Teignbridge District Council

Executive

Meeting date

Part i

Report Title: Teignbridge Digital Strategy

Purpose of Report

To obtain approval for the Teignbridge, Exeter and East Devon Digital Strategy 2022-2025

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

> (1) Agree to implement the Teignbridge, Exeter and East Devon Digital Strategy 2022-2025

Financial Implications

Financial implications are identified in 3.1 below.

Martin Flitcroft

Head of Corporate Services

Email: Martin.Flitcroft@teignbridge.gov.uk

Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Paul Woodhead Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Email: Paul.Woodhead@teignbridge.gov.uk

Risk Assessment

See Section 3.2

Committee
Date of meeting

Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

The Environmental and Climate Change Implications are considered in section 3.3 below.

David Eaton

Environmental Protection Manager

Email: David Eaton@teignbridge.gov.uk

Report Author

Title of author: Head of Communities & Service Improvement

Email: Amanda.Pujol@teignbridge.gov.uk

Executive Member

Cllr Martin Wrigley Executive Portfolio Holder for Communities & IT

Appendices/Background Papers

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Teignbridge Council adopted a Customer Access Strategy which detailed its approach to channel shift and moving more transactions online. This expired a few years ago.

1.2 Since the expiry of that strategy the Council has undertaken a number of digital transformation projects to develop digital services for customers and improve its efficiency and processes as an organisation. This includes the launch of the Teignbridge "My Account", implementation of a new digital Human Resources system and deployment of Microsoft 365. However, there has been no consistent organisation-wide vision for how digital applications can be used to drive

transformation and to redesign Council services and ways of working in order to deliver better outcomes for residents.

1.3 Use of digital technology by the public has increased significantly in recent years, particularly as a result of the COVID pandemic when access to face to face services was severely restricted. 94% of households now have internet access, with smartphones becoming the most common tool that people use to access services online. In September 2020, UK internet users spent nearly four times as much time on smartphones (an average of 2 hours 19 minutes a day) than they did on computers (37 minutes) (Ofcom Online Nation Report 2021). For the first time households were asked to complete the 2021 census online, and almost 90% of households did so. These national trends illustrate the need for the Council to ensure it has a good digital service offer for its residents, regardless of the digital device they use.

1.4 Evidence has shown that there is significant demand from our residents for digital services. The adoption of this strategy will enable us to build on this work and ensure residents and staff have access to digital tools and services that meet their needs. It also recognises that use of digital tools and services can help the Council in meeting its climate change targets, improve efficiency and reduce cost:

- 35,215 residents are registered for a Teignbridge My Account which enable them to report issues to the Council and receive regular updates on progress of their queries, in addition to enabling them to access their Council Tax and Benefits accounts online.
- 15,839 of residents receive our digital resident's newsletter.
- There has been a significant increase year on year of digital forms completed by residents requesting services from the Council.
    - 2018 – 4,700
    - 2019 – 37,730
    - 2020 – 63,290
    - 2021 – 81,030
    - 2022 – 16,800 to date

- We have reviewed 137 Council processes and redesigned them in a digital way to improve customer experience and efficiency.

1.5 Members will be aware that Teignbridge has a teckal company, Strata Service Solutions, created with Exeter and East Devon to maintain its IT and digital services. Given the critical role Strata provide in terms of delivering the Councils' digital strategy it was decided by the 3 Councils to develop a joint Digital Strategy rather than individual strategies, recognising that some systems are already shared and have common infrastructure across the 3 Councils. Adopting a joint digital strategy will also enable Strata to ensure their annual business plan meets the strategic digital ambitions of the 3 Councils as set out in the Digital strategy.

2. Digital strategy

2.1 The Council(s) want to use the best of digital technology to enable our users to access services in the way they choose, when they choose. The strategy explains how we will build a digital council over the next three years. Becoming a digital council is about fundamentally improving our resident, visitor, business, members and staff experience through simpler, better services and tools.

2.2 The new strategy is built around six themes:

1. Customer access and service
2. Digital and mobile work force
3. Digital democracy
4. High-quality, accessible data
5. Digital and Net Zero
6. Responsive, resilient and secure infrastructure and systems

2.3 The strategy recognises that not all customers will have the ability to use digital systems to interact with Council services. Telephony and face to face contact will remain an option for those who are unable to use digital services or where there are more complex processes which require specialist input from officers.

2.4 If the new digital strategy is adopted by Executive we will work with ECC, EDDC and Strata to agree clear actions and timescales to deliver this strategy and to ensure we have data recording systems in place to monitor progress. In the main these will be the same for the three authorities but there is likely to be some differences on priority and the implication of this will need to be considered. There will be IT investment decisions for Executive and Council to make in order to achieve the strategy in full but these will need to be presented in business plans for members to consider when they have been developed.

3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

3.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of this strategy. Investment in digital technology in any service area arising from the strategy will be subject to a business case to identify its return financially and measure improvement in efficiencies etc.

3.2 Risks

Successful delivery of the strategy will be dependent upon ensuring the Strata Business plan aligns with its objectives and that the IT is delivered by Strata.

Non adoption would mean we are not in line with our IT partners around our vision for sharing systems and processes and the digital ambitions of pursuing further efficiencies in our operations

3.3 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

The strategy includes a specific theme supporting measures to reduce the carbon impact of our IT systems. Further work will need to be undertaken to understand the scope 3 carbon footprint emissions of the new technologies and working arrangements within the strategy.

4. Conclusion

The Teignbridge, Exeter and East Devon Digital Strategy sets the strategic framework for the next 3 years to ensure the Council targets its resources effectively, is not dependent on inflexible and expensive technology, and harnesses digital, data and technology solutions to improve services for customers and deliver efficiencies in service delivery.