end-to-end customer environment.

Roll Out Plan:

There is no longer a specific timeline associated with application consolidation. Work toward replacing the Accolade Planning and Building Control system has recently commenced within initial discussions underway. This will be facilitated by ICT who will provide comprehensive project and technical support.

1.3 ***Practical Impacts of De-Merging***

1.3.1 Work to facilitate the merger of SDC and WDC within ICT had already commenced at pace. The subsequent decision to cease merger activities did have some specific ICT implications, but fortunately none were significant:

- *Remote Access*

A number of staff at both SDC and WDC had been given access to systems and data at both organisations. In some cases, hardware for each respective authority was also issued.

All remote access for non-WDC staff was quickly terminated. The Councils have exchanged returned hardware and arrangements have been put in place for posts which continue to be shared.

- *Combined Systems*

Most of the work undertaken to combine systems was focused on the use of Office 365 and the enablement of shared collaboration technologies.

Again, all remote access to collaborative resources that contained WDC data has been ceased. However, the facilities introduced during the merger (such as the ability to directly Teams chat with an SDC staff member) have been left in place. They posed no significant threat and continued to benefit the authority for any ongoing shared initiatives.

Work on combined software applications was ceased in all areas other than eSignatures, where a contract involving the two Councils had already been signed. Fortunately, the DocuSign solution is an online portal, and no practical sharing has continued with SDC other than invoicing for the costs of the system.

- *Information Sharing*

Where necessary, services can continue to share data with SDC colleagues as the Council has left all relevant sharing agreements in place. Any information that was shared with SDC previously has been purged from their systems where appropriate, or will be removed as part of their retention and disposal policies.

- *Email*

Several SDC colleagues were issued with WDC email addresses as part of their combined duties. These have now been entirely removed, following a brief period of redirection and the presence of an "out of office" warning.

All shared mailing lists have also been decommissioned.

1.4 **New Developments - Government Digital Strategies**

1.4.1 In June 2022, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced its new UK Digital Strategy. Intended as a cross-government policy, the strategy focuses on six key areas:

- *Digital Foundations*

Digital infrastructure, data, regulation and digital markets, and security.

- *Ideas and Intellectual Property*

Consolidation of the government's work to support the innovation ecosystem, including in universities and the private sector.

- *Digital Skills and Talent*

Strengthening the digital education pipeline, increasing awareness of pathways into digital occupations, enhanced digital skills base, access through alternative routes and, work with the private and third sectors.

- *Financing Digital Growth*

Improving access to finance, embedding the technology revolution across the economy and the government's push to make the UK the best place to list a technology business.

- *Spreading Prosperity and Levelling Up*

Using digital technologies to support key strategic priorities including enhancing productivity, improved services, levelling up, and net zero.

- *Enhancing the UK's Place in the World*

The UK's strategic advantage to influence global decisions, commitment to maintaining the UK a science and technology superpower and helping to set global standards on digital products and services.

1.4.2 Each of the government's digital priorities are broken down further into smaller initiatives but many of these are likely to be delivered by central government agencies. None of the key actions are identified for delivery by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), but this does not mean that local government does not have a role to play.

1.4.3 The Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) also recently published a new policy paper, Transforming for a Digital Future: 2022 to 2025 roadmap for digital and data. This also identified six key, cross-government priorities:

- *Transformed Public Services*

Enabling great digital services and embedded digital design and delivery.

- *One Login for Government*

A single method of authentication for all government services.

- *Better Data to Power Decision Making*

Co-operative sharing of quality data for reuse across government.

- *Secure, Efficient and Sustainable Technology*

Promotion of reusable technology that is resilient, secure, sustainable and effective with emphasis on the remediation of legacy systems.

- *Digital Skills at Scale*

Upskilling staff, establishing a capability framework and improving retention.

- *Unlocking Digital Transformation*

Addressing systematic barriers to digital transformation and ensuring all departments meet an agreed standard of delivery.

1.4.4 The CDDO policy does state that it is not specifically intended for adoption within Local Government. However, it also indicates that the CDDO and DLUHC are jointly engaging with local government to help create alignment with these plans, by supporting the reform of local services and, where appropriate, encouraging integration with central government services.

1.4.5 WDC's revised Digital Strategy will include direction (where appropriate) from Central Government Digital Strategies. Consideration will also be given to the Levelling Up agenda which was not available when the Joint Digital Strategy was designed.

2 Alternative Options

2.1 No alternative options are presented.

3 Consultation and Member's comments

3.1 The Portfolio Holder for Transformation has received a copy of this report.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

4.1.1 None.

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 None.

4.3 Council Plan

4.3.1 None.

4.4 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

4.4.1 None.

4.5 Analysis of the effects on Equality

4.5.1 None.

4.6 Data Protection

4.6.1 All Digital Strategy initiatives/changes are in-line with data protection legislation.

4.7 Health and Wellbeing

4.7.1 None.

5 Risk Assessment

5.1 None

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

6.1.1 Abandoning the merger was a significant blow for the Digital Strategy objectives. However, this does not mean the end of the road for Digital and a revised Digital Strategy proposal will provide WDC with a real opportunity to tailor its digital approach and concentrate on delivering programmes which will truly be of benefit to our residents.

6.1.2 There are no specific recommendations made within this paper, it is simply intended to offer reassurance to members that after the Digital Strategy was approved, ICT did actively start to work on several key initiatives. Our revised strategy proposals will continue to prioritise the actives which will have the most benefit to our communities, but also to resolve some of the shortfalls of the previous strategy and improve our overall outcomes.

7 Background papers

7.1.1 WDC, 2021 – [Joint Digital Strategy](#).

8 Questions from Councillors

8.1 *Question from Cllr. Dickson*

8.1.1 Its proposed that plans for a new CRM system will be brought forward for consideration in Q3 2022 for rollout in Q1 2023. Is there any indication of the possible costs of introducing such a system (even just ballpark figures) and from where this would be funded?

8.1.2 Also, how confident are you that if a decision is made in Q3, that the first services could be rolled out in Q1 next year? Does this really allow enough time for UAT?

8.1.3 One of the lessons of our community engagement during the recent COVID

pandemic has been that there are still many people in our District who do not have access to any form of digital technology. What reassurances can you provide that WDC's digitalisation strategy does not leave these residents feeling disenfranchised?

8.2 *Response*

- 8.2.1 When thinking about a CRM, members must consider that the cost of implementation can vary significantly depending on the desired functionality, software provider and other fluid factors such as the number of users. Any proposals formally submitted in the future will have a properly costed business case which fully identifies and accounts for everything the Council would need to spend.
- 8.2.2 As a "ballpark" figure, assuming that we would like a full service CRM that integrates completed with e-forms and key back-office systems, includes workflow, implementation support, etc., I'd expect year one costs of around £80,000 - £100,000. Then depending on the number of users the system hosts and the levels of integration we decide are required, around £40,000 each year afterwards in maintenance.
- 8.2.3 However, as said, this could vary significantly and the figures above assume a system that will integrate with some of our existing technology.
- 8.2.4 Funding would likely be taken from the ICT Service System Alignment Reserve or ICT's Digital Seed Funding. Again, please be assured that any future business case would have to be approved by our finance team, with funding identified across the solutions lifecycle. We would not sign the Council up for anything we cannot afford or would create unjustifiable financial pressures.
- 8.2.5 In terms of timing – we will keep this continually under review as a difficulty or hold up at any stage could delay things. However, it would be important that we start to use any system we procure relatively quickly. Getting high-quality, positive outcomes at the start of what will be a long-term project is absolutely essential. Most CRM providers now are hosted so our technical requirements may be limited and in advance of this we could already be working with service areas to identify and build processes. All of this will help us to move forward quickly whilst maintaining service quality.
- 8.2.6 Regarding the delivery of services for non-digital residents, we will absolutely not leave any resident behind. Our Digital Strategy and its delivery will remain true to the Council's values of being Community Focused, with Fairness and Equality.
- 8.2.7 The benefits of redesigning services for digital will flow across other service channels. For example, if we were to implement a CRM, the same e-forms would be used to complete a transaction on the website as would be used internally for staff face to face or over the telephony. Any assisted transaction would then benefit from the transparency and efficiency of the digital process, but would remain accessible via the customers chosen channel. People could also swap channels, with their information remaining consistent and open.

8.3 *Question from Cllr. Sidney Syson*

- 8.3.1 On 1 June, Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP announced a £1.1m fund to test the use of digital tools and data standards across 10 local areas

which included WDC and Stratford. Cllr Cooke commented: "The Planning White Paper published last year highlights Government's desire for Local Plans to be fully digitised, more visual, web-based, and based on the latest digital technology. It also indicates that this should improve public engagement in the Plan making process. I am therefore delighted that the two South Warwickshire Councils are amongst a select few authorities to have been chosen to test the use of digital tools, thus leading the way in this area.

8.4 *Response*

- 8.4.1 The allocation of funding to Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Council's will be used to assist in the digitalisation of the local plan.
- 8.4.2 The intended outcome of the pathfinder programme is to translate Local Plans into online, digital resources which can be interrogated from a map interactively rather than a traditional flat document. The pathfinder identifies a number of local plan standards to be used, which should ultimately improve accessibility and the integration of the plan with other services.
- 8.4.3 At SDC and WDC, the funding is being used to cover the costs of a support officer who will assist with data capture and the digitisation of the local plan itself. This has a tremendous number of benefits, particularly within planning. If for example, the local plan layer were added to our development control system, it would be possible to autonomously search for local plan policies and there associated text every time a planning application is captured. These could then be included in reports and decision notices automatically. The data could also then be presented in other systems, on the Council's website and intranet.
- 8.4.4 The pathfinder activities are not directly under the control of ICT (i.e. part of a specific digital agenda item), but they are within the spirit of the previously agreed Digital Strategy. The activities will open up our data for re-use, make better use of spatial information and can contribute to the automation of services.

Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with draft report

Committee/Date	05/07/2022	
Title of report	Work Programme Update – Digital Strategy	
Consultations undertaken		
Consultee *required	Date	Details of consultation /comments received
Ward Member(s)	NA	
Portfolio Holder WDC & SDC *	27/06/22	Cllr. Tracey
Financial Services *	NA	
Legal Services *	NA	
Other Services	NA	
Chief Executive(s)	CE 27/06/22	
Head of Service(s)	NA	
Section 151 Officer	NA	
Monitoring Officer	NA	
CMT (WDC)	27/06/22	
Leadership Co-ordination Group (WDC)		
Other organisations		
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Ctte/Council?		Recommendation to :Cabinet / CouncilCommittee
Contrary to Policy/Budget framework		No
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?		No
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?		No
Accessibility Checked?		File/Info/Inspect Document/Check Accessibility