

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
25 February 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a new digital strategy for the Council developed with CGI. The strategy "Digital Borders" is designed to realise the vision of Scottish Borders becoming a Smart Rural Region. The Strategy will seek to invest in change programmes, new ways of working and new IT infrastructure to harness the power of communities, empower individuals, reduce inequality, widen access to digital connectivity and expand the economic potential of the Region. In doing so the strategy responds to the key recommendations of a recent study by the Accounts Commission.**
- 1.2 The Council at its meeting on the 25 September 2020 agreed to extend its strategic IT partnership with CGI and in doing so agreed to the development of a new digital strategy for the Council. This strategy is designed to help address a range of key challenges facing the Borders. The strategy will form a key part of the Council's Fit for 2024 transformation programme designed to deliver better outcome for citizens and a more efficient operating model for the delivery of local services either directly by the Council or in conjunction with our Community Planning Partners.
- 1.3 The Digital Borders strategy is consistent with the understanding of evolving national strategy. It will seek to enable citizens, suppliers, and local businesses, to engage effectively with the Council, empower front line staff using mobile technology, rationalise and integrate back office systems, ensure the security of data, reduce social isolation and digital exclusion in our communities, and enhance the skills and the digital capability local people through working with our schools and partner agencies. In doing so a range of environmental, social and economic benefits are expected to be achieved.
- 1.4 Significant detailed analysis work has been undertaken to date, as highlighted in Appendix 2, to assess how the opportunities identified by the strategy should be prioritised. Further diligence is now required to further work to refine the Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) benefits identified to date.
- 1.5 The strategy therefore advocates further work to be undertaken with CGI to develop a digital roadmap covering the next 3.5 years. A change programme and detailed benefits realisation plans for individual projects will also be delivered to enable sustainable change, track savings, achieve process efficiencies and deliver improved outcomes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- a) Approve the Digital strategy outlined in the report;**
- b) Agree that further work be undertaken to develop the digital road map, detailed benefits realisation and change management plans for individual projects; and,**
- c) Note that update reports will be brought to future Executive meetings in line with routine FF24 transformation programme updates.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council at its meeting on the 25 September 2020 agreed to extend its strategic IT partnership with CGI and in doing so agreed to the development of a new digital strategy for the Council. This strategy "Digital Borders," is to be enabled through the Councils' Fit for 2024 transformation programme. The strategy set out in Appendix 1 aims to make the Scottish Borders the first "Smart Rural Region" in the UK.
- 3.2 The September report highlighted the need for the Council to address a range of key challenges
- We need to engage more effectively with our citizens in ways that suit their needs.
 - Our resources are constrained, and our communities are rightly expecting more.
 - We face huge challenges with maintaining our ageing property estate that urgently needs rationalisation and where possible renewal.
 - We are facing increased demands for our services from an increasingly elderly population and help them to live well independently for longer.
 - We need to ensure those who live in our care can continue to communicate with family and friends.
 - We need to give our children the best possible start in life.
 - We need to ensure our young people have access to technology and the right digital skills to use this technology effectively as part of the Council's education offering, to give them the best possible chance of success later in life.
 - We need to ensure all our staff, including those working with clients, e.g. front line social workers, can work more efficiently through technology.
 - We need to become more efficient and less reliant on paper.
 - We need to be more mobile, less reliant on costly carbon heavy buildings and adopt new ways of working using technology.
- 3.3 The way to best meet these challenges is considered to be through the adoption of a new digital strategy, delivered as part of the Fit for 2024 programme that will drive the implementation of new technology. The Council's response to the COVID 19 pandemic has shown the benefits that can be delivered through the effective deployment of new information technology and different ways of working. Inspire Learning for example has enabled the continuation of remote learning in all schools across the Borders in a way not possible in many other Council areas.
- 3.4 This report provides an update on work to develop the new Digital Strategy and seeks approval of the way forward.

The paper also responds to the recommendations of a recent study by the Accounts Commission "Digital Progress in Local Government" that highlights Councils should have a clear digital vision and strategy that sets out how digital transformation will deliver better outcomes for people. The strategy should be supported by plans detailing actions, timescales and the required investment in technology, people and skills.

4 DIGITAL STRATEGY

- 4.1 The Digital Borders Strategy (Appendix 1) is a key pillar of Fit for 2024 programme. It aims to drive forward change and innovation, improve the effectiveness of Council services and thereby the quality of lives of our residents. At its heart the strategy seeks to use information technology and data insights to improve outcomes through new ways of working. This will enable our front line staff across the Council, whether they work in environmental services, Health and Social Care, Roads Inspections or Planning, to work in an agile mobile way, deliver an improved customer experience, and better support to local people, communities and businesses.
- 4.2 The new Digital Borders strategy will support the Council's stated aim of become the UK's first smart connected rural region; thereby delivering better outcomes for everyone who lives and works in the Borders.
- 4.3 Specifically the Digital Borders Strategy will deploy technology that will:-
 - a) Enable citizens, suppliers, and local businesses, to engage effectively with the Council, seeking information, booking services, tracking service requests, making payments, meeting with Council Members and Officials and using on line technology to manage their data. The improved information provided by the strategy will allow better planning information to inform future service delivery.
 - b) Empower front line staff through the deployment of mobile technology that makes their jobs easier, improves communications, improves operational efficiency and is fully integrated with central systems. This means that staff will be able to access the information they need using appropriate hand held technology while they are meeting clients, and while undertaking site visits operating out with an office environment.
 - c) Rationalise and integrate the complicated landscape of IT systems to ensure data requires to be input only once and is used effectively across the council to provide joined up and intelligent delivery of services.
 - d) Provide improved information to allow better service planning and inform future service delivery.
 - e) Ensure the Council systems and data remain secure at all times, safe from cyber-attack, malware and phishing attempts.
 - f) Ensure no one is excluded either by low incomes, capability or geography and that all those in the Borders are able to access the benefits of digital technology.

g) Enhance skills and the digital capability of the local economy through working with local businesses, council suppliers our partner agencies.

4.4 The Digital Borders strategy is consistent with the evolving National Digital Strategy for Scotland being developed by the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Improvement Service and the Digital Office.

4.5 The vision is that that Scottish Borders will become the UK's first smart connected rural supporting better outcomes for everyone who lives and works here.

4.6 The benefits envisaged by the strategy are set out below.

For the Environment and Sustainability

4.6.1 By investing in new technology we can significantly reduce the Council's carbon footprint. A tangible difference can be made through reduced travel mileage, a transition to a green council fleet running on sustainable power rather than traditional petrol and diesel, and reduced printing savings on paper and ink cartridges.

For Citizens

4.6.2 Through our Digital Customer Access project, which is largely complete, the Council is already delivering a different relationship with the citizen for example allowing people to engage, report, request services, seek feedback and check the real time progress of their query online. The customer now has the ability to manage their account data through the Council's online data portal

For SBC workforce

4.6.3 The strategy will seek to leverage the investment the Council has already made in its core ERP system covering financial, payroll, HR and procurement modules. Integrating this with service specific information systems such as the social work system Mosaic so that colleagues can access a digital online workplace from a mobile device giving them the tools, data and capability they need to do their job without physically accessing an office. The aim is reduce administration and to use hand held technology and relevant information at the point of need to empower front line staff to deliver services to customers and clients.

For the future skilled workforce

4.6.4 Through the Council's partnership with CGI and investment in new technology and infrastructure creating a digital edge for the Borders. The strategy will seek to leverage the investment already made in Inspire Learning in order to maximise the depth and breadth of the curriculum available in all our schools. This will in turn help to develop new digital skills of young people in the Borders, such as coding and development of problem solving techniques, to equip them with the skills they need for the online workplace of tomorrow.

For Local Business

4.6.5 Making it easier to do business with Council through a new online supplier portal enabling businesses to tender for work, submit their invoices, track their payments, manage their cash flow more effectively and update their details online.

For those in our Care

4.6.7 Allowing clients better access to online information about the services they need, accessing support and benefits, arranging meetings or health consultations online without the need to travel, addressing isolation and loneliness by using technology to signpost people to social interactions, volunteering opportunities, respite care and paid employment where appropriate and, as we already do, enabling those living in our care homes to keep in touch with friends and family even during lockdown.

4.6.8 For Communities

Working with partner agencies and the Scottish Government to ensure that everyone in the region regardless of their material circumstance has the opportunity to access superfast broadband thereby allowing them to communicate, work, bank and engage online effectively wherever they live in the region and ensuring no one is left behind.

4.7 The digital strategy aims to deliver for all those noted above transforming the Council's service delivery model to a 'digital by design' approach. Significant work has already been undertaken with CGI to map out opportunities. These opportunities have been categorised as service imperatives, shown in appendix 1 which will fundamentally seek to:-

- Re-define SBC Services and our relationship with the citizen,
- Update our operating model,
- Simplify our processes,
- Prioritise the deployment of new technology to the front line,
- Enable change and increase efficiency,
- Improve communication with the people we serve,
- Build capability and empower staff.

Digital Strategy Roadmap

4.8 This will cover a programme of work over the next 3.5 years commencing in April 2021. An initial view of the programme which is subject to refinement and final phasing is shown in appendix 1. Working with CGI the Council aims to deploy this roadmap to deliver projects that will help with the delivery of existing savings plans and identify future opportunities for greater operational efficiency.

Change Management

4.9 The Council recognises that it is essential that a programme of change management is undertaken to ensure that changes made to implement new technology are also reflected in changes to culture, processes, staffing structures and the adoption of sustainable new ways of working. In order for the Council to modernise as effectively as possible the Council will develop a plan to implement these changes to culture, processes, staffing structures and the adoption of new ways of working in line with the technology being deployed to ensure that both financial and service benefits are maximised.

Benefits realisation

4.10 A benefits realisation plan will be developed with CGI to track the delivery of savings and operational process improvements associated with each project. This plan will assess the current operating models, what impact the new technology can have on how we deliver these services, propose a plan

for how we move from current to new operating models and project anticipated benefits arising from this modernisation. This plan will be a crucial tool in ensuring both service and financial benefits and tracked and maximised.

Mobile working

- 4.11 The programme will seek to leverage CGI experience of implementing technology change programmes elsewhere as well as learning from the previous experience of organisations have already implemented change successfully. An early win for example is the project to implement Total Mobile across SBC care services reflecting the experience of other Scottish Councils that have already undertaken this change.

5 DETAILED ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Significant detailed analysis work has been undertaken to date, as highlighted in Appendix 2, to assess how the transformation projects identified by the strategy could be prioritised and to provide a rough order of magnitude (ROM) indication of the scale of benefits which may be achievable.
- 5.2 The slides in Appendix 2 give details on the output of fieldwork research undertaken by CGI to assess where the Council should prioritise investment through the digital strategy to deliver the most significant benefits. An exemplar is provided in the final 2 slides focusing on Health & Social Care and potential benefits of improving productivity enabled through mobile technology. The next steps around change management and benefits realisation plans explained above will now be progressed to assess the anticipated benefits of mobile technology for the Council.
- 5.3 These high level potential benefits give an initial indication of the scale of service and financial benefits which could be deliverable with crucial next steps now being planned to develop a digital road map, change management programme and benefits realisation plan.
- 5.4 The Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) figures included in appendix 2 should be viewed as a guide to the scale of benefits which may be possible and not a commitment to the level of savings which will be delivered. The detail around anticipated financial savings will be refined as new projects and operating models are developed and will be included in future Council Financial Plans once the necessary diligence has been undertaken. A key priority during the process will be balancing service outcomes and future service delivery models with potential savings opportunities.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

This report proposes a new digital strategy for the Council the components of which are set out in appendix 1. The programme of change envisaged, including the deployment of new technology, will be funded by the investment budget of £34m already agreed as part of the CGI extension in September 2020. As such there will be no additional costs to the Council beyond the investment already approved and budgeted. The planned programme of work including the roadmap, benefit realisation plan and

change programme will be designed to deliver operational improvements and financial savings to the Council. The potential cost reductions highlighted by the strategy will help to deliver existing savings targets and future savings required by the Financial Plan. Once finalised, with the necessary due diligence work completed, they will be fully reflected in future revenue budgets. Any changes to the position outlined, for example a future requirement to switch resources between capital and revenue budgets, will be reported as part of future financial planning processes. The tracking of the delivery of savings will be reflected in the budget monitoring process.

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

The Council as with many public sector organisations is facing huge demands upon its services. Many younger people traditionally leave the Region for further education or employment and the population pyramid of the Borders is characterised by a higher percentage of older people (many of whom inevitably require care and support services) than in other areas of the country. Society in the Borders contains pockets of deep seated deprivation while the economy presents significant long term challenges with relatively low wages and a reliance on farming, fishing and forestry and the public sector for employment. The challenges posed by rural isolation, poor transport and digital connectivity have all been added to by the impact of COVID 19. Faced with these issues and rising public expectations, the Council cannot stand still. The investment in new technology advocated by the digital strategy, provides the prospect of addressing these challenges and mitigating risks through investment in improved digital infrastructure and new ways of works that empowers citizens, businesses and staff.

6.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken for the overarching digital strategy. Individual projects will require their own IIAs as more detailed implementation plans are developed.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

The greater use of information technology should assist with reducing the Councils carbon foot print through reduced travel and less use of stationery consumable.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report, its adoption should however assist with reducing the council's carbon footprint.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report. Its adoption should help to assist with improving digital connectivity to rural areas of the region.

6.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are not changes to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation required as a result of this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

David Robertson

Signature

Executive Director Finance & Regulatory

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Background Papers:

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