

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 30 March 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Digital Strategy 2022

Report summary:

A joint Digital Strategy has been developed with Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council and is being presented for Cabinet to consider.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

To adopt the attached Digital Strategy

Reason for recommendation:

To give focus and ensure resources are deployed in the areas that members agree

Officer: Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☒ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☒ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☒ Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- ☐ Economy and Assets
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information [Customer Access Info Diagram](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ Better homes and communities for all
 - ☐ A greener East Devon
 - ☒ A resilient economy
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Digital Strategy 2022

1. East Devon has an adopted digital strategy running from 2018 to 2021 and although not updated at the end of that period the principles and objectives have remained and working in partnership with Strata we have achieved a number of its outcomes.

The strategy recorded at the time for 2017/18 the following statistics and as a snap shot this is compared to the current position.

- *We have already started our digital journey and currently have 165 online forms. We believe the Firmstep implementation will provide a step change in our delivery of digital services.* We now have 123 processes live through Firmstep which sounds like a backward step, but these are now end to end processes rather than simple forms on the website and we've combined multiple forms which were on our old system (Lagan) into a single process, so for example we had multiple forms for missed recycling there is now one process for the customer to complete.
 - *In 2017/18, nearly 91,000 people visited our website. There were over 6,000 transactions through our existing online forms across a range of services.* In 2021 we had 1.4 million visits to our website, with 120,000 transactions.
 - *Over 16,000 of our customers have now downloaded our mobile app which gives customers information about councillors, waste collections, local news, eating out, planning and the ability to report issues such as animal fouling or graffiti.* Currently there are 44,000 devices signed up to the East Devon app and 5,000 have signed up for the Alexa recycling app.
2. The new digital strategy is not dissimilar to our previous strategy but it has been developed with Exeter City Council (ECC) and Teignbridge District Council (TDC); the two other partner authorities who own Strata. As a joint strategy this will give a renewed and clear vision to enable Strata to work with the three authorities following the same path. It helps Strata ensure it is developing its resources, skills and offering in the right direction to deliver what is required of it and likewise for the councils themselves.
 3. To reassure members an important message that is understood is that we do not underestimate the importance of maintaining human interaction in the services which we deliver. What is key is understanding the demand for council services and what can be moved and developed further onto a digital platform and what still needs to be handled with human interaction. We recognise that moving complex processes online can remove the flexibility of a service driven through effective human interaction; whereas common and simple processes delivered digitally can produce significant cost reductions through standard and repeatable responses.

4. 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

5. Certain outcomes have already been achieved within these themes, some are currently work in progress and others yet to begin in earnest. This work is happening within services throughout the Council and what is required is pulling this picture together for management and members to understand and monitor and ensure we are acting as one council in our efforts. The Strategic Lead Finance, the Service Lead responsible for corporate customer services and the Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Manager have worked closely over the last 4 months to form a digital lead group to bring this work together and give better clarity to help Strata deliver on priorities.
6. Attached in a background paper is an info diagram we have created to explain where we consider we are now with customer access and through various initiatives where we are aiming to move.
7. If the new digital strategy is adopted by Cabinet we will work with ECC, TDC and Strata to agree clear actions and timescales to deliver this strategy. 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 Cabinet 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.

Financial implications:

At this stage there are no direct financial implications

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications requiring comment at this stage.