

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 17 February 2021

Digital First – Update and Plan for the Digital Principle



Cllr Mike Sutherland, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said,

“Staffordshire County Council has already embarked on an ambitious programme, working with partners wherever possible, to transform how the public can access our services in a digital age.

This authority’s resilience during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic also demonstrated our ability and willingness to use new ways of working.

Now the many projects detailed in this paper, taken together, are another step in the essential process of moving Staffordshire’s residents and businesses forward so that we are equipped to take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.”

Report Summary:

This report provides Cabinet with the following update on the digital principle:

- a. **Context for the digital principle** and a review of progress made in recent years.
- b. **A new strategy for the digital principle called ‘Digital First’**. This ambitious strategy builds on the progress we have made with digital so far and sets out how we will make Staffordshire County Council a genuinely digital organisation for the 21st century.
- c. **A proposed plan for how we intend to deliver Digital First**, which includes 32 individual projects. The plan also includes how we will embed continuous digital improvement across the organisation.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress made by the digital principle to date.
- b. Agree a new strategy for the digital principle called Digital First.
- c. Agree the proposed delivery plan for Digital First, featuring 32 projects and continuous digital improvement for the organisation.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 17 February 2021

Digital First – Update and Plan for the Digital Principle

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

I recommend that Cabinet:

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Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Introduction

1. **Digital is fundamental to the way Staffordshire County Council works as an organisation**, as well as how we interact with our partners, citizens and communities. As such, digital is one of the four key principles set out in our Strategic Plan 2018-22.
2. Following the events of 2020, digital has become even more critical to how we live, work, and communicate with each other. **It is vital that as an organisation we continue to review and develop our approach to digital so that every citizen and business can flourish in the digital age.**
3. With this in mind, this report provides Cabinet with the following update on the digital principle:
 - a. **Context for the digital principle** and a review of progress made in recent years.
 - b. **A new framework for the digital principle called 'Digital First'**. This ambitious strategy builds on the progress we have made with digital so far and sets out how we will make Staffordshire County Council a genuinely digital organisation for the 21st century.
 - c. **A proposed plan for how we intend to deliver Digital First**, which currently includes 32 individual projects. The plan also includes how we will embed continuous digital improvement across the organisation.

Digital Principle – Context

4. In Staffordshire County Council's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, digital was identified as one of four key principles for the organisation, ensuring that as an organisation we are "using technology and data to connect, inform and support our citizens".
5. **Staffordshire County Council has an ambition to become a genuinely digital council for the 21st century.** This ambition extends to working with our partners to make Staffordshire a county where every citizen and business can flourish in the digital age.
6. **In the last four years, the Council has made great progress in developing its approach to digital.** In 2016, Cabinet agreed the #DigitalStaffordshire strategy, which set out 5 digital pillars ('digital citizen', 'digital council', 'data', 'digital health' and 'smart county') and aimed to explore how the Council could use digital and new technologies to improve the way we work, the local economy, and encourage social action.
7. Since the #DigitalStaffordshire strategy was agreed, a significant amount of work on digital has taken place. This has included the implementation of the Digital Citizen programme, substantial improvements to our digital services for residents, improvements to our online information portals and websites, and the creation of the 'myStaffs app'.
8. In addition, the Network Staffordshire partnership was formed in 2017, chaired by Trevor McMillan, Vice-Chancellor of Keele University. The Network has brought together senior partners from across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to develop the Smart Staffordshire concept and the '*Smart Living, Smart Working, Smart People*' strategy.
9. Staffordshire County Council continues to play a key role in driving forward the priorities of Network Staffordshire, including the development of a Data Institute and a plan for 5G implementation which forms part of the wider Digital Strategic Infrastructure Plan.
10. In 2019 there was a drive to consolidate many of our digital priorities and ensure that SMART working became standard practice across the organisation. 2020 and the outbreak of Covid-19 has seen digital become even further embedded in the way we work. This has included the roll out and use of Microsoft Teams across the organisation, the innovative use of Facebook Portal webcam devices in adult social care, the development of Virtual Family Hubs, and an enhanced digital offer for our cultural services.
11. The success of the past four years, as well as the pace of change and innovation seen during our response to Covid-19, has provided us with the opportunity to review our approach to digital. **This review has resulted in the development of a new and ambitious digital strategy for the organisation called 'Digital First'.**

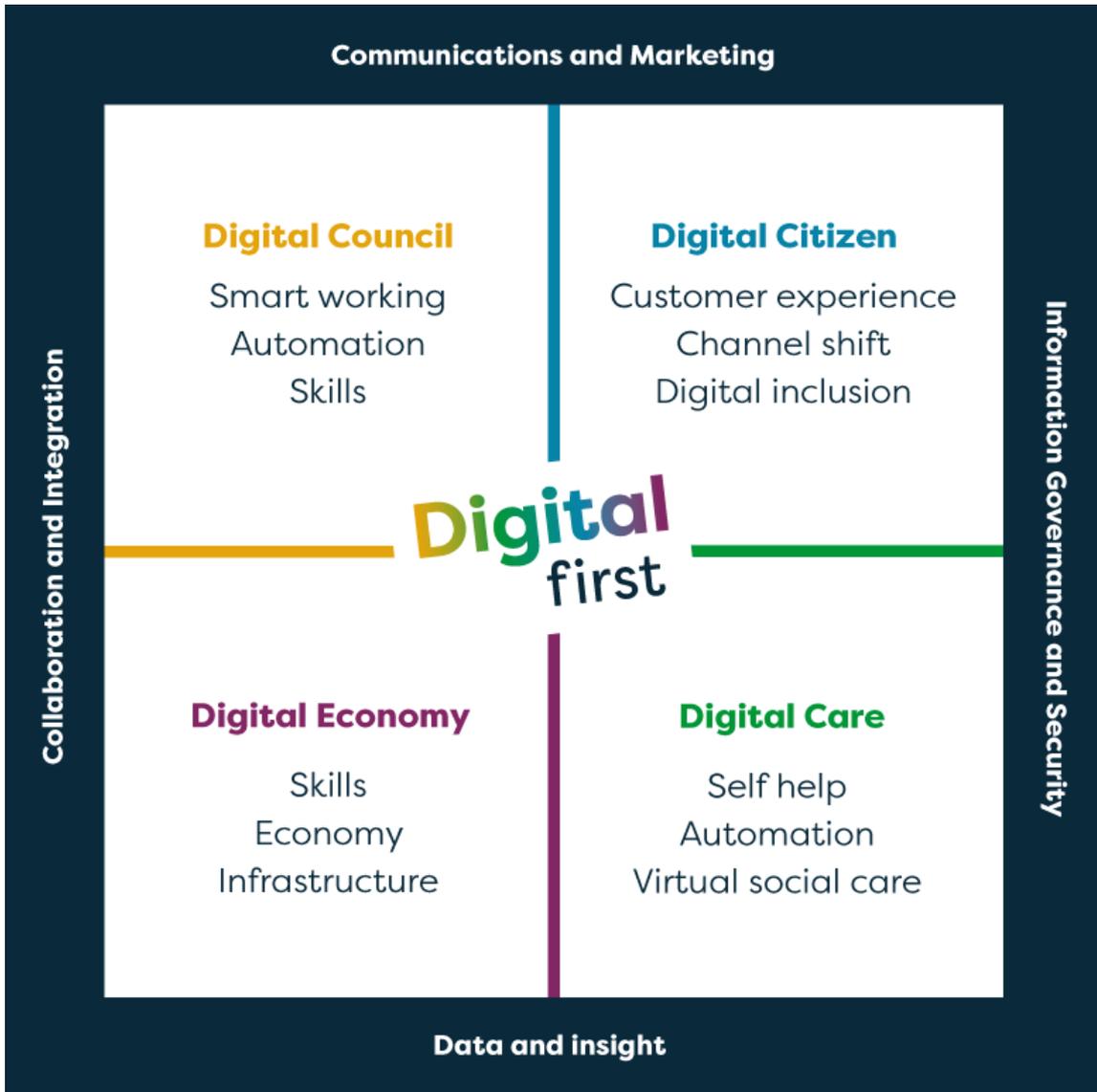
Digital First

12. Ensuring an organisation like Staffordshire County Council continues to operate in a digital way as technology advances presents many challenges. However, rather than seeing digital as a problem we need to mitigate, we must instead embrace the many strategic opportunities that digital can provide.
13. **This report proposes a new, simplified strategy for the digital principle called Digital First.** Digital First aims to make the most of the opportunities provided by digital to improve the lives of our residents and support local businesses and Staffordshire's economy.
14. To do this, Digital First sets out a framework with four priority areas. These are:
 - a. **Digital Citizen** – Improving how we connect, engage and communicate with our citizens through digital. This includes improving digital self-service and self-help tools to empower residents, increasing digital inclusion across the county, and using digital to support our highways assets.
 - b. **Digital Council** – Embedding smart working and empowering our staff to make the most of our digital tools and resources. This includes using digital to improve the customer experience, continuing to roll-out Microsoft 365, developing a plan to support staff and Members to develop their digital skills, and working with partners to improve how we share data.
 - c. **Digital Care** – Using digital to help our frontline teams support our most vulnerable residents and promote independence. Digital will also support the transformations in Children and Families and Adult Social Care systems. This work includes improving information, advice and guidance and the use of digital tools and data in Children and Families, as well as the Virtual Social Care project and promoting the use of assistive technologies in Health and Care.
 - d. **Digital Economy** – Supporting local businesses and our economy through better digital access and infrastructure. This includes continuing to develop the Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework, implementing a Digital Community Learning Programme for skills, and using digital to improve our local transport systems.
15. In addition to these priority areas, Digital First has identified four enablers that will be beneficial to ensuring that we can deliver the strategy. These are:
 - a. **Communications and marketing** – Promoting awareness of digital support and options both internally and with residents. This includes linking in with the Place Branding for Staffordshire work.
 - b. **Information governance and cyber security** – Ensuring the we protect our data by following national best practice on information governance and cyber security.
 - c. **Data and insight** – Using digital to improve how we analyse and use the data available to us and our partners.

d. **Collaboration and integration** – Working with our partners across Network Staffordshire and the wider public sector to integrate data and ICT services.

16. The diagram in Figure 1 below provides a visual summary of the Digital First strategy described above.

Figure 1 – Digital First summary diagram



17. More detail on the 32 individual projects that make up the 4 priority areas in the Digital First strategy can be found in the full delivery plan for Digital First at appendix 1 to this report.

18. Across the four priority areas and projects set out in the plan, **Digital First will strive to ensure that continuous digital development becomes 'business as usual' for the organisation.** This will be achieved through a range of supporting actions, including incremental support of the workforce using Microsoft 365 technologies and continually looking to improve how our websites, digital tools and processes function.

Governance

19. The digital principle is led by Cllr Mike Sutherland, Cabinet Member for Finance. The SLT lead is John Tradewell, Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services, and the WLT lead for Digital is Andrew Donaldson, Assistant Director for Strategy, Public Health and Prevention.
20. The primary forum for oversight of the digital principle and the Digital First delivery plan is the Digital Leadership Group. The Cabinet, SLT and WLT leads are all on the membership of this group and bring together the key officers responsible for delivering the Digital First Delivery Plan.
21. There are a number of interdependencies between the digital principle and the work of the other three principles in the Councils Strategic Plan 2018-22 (communities, workforce and climate change).
22. Each of the other three principles also have their own governance mechanisms. However, as there is significant cross over between these principles and digital, regular meetings will take place with the WLT leads of each principle to ensure coordination.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

23. There is some financial investment attached to a number of the projects in the Digital First delivery plan. However, much of this financial investment is modest and funded by the service areas rather than corporately.
24. Any significant financial pressures or additional investment required will be subject to the standard organisational MTFS processes and the development of individual business cases.
25. Any business cases that require no additional resources will be reviewed and signed off by the Digital Leadership Group. Where additional resources are required, these will be reviewed and signed off by SLT and Cabinet on a case by case basis following recommendations from the Digital Leadership Group.

Legal Implications

26. There are no specific legal implications for the digital principle as a whole. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the 32 projects outlined in the Digital First delivery plan. Any commissioning work or changes to services that result from the Digital First delivery plan will follow the standard legal requirements of our commissioning, procurement and property management processes.

List of Background Documents / Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Digital First Delivery Plan
- Appendix 2 – Community Impact Assessment

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