CABINET– 9TH JUNE 2021

SUBJECT: PROPOSED ICT STRATEGY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present to Cabinet the draft Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy and associated delivery roadmap.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Digital Services draft ICT Strategy ("the Strategy") is attached. The Strategy will provide the roadmap, direction, and guidance for ICT developments within Caerphilly County Borough Council for the next five (5) years.

2.2 The Strategy sets out how Digital Services will develop its service to support the Authority's Customer and Digital Strategy through innovative technologies that will transform service delivery. It will show how Digital Services will aspire to provide a good customer experience across all council services by putting customers at the heart of the organisation.

2.3 The Strategy has been developed in partnership with our support partner RedCortex, who engaged with colleagues from across the Authority to develop the key themes and strategic principles.

2.4 The Strategy sets out its vision for the Authority by defining the transformational journey for the next five (5) years by:

- Enabling the Authority to meet its current and future priorities
- Enabling and encouraging flexible working patterns
- Providing a better experience and level of customer care for all customers
- Migrating to modern, more cost efficient and environmentally friendly technologies and devices
- Providing a secure, resilient infrastructure environment which we can build upon in the future
- Migrating to modern solutions that improve customer experience, enable better use of information, and deliver improved services

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet is asked:

3.1.1 To approve the proposed ICT Strategy for taking ICT and Digital forward as a strategic enabler.

3.1.2 To note the financial implications as detailed in Section 8 of the report.

3.1.3 To agree that £320k of the £1.482m WG Covid-19 Hardship Fund digital transformation funding allocated to Caerphilly CBC should be set aside in an earmarked reserve to fund projected one-off revenue costs to support delivery of the strategy.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To ensure that the Authority has a fit for purpose ICT Transformation Programme and that the programme is funded appropriately.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The appended Strategy (Appendix A) has been under development since February 2020. Staff and key Officers from across the Authority have been instrumental in its development. RedCortex have been instrumental in defining the Strategy and will continue to assist in its implementation providing knowledge and experience in key areas. The on-going support of RedCortex to implement elements of the strategy, mainly around our Microsoft licences and also Cloud offering will allow for upskilling and knowledge transfer to our existing workforce and ensure we have a confident workforce in this new technology area. Microsoft are assisting Digital Services to deliver this vision, and where applicable we would look to benefit from Microsoft funding streams to accelerate implementation. We have already been successful in securing funding to kick start the Transformation workstream and the deployment of O365 E5 licences.

5.2 The Strategy shows the current position of services in the department and the future aims for service delivery within the Authority. The vision is to create a team of professionals that is transformational and leads innovation across the Authority through the application of appropriate digital infrastructure and applications.

5.3 A building that is stable is reliant on a strong foundation, our proposed strategy advocates the same approach. A strong foundation through robust, stable infrastructure that can be flexed to develop and evolve to create a truly flexible Authority capable of meeting our Customer needs and transforming the delivery of public services.

The essence of delivering good services is reliability, our ICT needs a reliable infrastructure that is scalable to meet increased demands and new technologies as they are introduced. This infrastructure will provide connectivity to enable safe, secure, and speedy transfer of data and information, one that enables collaboration across teams and provides easy access to the right information at the right time. It will be independent of the location of the information, be that on premise or in Cloud services, it will facilitate access to information both internally and externally. The Strategy is based on a cloud first strategy linked with reliable data connectivity across the Authority. As the on-premise requirements of the Data Centre diminish there will be opportunities to review its use, these considerations will be taken at the appropriate time.

The infrastructure proposed will provide the highest level of security and be able to proactively protect the Authority against the increasing threat of cyber-attacks. We are working on the premise that our infrastructure will protect the Authority against all types of threats (acknowledging that we can never be 100% protected due to the complexity of cyber-attacks) but also being inobtrusive to the end user. The approval by Council to upgrade its Microsoft licensing to the top security licence E5 is a major step in achieving our goal.

5.4 A set of strategic priorities and work streams have been defined to evolve service delivery within the Authority.

The 6 strategic aims as stated in 2.4 will be delivered through the following work streams.

- Transformation
- Governance
- Digital Services Team
- Departmental Business Systems

5.5 The proposed Strategy will facilitate a flexible environment for all. It sets out to provide a range of appropriate technological tools for all Officer's within the Authority. This will allow the delivery of end user computing that is fit for purpose and empowers an agile workforce.

We will use technology to improve communication and collaboration, with Microsoft Teams at the centre, integrating seamlessly with voice technology, creating a unified communications platform from trusted technologies.

We will build on our current use of automation to allow greater automation and improve self-service functionality for Customers, this will release staff to deliver tasks that require greater human interaction, ultimately improving the customer experience.

The delivery of technology and solutions will be of little benefit to the Authority without a workforce that has the necessary skills to maximise the use of such technologies, the proposed Strategy will redesign our Authority's approach to delivering learning and training and an evolution from traditional classroom based training to multi-channel delivery will be developed. A gap analysis will be completed across the Authority to identify technical ability and derive a training programme to upskill Officers. This will link with the Data Skills Corporate Review.

5.6 It is proposed to introduce a new governance regime through the introduction of several measures.

- Digital Solutions Board
- Portfolio, Programme and Project Governance
- Solution Design Methodologies
- ICT Financial Management
- Solution rationalisation and Consolidation
- Digital Services Printing Scrutiny

These measures will introduce frameworks that will govern the introduction and review of technologies and workload management. The introduction of these measures will define how Digital Services operates and give clear guidance to the Business on how they should engage with Digital Services.

5.7 The proposed Strategy shows the roadmap for the transformation of ICT within the Authority, to achieve this, the Authority will require its Digital Services team to be highly skilled in the new and evolving technologies. As part of the proposed strategy investment will be made in our internal team to build confidence in deploying and supporting new technology. All staff will have dedicated training plans in place.

It is proposed to develop a new service model established on industry best practices this will improve our working practices which will be customer focused and created to support our Authority wide business needs.

5.8 The proposed Strategy details a complete review of the Authority's systems and applications; this will be facilitated by the solutions board and form part of the Data service review currently underway within the Authority.

Effective use of data will be a key element in understanding and managing system change in order to deliver true customer centric services. The Authority is currently data rich however there is a clear lack of effective use. The proposed strategy will lay the foundations for

developing a secure approach to data collection and management. The current corporate Data review will also support the principles within the draft strategy. This will strengthen the way the Authority creates, stores, and uses data in a secure and transparent manner.

5.9   The Strategy underpins the Authority's Digital strategy; by providing the "tin, wires and code" technologies to deliver the Digital strategy. Without a solid base of computing, networking, and applications the Digital Strategy will not achieve some of its ambitious goals. This Strategy will allow the opening of the digital front door for everyone.

The Strategy supports the Team Caerphilly ethos of "Better Together". The Customer will be at the core of the Strategy and through greater engagement with our Customers, Digital Services will be able to deliver technology that will help to transform services across the Authority. Team Caerphilly is committed to having a greater emphasis on digital services and this Strategy will be central to this commitment. It will review the technologies we use and simplify the delivery of services, creating greater effectiveness and where possible improve efficiency.

This Strategy is bold and ambitious and fulfils the mantra of "Social Heart and Commercial Head", it will use technologies to reduce our carbon footprint and implement the most economical technologies for service delivery.

5.10   Conclusion

5.10.1 The proposed Strategy and Roadmap sets out a plan for the delivery of Information and Communications Technology across the Authority. It is a bold and ambitious Strategy that emphasises the relationship between Digital Services, business operations and our customers. The proposal highlights the need for a consistent approach to ICT infrastructure and how it supports the Authority to deliver robust business processes, data and data security which will enhance public services to the citizens of Caerphilly.

5.10.2 Technology is now at the core of every service within the Authority, the recent Covid pandemic has shown how reliant the Authority is on ICT and Technology Services. The last twelve months has seen the Authority transform the way it does business. To support the proposed strategy will allow Officers to take the transformation journey to the next level of maturity. The strategy fosters a collaborative approach with service areas, and the customer to create an environment of shared ideas coupled with technology to make innovation come alive.

6.   ASSUMPTIONS

6.1   Technology is continuously evolving and changing. Outside of any business disruption it is difficult to predict use and cost of technology applications longer than 12 months. In today's climate of the pandemic and Brexit the Author has written the report and proposed strategy with costings and technology as of January 2021.

7.   SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1   The full IIA can be accessed in the attached Appendix B.

8.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1   The 2021/22 Budget Proposals approved by Council on the 24th February 2021 included specific growth of £1.212m for Customer and Digital Services. This additional funding will support the 2021/22 programme of work for the proposed strategy by funding the purchase of

O365 E5 licence packages and procuring the necessary consultancy and training support for the Digital Services team.

8.2   During the next five years it is currently anticipated that a total of £1.528m further revenue budget growth will be required to implement the proposed strategy. This is currently the maximum projected figure required and will be reduced through levering in external funding wherever possible and through the delivery of savings arising from changes in service delivery e.g. decommissioning of the Data Centre as we move to Cloud based services.

8.3   Strong financial management will be a key component in rolling out the strategy and moving forward costs and savings will be analysed in detail to support growth bids that will need to be incorporated into the annual revenue budget setting process.

8.4   It is also currently estimated that additional one-off revenue costs of £320k will be required to implement the strategy. The Welsh Government has recently provided funding of £25m to local authorities across Wales from the Covid-19 Hardship Fund to support digital transformation, with Caerphilly CBC's share of this being £1.482m. It is recommended that £320k of this funding should be set aside in an earmarked reserve to fund the projected one-off revenue costs to support delivery of the strategy. Proposals to utilise the remaining balance of the £1.482m WG funding will be subject to a separate Cabinet report in due course.

8.5   The capital investment required to support the rollout of the strategy over the next five years is estimated to be £333k. There is sufficient funding within the core capital allocation for Digital Services to fund this cost.

9.   **PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1   Currently there are no personnel implications to the adoption of the proposed Strategy. Any changes that emerge beyond its adoption will be reported as required in line with corporate policies.

9.2   The proposed Strategy is a significant piece of work and one that will require assistance and support in implementing. The service is currently carrying a number of vacancies due to failed recruitment process. Unfortunately, Wales is suffering from a shortage of ICT and Digital professionals. Officers are exploring all opportunities available to recruit to these posts in consultation with HR colleagues.

9.3   As the deployment of the strategy progresses Officers will engage appropriate partners to support the implementation. This will be done in line with standing orders for contracts and financial regulations. As such all possible consultancy will be agreed with the appropriate Cabinet Member and Corporate Director.

10.   **CONSULTATIONS**

10.1   Consultations on report and proposed Strategy have taken place, comments and views are reflected within the report.

10.2   The Strategy was presented to Policy and Scrutiny Committee Members on 10 November 2020. Members were supportive of the proposed strategy however requested assurance that members of the public would not be disadvantaged and could access face to face services if required. Assurance was given that the proposed strategy would enhance service provision and not restrict it.

11.   STATUTORY POWER

11.1   Local Government Act 2000

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                Cllr Eluned Stenner Cabinet Member for Customer and Digital Services
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Background Papers:

Appendices:

Appendix A - Draft Digital Services ICT Strategy
Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment