Digital, Data and Technology Strategy

2024 - 2027

Contents

1. Introduction

Foreword by the Assistant Director for IT & Digital

In today's interconnected and rapidly evolving business landscape, digital technologies and data-driven insights play a critical role in driving success and delivering better services. By integrating digital transformation, data management, and technology utilisation, the Council can enhance efficiency, improve decision-making, foster innovation, and deliver superior customer experiences.

In our digital era, the significance of data is ever-growing. Information stands as a vital asset indispensable to the Council. High-quality decisions rely heavily on this data. Consequently, it is imperative to establish robust governance structures. These structures should guarantee that information forms the bedrock of the Council's business objectives. Moreover, it should facilitate collaboration and constructive critique from our partners and the communities we serve.

Over the past year, we've seen rapid technological advances - most notably in generative artificial intelligence (AI) - presenting us with new challenges and opportunities for innovation and transformation. With this pace of technological change and the growing expectations of citizens and businesses, we need to remain adaptable and focused to successfully achieve digital transformation.

The public now anticipates accessing services around the clock through diverse digital channels. It's crucial to reimagine our public services, focusing on enhancing customer experience.

This transformation can be powered by personal mobile technology, innovative thinking, enabling seamless access and convenience for users.

Simultaneously, the Council is confronting numerous challenges, necessitating constant exploration of more streamlined work methods. Information Technology (IT) stands as a crucial element in delivering services to Worcestershire's businesses and residents in a cost-effective manner. It not only supports daily operational activities but also facilitates innovative and transformative approaches to work, fostering smarter practices.

The following strategy sets out how IT can shape itself to best support the Council as it goes forwards into an era where service budgets have, and are continuing to be reduced, and where innovative and bold new service delivery models are being explored. The need for a flexible but robust technical infrastructure has never been greater, nor has the need to ensure that strong IT Governance is in place to direct resources and money at the key core strategic systems that support the business of the authority and enable the achievement of the Corporate Plan.

Purpose

This Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT) strategy lays out our approach to harnessing the power of digital transformation, leveraging data assets, and maximising the potential of technology to achieve Council objectives and support service delivery.

IT and Digital will act as an enabler for individual services within the Council, aiding them in fulfilling their specific goals and needs while placing a strong emphasis on the customer experience. This customer-centric approach guarantees that digital solutions are tailored to meet the requirements and preferences of the individuals utilising Council services. Rather than enforcing a rigid approach, we will capitalise on the potential of digital solutions, offering suggestions and insights to inform the adoption of technologies that enrich the customer experience.

The strategy adheres to guiding principles which support best practice, value for money, inclusivity, agility, cloud first and ease of use. These principles are supported by the **Technology Code of Practice** published by central government.

This document has been drawn up in consultation with senior managers across the service, under guidance from the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change and informed by the Corporate Plan. This has determined what currently works well, where there are problems, and what technology and systems are required for the future. The consultation identified much strength in what we already do as a Council and a digital ambition to develop the Council's website and our services in ways that match customer expectation.

The delivery of this Strategy will fall under the overall control of the Assistant Director for IT and Digital. Progress on the implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the IT and Digital Leadership Team.
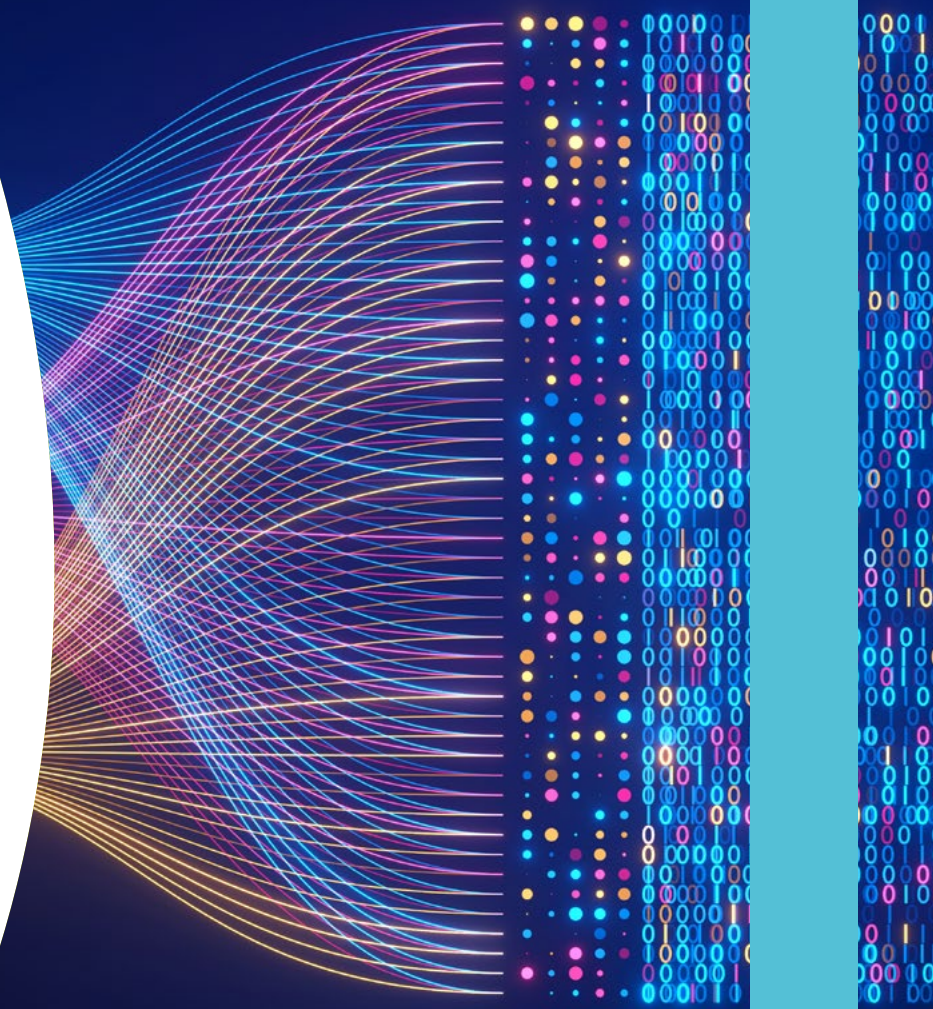
Executive Summary

Digital transformation has unrivalled potential to improve the lives of citizens throughout the UK and modernise the way government works. People across the country rightly expect public services to be high quality, easy to access and available whenever they need them. They also have a right to expect that every penny they pay in tax is used as productively and efficiently as possible.

In the ever-evolving landscape of business and technology, our Data, Digital, and Technology Strategy represents a transformative blueprint aimed at improving the Council's agility, innovation, and long-term success. This strategy integrates data management, digital innovation, and technological advancement. By leveraging the power of data-driven insights, embracing cutting-edge digital solutions, and fostering technological excellence, we aim to drive operational efficiency and enhance customer experiences.
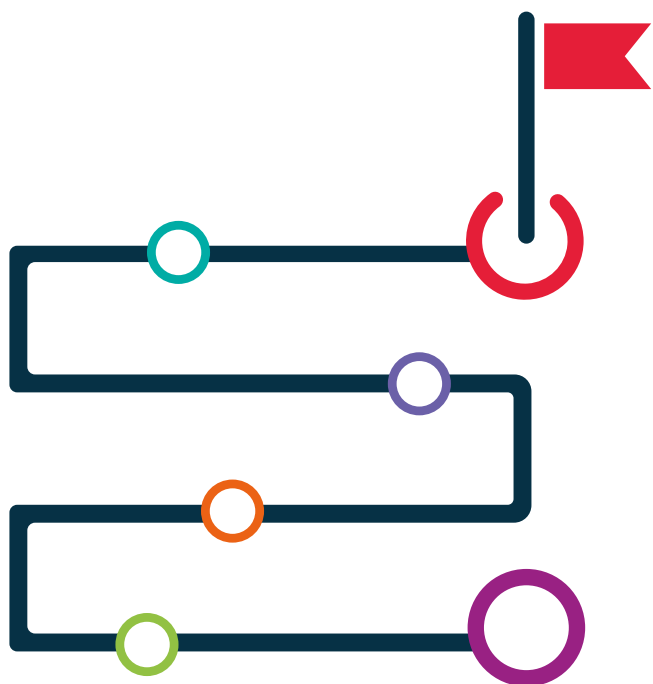
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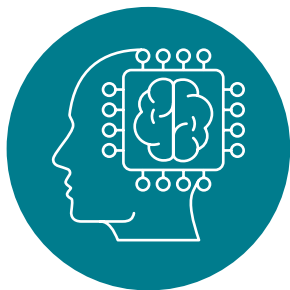
◆ **Maximise Data Utilisation:** Leverage advanced analytics and artificial intelligence to extract actionable insights from our data, enabling informed decision-making and strategic planning.

◆ **Optimise Operational Efficiency:** Streamline internal processes, automate repetitive tasks, and improve resource allocation through digital technologies, reducing costs and enhancing productivity.

◆ **Enhance Customer Experience:** Develop seamless, user-centric digital interfaces and services that cater to the evolving needs and expectations of our customers, ensuring exceptional user experiences.

◆ **Ensure Data Security and Compliance:** Implement robust cybersecurity measures and adhere to strict data governance standards to safeguard sensitive information and maintain regulatory compliance.

◆ **Foster Innovation:** Encourage a culture of innovation by investing in research and development, fostering collaboration and embracing emerging technologies to stay ahead in the competitive landscape.

Previous ICT Strategic documents have served the Council well and through them the Council has developed sound systems that support the delivery of services, and the employment of technology to support agile and flexible working demands. This strategy document will build on this to provide the blueprint for the things we need to do to continue to improve service delivery, help Members to serve their communities better and make the best use of new and emerging technologies.

ICT is an integral part of the business and whilst ICT will drive many important changes within the Council, its role is that of enabler rather than an end in itself. Worcestershire's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's service delivery priorities summarising the financial climate that the Council is working in and setting out service commitments and aspirations for the County. This ICT Strategy does not therefore stand alone and is placed in the wider context of the Council's overall strategy and business plans.

Linked Strategies & Programmes

The DDaT Strategy has been written to align with and complement our national, organisational and partner strategies to deliver a whole council approach, as listed below:
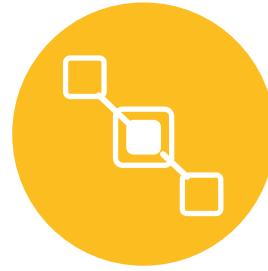
UK Digital Strategy

National Data Strategy

National AI Strategy

Transforming for a Digital Future 2022 - 2025
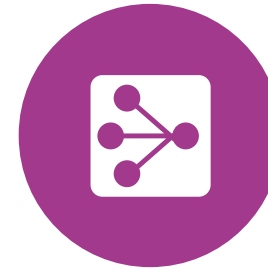
Technology Code of Practice

Building Digital UK (BDUK)
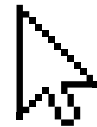
Corporate Plan - Shaping Worcestershire's Future

Customer Experience Strategy 2022 - 2024
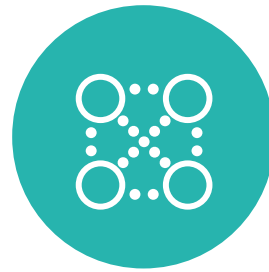
Information Governance Strategy

Digital Accessibility Strategy
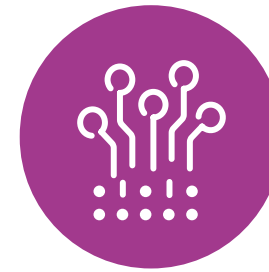
HWICS Integrated Care Strategy
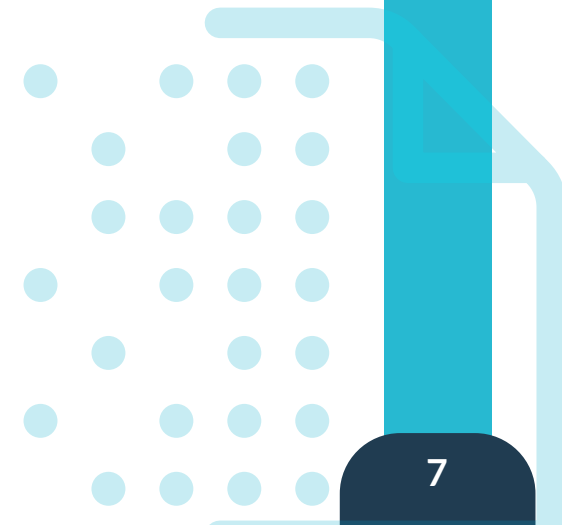
The Council has several cross cutting organisational transformation programmes:

◆ Digital Transformation Programme
◆ Economy and Infrastructure Technology Programme
◆ People Technology Programme
◆ Worcestershire Children's First Technology Programme
◆ Digital Skills Programme (Public Health)
◆ Sustainable Transformation Partnership
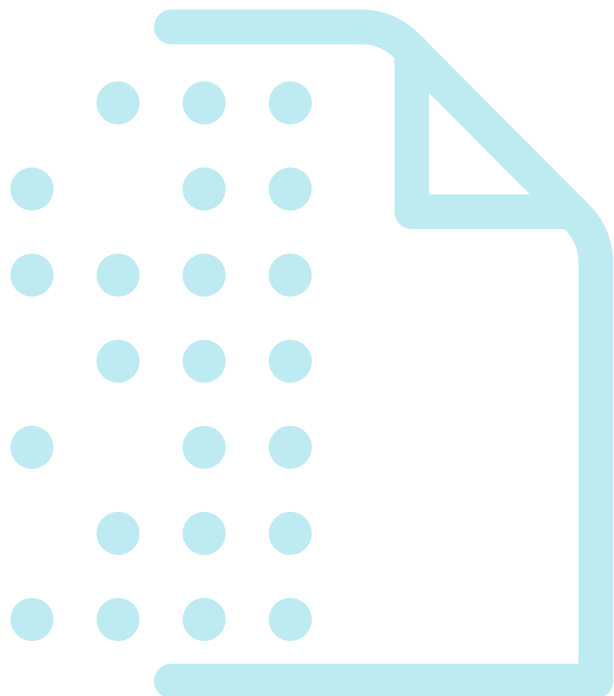
2. Where are we now

The Journey so far

There are digital, data and technology professionals working in highly effective teams in the Council. Services are able to deliver high volume digital services to a good standard and innovate and respond rapidly as citizens' needs change.

Our technology resilience position where we are now compared with where we were less than 5 years ago is unrecognisable. In that time, we have gone from effectively a single data centre with no resilience and limited backup capability, to a position where, we have now performed (multiple times) a full disaster recovery test, failing all services across to a secondary data centre, supported by immutable and offsite backups. The Council's reliance on this critical infrastructure is continually increasing and our delivery of critical and complex projects, has allowed us to meet and exceed the Council's expectations.

In recent years there has been a significant and concerning increase in cyber-attacks, including ransomware attacks, on the public sector and education organisations.

The Council continues to invest in a range of measures to protect our systems and the data they hold from potential attacks, with recent improvements being the onboarding of a fully managed Security Operations Centre that monitors our accounts and infrastructure 24x7x365.

Departments are investing in cutting-edge technology to solve complex problems. For instance, Technicare to predict and detect early deterioration of patients to avoid admissions, and Netcall Connect is the solution used by the Council to provide chatbot services on our public facing website.

An inward review of the IT and Digital services' operating model has been undertaken including how we deliver services and to ensure our teams are fit for purpose, and are equipped to deliver a professional, high-quality service that makes the greatest use of the expertise and experience, supporting our directorates as best we can in delivering their service outcomes. To that end, we have developed the structure of the service based around ITIL4 (IT Infrastructure Library) best practice operating principles and priorities.

Our focus has been on developing teams that are sized appropriately, offer the right skills, experience and expertise, and that are operating with the right tools, processes and methodologies to ensure the highest quality and most efficient service.

In addition, the Socitm Digital Maturity Assessment (SDMA) has been undertaken to assess the Council's digital maturity, based on the principles of Government Digital Service (GDS) and business architecture. The SDMA is drawn from a combination of best practice and deep experience of successful, hands on, digital delivery indicates that there are at least nine dimensions that must be considered holistically to ensure the conditions for successful digital delivery are optimised.

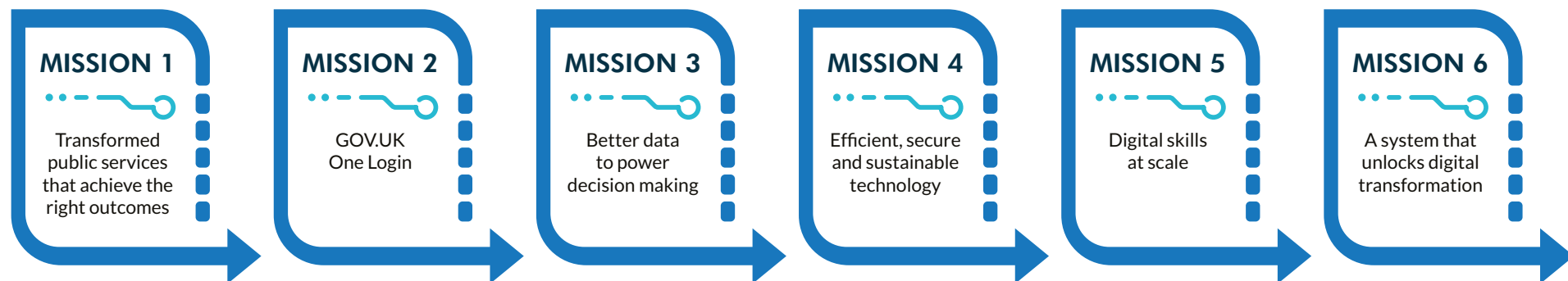Our DDaT Strategy 2024-2027 sets out how we will create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where digital technologies are an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for all to use. To deliver against this objective requires both a culture shift and a digital technology shift, and we've established overarching design principles to help us do it.

Government Transforming for a Digital Future: 2022 - 2025 Roadmap

Digital and data are the essential building blocks of all successful organisations. It's only possible to make effective decisions, meet customer needs and respond to new challenges and opportunities when you have modern technology, real-time access to high quality data, a cadre of skilled digital talent and the right conditions for innovation to thrive.

People expect government services to be as good as the best online experiences in the private sector. Rising to meet these expectations will require change on a scale that government has never undertaken before.

The **Transforming for a digital future: 2022 to 2025 roadmap for digital and data** is an ambitious statement of intent. It represents a new era of collaboration on digital transformation and marks a step-change in the digital and data agenda. Written collaboratively, it sets out a collective vision under-pinned by real, tangible commitments and actions, to be delivered by all government departments.

MISSION 1	MISSION 2	MISSION 3	MISSION 4	MISSION 5	MISSION 6
Transformed public services that achieve the right outcomes	GOV.UK One Login	Better data to power decision making	Efficient, secure and sustainable technology	Digital skills at scale	A system that unlocks digital transformation

Our Design Principles

Designing an effective Digital, Data and Technology Strategy requires adherence to certain guiding principles to ensure its success.

Recognising the crucial elements to prioritise is fundamental. Equally significant is understanding the methods to achieve success — including planning, sequencing, investing, designing, and engaging the entire enterprise in our technological modernisation efforts. The subsequent principles will provide direction in these initiatives:

1. Customer-Centric Focus:

◆ **Principle:** Prioritise customer needs and preferences in all digital and technological initiatives.

◆ **Rationale:** By understanding and addressing customer pain points, both internal and external, the Council can create valuable, user-friendly solutions, leading to enhanced satisfaction and loyalty.

2. Data-Driven Decision Making:

◆ **Principle:** Base strategic decisions on actionable insights derived from data analytics.

◆ **Rationale:** Informed decision-making, powered by data, leads to more accurate predictions, better resource allocation, and proactive problem-solving.

3. Agility and Flexibility:

◆ **Principle:** Foster an agile approach, enabling quick adaptation to changing market trends and customer demands.

◆ **Rationale:** Rapid responses to market shifts and emerging technologies ensure the organisation remains competitive and innovative.

4. Security and Compliance:

◆ **Principle:** Prioritise robust cybersecurity measures and regulatory compliance in all digital and data-related activities.

◆ **Rationale:** Ensuring data security builds trust with customers and partners, while compliance prevents legal issues and financial penalties.

5. Innovation and Experimentation:

◆ **Principle:** Encourage a culture of innovation, allowing employees to experiment with new technologies and ideas.

◆ **Rationale:** Innovation fosters creativity, leading to the development of cutting-edge solutions and the ability to seize new opportunities.

6. Collaboration and Partnerships:

◆ **Principle:** Using technology to enhance and support better methods of collaborations with external partners, startups, and industry experts.

◆ **Rationale:** Partnerships bring diverse expertise, enabling the Council to access new technologies and stay updated with industry best practices.

7. Sustainability and Scalability:

◆ **Principle:** Ensure that digital solutions are sustainable in the long term and scalable to accommodate growth.

◆ **Rationale:** Sustainable solutions reduce environmental impact, while scalability ensures the organisation can handle increased demands without major disruptions.

8. User Experience (UX) Design:

◆ **Principle:** Prioritise intuitive and seamless user experiences in digital interfaces and applications.

◆ **Rationale:** User-friendly designs enhance customer satisfaction, encourage usage, and reduce support requirements.

9. Talent Development and Empowerment:

◆ **Principle:** Invest in employee training, upskilling, and empowerment to build a skilled workforce.

◆ **Rationale:** A knowledgeable and empowered workforce is essential for successful implementation and adaptation to new technologies.

10. Continuous Improvement:

◆ **Principle:** Implement feedback loops and regular assessments to continuously improve digital solutions and processes.

◆ **Rationale:** Continuous improvement ensures that the Council remains competitive, efficient, and aligned with evolving market demands.

3. Where do we want to be

Our Vision

"A future where seamless integration of data, innovative digital solutions, and cutting-edge technologies drive unprecedented value for our customers. We envision a landscape where data isn't just a resource but an invaluable asset, empowering us to make informed decisions, enhance customer experiences, and foster continuous innovation."

Our Priorities

PRIORITY 1 – DATA MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

- Maintain robust data governance frameworks.
- Ensure data quality, integrity, and security.
- Implement data lifecycle management and compliance with regulations (such as GDPR).
- Support a secure collaboration platform for data sharing and working with partners in real time.
- Engage with stakeholders transparently regarding data usage and technology applications.
- Ensure compliance with data privacy laws and regulations.

PRIORITY 2 – ADVANCED ANALYTICS AND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

- Invest in deriving actionable insights from data.
- Embrace predictive analytics and machine learning for informed decision-making.
- Develop real-time reporting capabilities for agile responses to market trends.
- Further develop the Council's existing Self-Service Visualisation approach to Business Intelligence enabling reports and dashboards to be developed and owned by the business.

PRIORITY 3 – DIGITAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Design intuitive and user-friendly digital interfaces.
- Enhance mobile capabilities to cater to on-the-go customers.
- Provide the right technology to work efficiently, securely, and sustainably.
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PRIORITY 4 – EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR ETHICAL AND SECURE USE

- Develop guidelines for ethical AI and responsible technology use.
- Consider the societal impact of technology implementations.
- Strengthen cybersecurity measures to protect against cyber threats.
- Conduct regular security audits and employee training on cybersecurity best practices.
- Continue to migrate to cloud-based platforms for scalability and flexibility.
- Modernise legacy systems to align with current technology standards.
- Implement hybrid cloud solutions for optimal performance and cost-efficiency.

PRIORITY 5 – DIGITAL INCLUSION, INCLUDING DIGITAL SKILLS

- Invest in employee training programs for digital skills development.
- Foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation.
- Recruit and retain top talent with expertise in data, digital, and technology domains.
- Make sure that nobody is left out and that everyone can benefit from the information and communication technologies available today.

PRIORITY 6 – INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ Allocate resources for research and development activities.
- ◆ Foster a culture of creativity and idea generation within the organisation.
- ◆ Experiment with automation for operational efficiency.
- ◆ Explore and adopt emerging technologies like AI and IoT.

PRIORITY 7 – SCALABILITY AND AGILITY

- ◆ Ensure that digital solutions are scalable to accommodate future growth.
- ◆ Implement agile methodologies for quick iterations and adaptability.
- ◆ Foster collaboration between IT and business units for streamlined processes.
- ◆ Ensuring our underlying IT infrastructure is fit for purpose with changing demands.

4. Delivering Change, Monitoring Progress and Measuring Success

Investing in People

IT and Digital support the development of our employees and recognise their achievements and the invaluable contribution they make in delivering services.

All employees undergo an annual review meeting where priorities and objectives for the year ahead are agreed and put into an action plan that is regularly monitored.

Large projects will require a specific Training Needs Assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge, skills or abilities of impacted stakeholders compared to levels required to support and sustain the changes implemented.

To maximise learning and ensure learning is retained, a blend of training delivery methods will be used. This will include:

Instructor - Led Training	e-learning	Mentoring	Coaching
Skills transfer	Apprenticeships	Webinars	Conferences and events
Technical forums	Leadership programmes	Workshops	Focus groups
IT Support resources	Internal and External training courses	Acting up arrangements	Secondments

Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion refers to the equitable and meaningful access to digital technologies, including the internet, computers, and mobile devices, as well as the skills and knowledge needed to use them effectively.

In today's increasingly connected world, digital inclusion plays a crucial role in promoting social and economic development, enhancing educational opportunities, and fostering civic engagement. However, despite the numerous benefits, a significant portion of the population still faces barriers to accessing and using digital technologies.

The benefits of digital technology on the delivery, experience and quality of services are well understood. However, there is no guarantee that the benefits of digitally enabled services will be realised by all members of the population until they are inclusive, designed for change, and meet the expectations of staff and the public.

Digital inclusion is more than just providing access to technology; it is about empowering individuals and communities to fully participate in the digital age. Embracing digital inclusion can lead to improved access to information and services, enhanced communication and collaboration, and increased economic opportunities. It also enables marginalised and underrepresented groups to voice their concerns, participate in decision-making processes, and advocate for their rights.

The newly formed Digital Inclusion group, supports our ambition to achieve a culture of digital inclusion that will ensure our websites and web-based systems and services are accessible to all customers. The group will work together to understand the needs of our community, our staff and to Identify gaps not covered by existing initiatives or plans.

Resourcing the delivery

Funding for the DDaT Strategy 2024-2027 will be incorporated within IT and Digital's revenue budget and capital programme and drawn down based on costed business cases.

It should be noted that whilst we are in a climate of reducing budgets, the demands on IT and Digital is growing as the Council becomes increasingly reliant on technology to enable savings and efficiencies whilst also meeting increasing demand for more flexible working solutions and online collaboration.

Additional resources and investment may also be required if the pace of delivery required by the business is greater than our current delivery capacity.

Monitoring and Reporting progress

It is essential we monitor progress and ensure that the work we are doing is delivering a tangible difference to our staff, members, residents, visitors, communities and businesses of Worcestershire. Therefore, this strategy will be supported by a robust implementation plan which will evidence the delivery of our priorities and will set out key milestones and achievements.

Progress in implementing the strategy and delivery plan will be reported to the IT and Digital Leadership team on a monthly basis. Progress will be reported to the Cabinet Lead for Commissioning, Finance and Transformation on a periodic basis, with the opportunity for ad-hoc progress reports as required.

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