Cabinet
28 February 2023
Dorset Council's Digital Vision Update

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr J Haynes, Corporate Development and Transformation

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Dr Deborah Smart
Title: Corporate Director Transformation, Innovation & Digital
Tel: 01305 224711
Email: Deborah.Smart@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

At 6 April 2021 meeting Cabinet agreed our digital vision which set out our ambition 'to become a digital council in a digital place', with an accompanying eighteen-month delivery plan.   Significant progress and learning have taken place during that period informing the latest version of the delivery plan.

Recommendation:

1. To review the refreshed Digital Dorset Vision updated delivery plan attached to this report, and subject to any final changes accept the recommendation to adopt it.

2. Ask the Place and Resources Overview Committee to examine the role and potential benefits of a Digital Infrastructure Strategy for Dorset, and in the meantime confirm the roles of a Local Authority Digital Champion and Digital Co-ordinator as envisaged in Government guidance with the Portfolio holder for Corporate Development and Transformation and the Service Manager for Digital Place.

Reason for Recommendation:

The delivery plan has been updated to reflect progress over the last 18 months and to align with our refreshed council plan outcomes:

- digital connectivity is widely available
- we work together as 'one Dorset Council', with partners to provide easy to access, responsive services that meet the needs and expectations of our customers
- we develop our use of data and insights to support evidence-led decisions and targeted and timely delivery of our services to improve outcome

1.   **Context**

1.1   Digital plays a key role in both transforming and changing the organisation and place around us. Change enables us to continually improve our services and consider how we can increase productivity using tools such as automation. Transformation looks forward to the future and outward to our communities to understand the problems and challenges we need to solve, using user centred design and modern technology to create new service delivery models.

1.2   Our digital vision recognises the important role digital has in helping to become a more responsive, customer focused council, by:

- talking to customers, listening to their needs, and involving them when designing services
- using technology to provide good customer experiences, increase workforce productivity
- consider new ways to deliver services to increase resilience and sustainability
- becoming data driven, using data and customer insight to inform decisions, predict and intervene early
- developing workforce digital skills and culture of experimentation and openness

1.3   It recognises the enabling role digital has in driving economic prosperity and is central to the modernisation of Dorset's workforce, economy, and communities by:

- promoting and developing Dorset and its businesses as a national centre for digital innovation
- stimulating and supporting the market through a 'one council' approach to digital connectivity

- helping Dorset residents to overcome the financial & skill barriers to being online
- maximising the impact of Dorset's connectivity and skills for economic prosperity and social opportunity by creating digital partnerships and networks where everyone – public, private and community - can lead and learn

2.   Delivery Plan Progress

2.1   Over the last eighteen months we have made substantial progress delivering the plan which has been described in Appendix A.

2.2   There has been significant inward investment into Dorset for digital innovation and connectivity programmes and opportunities to grow the inward investment further:

- £250m estimated commercial investment into fibre deployment in the next three years, with significant deployments expected by recent market entrants
- £10m industry and government investment into 5G RuralDorset
- £6m government investment into Project Gigabit, with a second procurement to take place during 2023 bringing further investment
- £1.2m into three hub projects to provide direct connectivity to schools, libraries, and other public service points

2.3   In addition to the original delivery plan, we have responded to events such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Cost of Living crisis in a digital way and continue to increase our digital maturity across the council using digital solutions to improve service delivery and peoples' experience.

2.4   We have demonstrated commitment to the 5 principles in the national Local Digital Declaration that we signed as the new Council formed through our work:

- to implement the customer platform, enabling us to change the way we use our software applications to reduce cost, complexity, and make things better, consistent, and accessible for our customers.
- sharing information with the Dorset Care Record in a secure way to improve care.
- participating in LGA cyber security improvement work on behalf of the sector.

- developing digital skills and awareness through our champions networks, leadership for digital age programme, digital dorset brand, and festival of the future.
- sharing our learning at national events on a whole range of topics such as cyber security, leadership, 5G and digital inclusion.
- participating in national Local Digital fund projects.
- 5G rural Dorset which has established our reputation as a forward thinking, innovative council, trailblazing in this space and winning awards.

2.5   Work has taken place to converge systems following Unitary status and support our application portfolio when contracts expire, examples of systems currently in procurement are recruitment, bereavement, travel, Special Educational Needs Case Management and consultation and engagement. Balancing the need to maintain an efficient, secure portfolio with software rationalisation.

2.6   We have made good progress delivering against the measures we set out in our vision, which are tracked through our corporate performance reporting and detailed in Appendix B.

3.   **Lessons Learnt**

3.1   Delivering our digital vision, we have learnt there is still work to do to develop the skills and mindset of all our workforce. As technology is made easier and tools available to self-serve, people don't always have the knowledge and expertise to deliver good experiences to our customers.

3.2   We need to continue to educate people how technology can be used to enable accessibility and inclusion of our workforce and customers, and help managers and leaders understand their crucial role in helping to move us into the future and exploit the opportunities available. Through role modelling they can give permission for people to:

- share ideas and collaborate,
- experiment and build insight,
- think one council and beyond their team or service,
- work in the open to build transparency and resilience.

3.3   It has been challenging to recruit people with the skills we need into technical/digital roles in the post pandemic market and therefore dedicate resources to work to deliver quicker. It is acknowledged we need to 'grow our own' using mechanisms such as apprenticeships, communities of practice and professional career pathways to build the future skills we need and keep pace with the latest technology developments and Digital, Data and Technology professional roles.

3.4 We have developed a service design capability at times supplemented with external resources. For example, the Dept of Health & Social Care have recently completed discovery work in Adult Services and Made Tech have worked with Children Services as part of their Digital Family Offer programme. There is further work to do to grow other disciplines required for digital: technical design, delivery management, product management, software development, automation and other future skills.

3.5 Rather than try and do everything ourselves and to enable us to tap into the opportunities of emerging technology, we need to work with a range of businesses/suppliers. To innovate requires agility and we need to be prepared to challenge our internal ways of working to enable us to move quickly when opportunities present themselves.

3.6 We need greater focus on the planet and integrating climate considerations into design and technology decisions.

4. **Delivering on Commitment 10 – Digital Innovation**

'Continue to pioneer new technologies and create the foundations for long-term economic prosperity. We will work to safeguard and encourage job retention and growth, working with the private sector'

4.1 The outward-facing digital place team has four over-arching priorities to deliver the cabinet commitment, to create the foundations of longer-term economic development.

4.2 **Digital innovation**

- Exploring how technology from different sectors can be adopted to solve some of the challenges we face with "outside the box" thinking.
- To deliver management structures and networks that promote and develop rural Dorset as a national centre for digital innovation, initially through business cases, funding bids, and the creation of a Digital Innovation Network.

4.3 **Digital Connectivity**

- One council approach – work with services across the council (primarily Place Directorate) to improve processes which impact on digital connectivity. Continue liaison with BDUK and industry on quick win or innovative barrier busting to facilitate fixed and mobile connectivity improvements.

- Gigabit digital infrastructure for Dorset – stimulating the market, gap funded contract delivery, demand-led provision of fibre where needed by business and communities using voucher funding.
- Understanding, monitoring, and influencing progress of commercial gigabit capable infrastructure delivery across Dorset.
- Exploring solutions for our poorest-served most hard to reach communities and businesses, reducing the rural digital divide.

4.4 DCMS, MobileUK and the LGA recommend that councils adopt a [digital infrastructure strategy](#) with a named officer and councillor champion who promote digital infrastructure both internally within the council and externally. The principles and content of a local authority Digital Infrastructure Strategy are embodied in this Digital Vision.

4.5 There is, however, much to do on this in Dorset, particularly in taking a one council approach to digital connectivity. Therefore, it is recommended that Digital Champion and Digital Co-ordinator roles as outlined in the government's guidance are formalised in accordance with current practice, and that the Place and Resources Overview Committee examine and bring forward a Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

4.6 **Digital Skills**

- Help Dorset residents to overcome the financial barriers to being online and access the savings available by being online.
- Help Dorset residents improve their digital skills so they can access council and other essential services easily through offering targeted support at the point they need it.
- Understand the digital skills training available to Dorset businesses and work with partners to address gaps and provide routes into tech careers for job seekers.

4.7 **Digital Leadership**

- Maximise the impact of Dorset's connectivity and skills for economic prosperity and social opportunity by creating digital partnerships and networks where everyone – public, private and community – can lead and learn.
- Promote Dorset as a digital place and attract inward investment by sharing stories nationally and celebrating Dorset's technology initiatives.
- Develop Dorset Council's reputation as digital pioneers, being brave and focused on the future.

5. **Delivering on Theme 5 – to become a more responsive, customer focused council**

5.1 To help us become a more responsive, customer focused, digital council we will build on the foundations we have been putting in place that enable us to unlock our data, deal with our technical legacy, and improve the experience of people using our services.

5.2 We will soon launch our customer account that will enable us to personalise website content, proactively communicate and target information. We are adopting standards and design patterns to provide good, consistent experiences, and will use customer insight to drive service improvement and maximise use of our online channel.

5.3 We are building capabilities on our customer platform that can be re-used, enabling us to rationalise websites, portals, and software applications reducing cost and complexity.   Other council's will be able to use what we develop and vice versa harnessing innovation and realising benefits across the sector.

5.4 As we adopt our customer transformation principles, we will need to take a one council approach to redesign and build services on the platform based on our customer's needs. Developing our customer account to become the online place our customers do business with us supported by teams or champions when they need our help.

5.5 We will adopt the same principles internally to make it simple and easy for employees to self-serve information for internal services such as HR and Procurement and improve how we communicate and engage our workforce by using the latest O365 tools and procuring a replacement for DES our SAP system.

5.6 We know automation and artificial intelligence can play a key role in helping us to respond to the challenges we have with recruitment, retention and increasing customer demand. We are exploring the right toolset to implement to support us in effectively managing our capacity.

5.7 To enable us to deal with our technical legacy and deliver the data and business intelligence strategy we need to govern the purchase of new software and do it in a way that aligns to our vision so we can integrate or access the data we want to use. The first step in the process is to understand and manage our existing portfolio of software applications enabling us to drive down cost and inefficiency.

5.8 As part of the council-wide review of how we consult and engage with residents and other audiences, we are launching a new engagement

platform. This will be linked to the customer platform and enable us to better use data and improve the experience for residents. It will provide a one-stop shop for people to have their say on council services, policies, and proposals in more engaging and user-friendly ways.

5.9 We will implement our Data and Business Intelligence strategy helping us to use data to respond to future need and inform service decisions, as well as make sure we keep data safe and secure using the right technology. The digital records management work will help us manage documents and information and their preservation better across the council.

5.10 Our customer transformation programme will require us to think about new ways to deliver services and learning from the 5GRural Dorset work shows the potential of using the Internet of Things. This could change how we deliver services across Dorset, such as Highways, enabling us to be proactive and cost effective, but requires us to think as one council so we manage data, security, and customer experience well.

5.11 Following creation of the Integrated Care System (ICS) we have successfully secured £1.1M over 3 years to support Adult Social Care Providers to make best use of digital technology to improve the quality and delivery of care. As the ICS evolves there is likely to be greater convergence and joint digital work considering technical architecture, systems, services, skills, and innovation.

5.12 Appendix C contains the refreshed delivery plan for the next 18 months taking into consideration the lessons learnt, our vision, and the refreshed Council Plan. It will need to continue to adapt to respond to external changes with some of those examples detailed in Appendix D. Directorates will have their own digital roadmaps and delivery plans that complement our overarching vision.

6. **Financial Implications**

The actions set out in the delivery plan will be financed through appropriate funding streams which are already accounted for within the MTFP including the transformation fund and capital allocations for ICT. These alongside Government or LEP grants mean the delivery plan can be funded.

7. **Environmental Implications**

This digital vision improves connectivity across Dorset, supports the development of good digital services for the council and the ability for excluded members of the public to consume them. It contributes to the council transforming the way it works through the adoption of the Dorset Workplace. These actions are believed to contribute to reducing travel,

reducing paper and have other positive contributions to support reduction in carbon consumption.

8. **Well-being and Health Implications**

Improving digital connectivity and reducing the digital divide can play an important role in supporting people to live healthy lives. It contributes to the ability for the council within social care and health partners to take advantage of digital equipment, remote monitoring and other emerging technologies to support improvements to health and well-being outcomes.

9. **Other Implications**

None

10. **Risk Assessment**

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk:
Residual Risk:

11. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

[Dorset Digital Vision EqIA – Dorset Council](#)

12. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Delivery Plan Progress

Digital Council:

Digital Skills & Inclusion

- Our 230 **workplace digital champions** have been developing skills in O365 helping their colleagues and the organisation to become more efficient, exploiting the tools we have and preparing for future change.
- The' All Together Group' has been established and working towards ensuring **all staff** can access Dorset Council systems through the provision of Microsoft licences and 'Bring Your Own Device' capabilities.
- Working with the NHS to develop **digital skills and academy** we have experimented and tested leadership for the digital age and data literacy training which we are now embedding in our L&D offer.

- Last year we had a 94% completion rate of our **cyber security training** which every employee should complete. Having changed providers in 2022, 53% of monthly e-learning modules have been completed this year, with plans in place to increase the completion rate given how critical user awareness is for avoiding being caught out by phishing and other social engineering attempts.

Data & Intelligence
- The Business intelligence and data strategy has been developed for approval at February 2023 Cabinet.
- We have appointed a data science role.
- Established a data warehouse
- Dorset Care Record – we are now feeding risk data into the record to help our partners decision making.
- Created a 'Cost of Living dashboard' using external and internal data to model various scenarios to understand the impact on differing communities to enable decision making around our response.

Designing Future Services
- We have progressed building the foundations of our **customer platform** replacing Our Dorset council, Our Dorset Social Care, Public Health, and the Xchange websites.
- Developed for launch our customer account, replacement newsroom and customer contact management, and agreeing a new approach for directories, positioning us to realise our customer transformation ambition.
- In December it was approved to bring in external help to develop our one council business case for customer transformation and a people first, digital always vision to how we **re-design our services** to meet customer needs.
- Pilot underway for building/desk utilisation monitoring using IoT sensors at County Hall – smart sustainable buildings
- Supported the creation of systems and processes for Ukraine response, including mobile inspections.
- Developed of a tool for landlords to understand energy efficiency which has been nominated for two awards.
- Procured and implementing an online Financial Assessment tool for social care clients as an alternative to telephone and face to face visits.

Technology & Infrastructure
- The Intelligent Council group has been established to oversee the application portfolio and commissioning of new systems. The group is seeking external help to undertake work to understand our existing portfolio and **inform a roadmap** to rationalise and reduce cost.
- Supporting Dorset workplace, we have 4715 users of MS teams, 48 meeting rooms now have hybrid kit, a new room/desk booking system,

the use of govnotify and a project to look at an electronic signature capability to help us **go paperless**.

- Through our infrastructure security **vulnerability work** in the first year, we have reduced our technical vulnerabilities by about 80%. We have implemented **Security Incident and Event** Monitoring tooling to identify suspect activity and immutable backup solutions to provide an additional **layer of data protection from cyber-attack**.
- Implemented a new case management system for legal services casework and move to electronic recording.
- Implemented the new housing system Huume/Home Choice to converge the 3 legacy district systems into one and used content design to re-design letters for customers.
- Procured and implementing the Provider Assessment Market Management Solution within Adult Social Care allowing us to monitor the quality of providers and forecast cost and demand activity.
- Enabled mobile working for Building Control and developing mobile working for the rest of Planning services
- Completed the convergence of six legacy Planning, Building Control, Land Charges & GIS Systems, transferring 5.2million documents, 47 years' worth of data, moving 285 people onto new system.

Leadership & Innovation

- Using modern communication methods to speak to our communities – Facebook live sofa sessions
- We were the first pilot site for the LGA sector led improvement work around cyber security and recently had a Cyber 360 review which has helped us to really understand our culture and leadership and will be focused this year on providing more specialist targeted training alongside stronger cyber and service continuity exercising.
- We have been a partner in national Local Digital Fund/DLUHC PropTech projects, collaborating with other councils to encourage public engagement in the planning service and re-developing our online planning register, income management and development of online low code waste services which a subsequent bid has been submitted to extend this work into commercial waste/ecommerce capability.
- We have been successful securing £1.1M over 3 years to support Adult Social Care Providers to make best use of digital technology to improve the quality and delivery of care. As an ICS we are committed to ensuring that 80% of CQC registered providers are using electronic care planning solutions by March 24 and support 20% of residents who are identified as at high risk of falls in CQC registered care homes.

Digital Place:

Digital Skills & Inclusion

- 800 frontline employees have been trained as **embedded digital champions** to help people use online public services.
- There are 44 **volunteer champions** who have helped 1750 people in the community develop digital skills and get online. The digital hotline has received over 1000 calls.
- 96 people have received devices through our Digital Doorway scheme removing barriers to provide **digital access for all**. Enabled over 100 people to cross the digital divide thanks to device and data giveaways
- LGA pathfinder funding to explore ways to counter the national shortage of fibre engineers. We are working with network providers who are active in Dorset to understand the specific skills gaps and find cost-effective ways to fill them.
- Dorset's new Digital Skills Partnership has brought together around 20 partners to share their knowledge of existing digital skills support in Dorset to support business workforces.
- We held the first ever Dorset Coding Day Brought schools and tech companies together on Coding Day.

Technology & Infrastructure

- Mobile connectivity **Rootmetrics** work completed.
- **Wessex Digital Infrastructure Accelerator– awarded £500k funding.** Working with industry and government to improve processes for mobile site acquisition through the [Wessex Digital Infrastructure Accelerator (wessex-dia.org).](wessex-dia.org)
- **Superfast** programme completed.
- **Fibre connectivity** – 14 **libraries** connected using £200k national funding.
- Fibre connectivity **UK gigabit programme** – 35 public sites will now be getting full fibre gigabit thanks to £900k government funding.
- Fibre connectivity **inward investment** – Significant expansion of commercial gigabit (full fibre) coverage is anticipated over the medium term. Gigabit capable coverage in Dorset currently at 19.51% (ThinkBroadband March 2022).
- Voucher activity to **maximise utilisation of government funding** for new gigabit connections -overseen over 400 properties connected utilising top-up vouchers.
- Significant increase in commercial activity.
- Secure connected places work looking at data management implications of smart sensors with a small grant from DCMS.

Leadership & Innovation

- Trailblazing **5G work**, achieved world firsts significant benefits/legacy realised, national profile achieved and Multi award winning. Led to follow-on projects including Wessex DCIA.
- **5G RuralDorset** brought in £10m of government and industry investment. It gives us a great foundation for future innovations with government and industry.
- Working effectively with Economic Development service to leverage digital innovation from investment in the Dorset Innovation Park, including the BattleLab.
- Mentoring other councils around digital (digital inclusion, skills, 5G).
- Built knowledge and awareness of Dorset's fabulous digital innovation initiatives through Festival of the Future and our Digital Dorset brand via: residents digital e-newsletter which reaches 10,852 people, Twitter 2.9k followers and Facebook 251 followers. In the last year both accounts have reached 115.5k people (**up by 56k on the previous year**). Youtube channel 10,374 views over the last year.

Appendix B – Performance Measures

Measures we will continue to retain:

1. Percentage of premises within the Dorset Council area that can access gigabit-capable (full fibre) broadband **increased from 6.6% to 32.14%**
2. Staff satisfaction of experience and use of technology – this was recently captured for the first time providing a baseline of **5.57** (from a scale of 1-7 where 7 is Excellent) – this score was on the boundary of the 3/4th quartiles in the benchmarking assessment.
3. Reduction in the number of people who are digital excluded in Dorset – 31% baseline, this has not yet been re-measured

We have been unable to collect data for the measures below, but will be addressing this through our customer transformation programme and platform work to establish a baseline by Summer 2023 as they are key priorities in the refreshed council plan:

4. increase in the use of online services by residents and businesses reducing demand over the phone and face to face
5. customer satisfaction of services through improved experience

Measures we have been tracking but are no longer relevant:

6. Percentage of premises within the Dorset Council area that can access superfast broadband services **increased from 96.18% to 96.80**

7. Percentage of A and B roads in Dorset have acceptable signal on all the 4G mobile networks **increased from 42.6% to 55.2%**
8. Percentage of premises within the Dorset Council area that can access superfast broadband services **increased from 96.18% to 96.80**
9. Confidence of the workforce using MS teams has **increased from 78% to 89%**
10. Adoption of O365 & Teams across the workforce improving productivity increased **from 3400 Teams users to 4715**
11. reduced paper usage and postal costs, helping to meet the council's climate commitments - measure removed

Appendix C – Refreshed Delivery Plan

Attached document.

Appendix D – External Factors

- DHSC plans for digital Health and Social Care data
- Whitepaper for Social Care Reforms
- DHLUC Future Councils initiative
- DCMS policy for using artificial intelligence
- Levelling Up bill impact on Planning and Assets & Regen
- Geospatial Commission announced that UPRN and USRN data now openly accessible and mandatory
- Digital local roads report
- Transforming public procurement bill

13. Background Papers

Dorset Councils Digital Vision

Detailed Action Plan