



**Cabinet**

**Tuesday, 9 September 2025**

**Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028**

## **Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services**

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Wellbeing, ICT and Member Development, Cllr J Wheeler**

### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. This report presents the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028 for Cabinet approval.
- 1.2. The Strategy consolidates and modernises three existing strategies: ICT, Digital-by-Design and Customer Access; while aligning with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and strategic priorities.
- 1.3. It outlines how the Council will leverage emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to improve service delivery, enhance digital access, and strengthen cyber security.
- 1.4. The Strategy and a detailed Action Plan is included at Appendix One.

### **2. Recommendation**

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1. This Strategy has been created to provide a clear plan for how the Council can use technology to improve its services, processes and digital access for both residents and staff. It provides a positive framework to update the Council's core systems, improve online security and explore helpful new tools like AI. The accompanying Action Plan lists a number of projects to increase awareness of Council services, improve customer experience, and support the Council's workforce with the skills they need to succeed.
- 3.2. Approving this Strategy is an essential step in continuing to make Council services modern, helpful and responsive to residents' needs. It will allow the Council to use technology to remove barriers for people, reduce costs, and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from its digital services. Importantly, it also aims to nurture a positive and supportive culture where our staff feel empowered to develop new ideas that deliver high quality services for the benefit of all.

- 3.3. The accompanying Action Plan outlines specific initiatives across three strategic strands: Technological Access, Digital Access and Customer Access, with measurable outcomes and timelines.

#### **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1. In recent years, the Council has made great progress with its digital services based on previous strategies. Key achievements include moving its backup systems to more secure cloud services, launching a new website that met high accessibility standards, and introducing popular online features like MyAccount. These successes show the Council's commitment to using technology to deliver better and more reliable services for residents.
- 4.2. The Council recognises that it must continue to improve to meet the changing expectations of its residents and keep up with the fast pace of technology. Bringing three strategies into one gives the Council a clearer and more unified plan. It allows the Council to better embrace the opportunities offered by new developments like AI and prepare for potential future changes in local government.
- 4.3. A core principle of the Strategy is to nurture a positive and forward thinking culture, where innovations can flourish. This means creating a supportive environment that encourages staff to explore new ideas and test creative approaches to improve services for residents. It is an approach centered on learning quickly from the Council's experiences, sharing its findings constructively, and continuously adapting to ensure the Council always deliver the best possible outcomes.

#### **5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection**

- 5.1 The Council could have chosen to simply refresh the three existing strategies separately. This option was rejected because a single, unified plan avoids duplication and is more effective for delivering a clear and consistent improvement to both Council digital services and customer accessibility.
- 5.2 Alternatively, the Council could have chosen not to renew its Technology Strategy at all. This was not considered a suitable option, as it would be out of step with the Council's commitment to continuous improvement and would mean missing out on new opportunities to make Council services better for residents, in a fast changing environment. Furthermore, ensuring Council services can operate in a secure environment.

#### **6. Risks and Uncertainties**

- 6.1. There are clear risks to the Council if it does not continue to develop its services. These include not meeting the needs of residents, having out-of-date security that cannot provide against the thousands of daily online threats and not providing the convenient 24/7 digital services that people expect.

- 6.2. This Strategy directly addresses these risks through planned investment in modern systems, a strong focus on online security, and clear oversight of the Council's digital work. By promoting a culture of security awareness and providing ongoing training, the Council can ensure it remains protected and that its services are safe and reliable.
- 6.3. With Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon the Council needs to be in the best place it can be to deliver modern effective services for its residents and make any transfer or merger of hardware, systems and information as easy as possible.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Financial Implications**

The advent of developing AI, preparing for LGR and ensuring we operate in a secure environment is likely to lead to resource issues. Any budget growth will be reported in financial reports to Corporate Overview Group and Cabinet and to Full Council as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **7.2. Legal Implications**

Implementation of the Strategy will help to ensure ongoing compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation and guidance.

### **7.3. Equalities Implications**

The Strategy is supported by an Equality Impact Assessment and will be reviewed accordingly.

### **7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications**

There are no Section 17 implications contained in this report.

### **7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications**

There are no biodiversity net gain implications contained in this report.

## **8. Link to Corporate Priorities**

The Environment	Supports carbon neutrality through cloud adoption, reduced paper usage and enabling digital usage rather than physical travel
Quality of Life	Enhances access to services and empowers residents through digital inclusion
Efficient Services	Streamlines processes and improves service delivery through automation
Sustainable Growth	Builds digital infrastructure to support future growth

## 9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028.

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<b>Background papers available for Inspection:</b>	Communications and Engagement Strategy Equality Impact Assessment
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix One – Technological, Digital and Customer Access Strategy 2025-2028