

Digital Strategy for Somerset Council

Executive Member(s): Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts -

Lead Member for Communities

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Kevin Chorley

Author: Kevin Chorley – Digital Engagement Manager, Sedgemoor District Council

Contact Details: kevin.chorley@somerset.gov.uk

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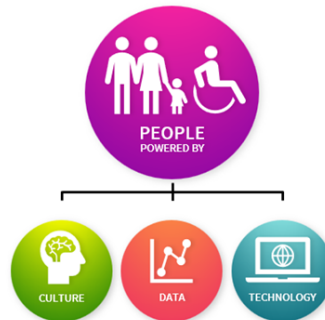


1. Summary / Background

1.1 Digital has been defined as:

'Applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations.'

Digital is at the heart of a culture of continuous improvement, taking incremental steps towards a bold future. 'Digital' is about People, empowered by Culture, right-quality Data, and re-useable Technologies; to meet the raised expectations of the Internet Age.



The Digital Strategy is at the core of enabling the strategic objectives of the organisation supported by Data and Technology.

1.2. A new Digital Strategy for Somerset Council is a product required under the Local Government Review Programme for vesting day.

2. Recommendations

2.1. LGR Joint Scrutiny Board is asked to:

2.1.1 **note** the key elements of the Digital Strategy,

2.1.2 **note** the high-level implications and risks,

2.1.3 **endorse** the strategy content.

3. Reasons for recommendations

3.1. Many of our customers have embedded digital into their lifestyles, with a raised expectation for convenient, real-time access to services, and control over their private data. Those customers who have not embraced digital themselves, have come to expect the quality of service that a modern workforce can provide when a digital culture is supported by the tools and skills for collaboration and innovation.

However, being a 'digital council' is no longer sufficient. Somerset is served by many organisations, from government agencies, through to the many community and voluntary groups that build strength and resilience. Digital for the 'place' of Somerset can create a trust framework in which the needs of individuals and of communities are understood and addressed via secure data sharing, shared casework, and through investments in smart solutions and connectivity. For the digitally excluded, we have a role to provide support and opportunity.

- 3.2.** Digital is fundamental to tackling Somerset Council's biggest challenges. It will be central to how we address the needs of health and social care, the climate emergency, achieving financial sustainability, improving public services, and supporting the most vulnerable. One of our biggest challenges and biggest demand on resources is around care. The use of digital technologies in health and social care is rising exponentially. Remote monitoring and diagnostics are allowing individuals to remain independent for longer – contributing enormously to their physical and mental wellbeing at the same time as reducing pressure on fixed health and care facilities.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1.** No alternatives were considered. There is no other viable option to a Digital Strategy.

5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

- 5.1.** The Digital Strategy supports deliverability of the County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan through the provision of digital which will be used to support customers, innovate, drive transformation, and improve outcomes.
- 5.2.** The Digital Strategy sets out its own aims but also delivers against other corporate objectives including the Data Strategy, Customer Strategy, Business Intelligence Strategy, and the Technology Strategy.

6. Consultations and co-production

- 6.1.** The Digital Strategy was co-produced by a range of contributors who cover a range of professional disciplines and areas of expertise. Fortnightly sub-workstream meetings have been held since February 2022, which helped shape the strategy, its principles, and deliverables identified.
- 6.2.** The Digital Strategy has been considered by the LGR Communities, Customers

7. Financial and Risk Implications

- 7.1. No additional funding requirements are being sought for the approval of this strategy.
- 7.2. It has been established that well planned and well implemented digital solutions save money in the long term, whereas poorly planned, poorly implemented 'digital' results in poor value for money. This strategy aims to establish a future in which the deployment of digital is properly governed, and the digital marketplace is managed to ensure best return on investment.
- 7.3. At this current point in time the Digital Strategy is not costed. It sets out a high-level vision for the future. The implications of this vision will mean at times there will be a need for additional future investment, and the realisable cashable benefits may take time. Discrete programmes will fall out of the strategy, and these will be individually subject to investment appraisals.
- 7.4. The strategy gives the context for budget setting and MTFP and to that extent financial implications are bounded by existing controls.
- 7.5. Successful consolidation and modernisation of digital solutions will require business change, across a new council already pressurised by other organisational change demands. Digital changes must be introduced with careful change management strategies, always service/business led, and implemented by multidisciplinary teams – including, but not solely made up of, technical staff.
- 7.6. As systems are consolidated and modernised, on-going services must continue to be delivered. Methods such as user testing, parallel operation models, and agile delivery can help ensure service continuity, but they must be properly planned and resourced.
- 7.7. The scale and scope of change inherent in LGR, and proposed by this strategy, will be resource intensive. If organic capacity does not exist, resource may have to be bought in.

8. Legal and HR Implications

- 8.1. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 8.2. The Digital Strategy promotes a Council with the ability to develop systems, integrate technologies, be innovative, as well as commissioning platforms; it

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highlights the need to actively manage a diverse and dynamic digital marketplace. Alongside the more traditional IT roles, these capabilities require specialised skills which may have an impact on how we recruit and retain staff.

9. Other Implications

9.1. Equalities Implications

See Equalities Impact Assessment in Appendix A.

9.2. Community Safety Implications

There are no Community Safety implications arising directly from this report.

9.3. Sustainability Implications

Individual digital solutions need to be judged separately in terms of their contribution to the sustainability agenda. However, through a reduction in commuting because of more remote working and a lower reliance on office consumables, digital has the potential to impact positively on the environment.

9.4. Health and Safety Implications

There are no Health and Safety Implications arising directly from this report.

9.5. Ethics implications

The use of technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence to support decision making, and greater exploitation of data raise important ethical questions. Digital ethics – how we should handle data and new technologies in a responsible manner – will need to be considered in future governance and oversight structures.

9.6. Health and Wellbeing Implications

Once again, this strategy is neutral on health and well-being. Technology is increasingly being used to enhance health and well-being, but conversely poorly planned and misused technologies can have a detrimental effect.

9.7. Social Value

The Digital Strategy will develop the Council workforce, provide skills and training opportunities.

There is an evident emphasis on delivering these opportunities for hard-to-

reach/disabled/target groups

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The Digital Strategy highlights care as an exemplar and where we can achieve improved outcomes for our customers through improving health and wellbeing and maintaining independence.

10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

- 10.1.** To date, the proposed Digital Strategy has not been considered by a Scrutiny Committee.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1.**
- Technology Strategy for the New Somerset council.
 - Data Strategy for the New Somerset council.
 - Customer Strategy for the New Somerset council.
 - One Somerset business case

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

Version	1	Date	22 nd December 2022
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Description of what is being impact assessed

Digital Strategy

Evidence

What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#),, should be detailed here

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/digital-inclusion/>

[Population Estimates - Somerset Intelligence - The home of information and insight on and for Somerset - Run by a partnership of public sector organisations](#)

[Government Digital Inclusion Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Internet Speeds - Somerset Intelligence - The home of information and insight on and for Somerset - Run by a partnership of public sector organisations](#)

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people,

please explain why?

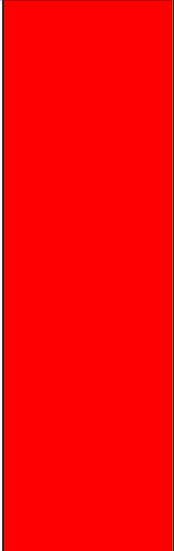
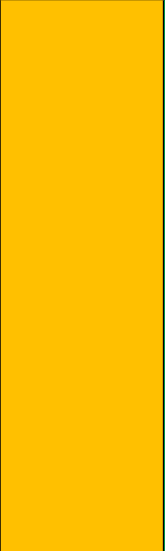

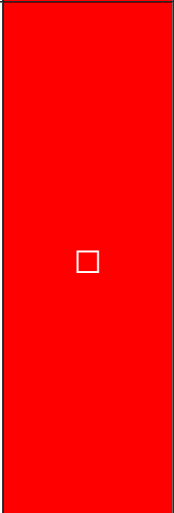
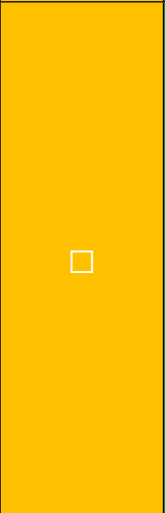
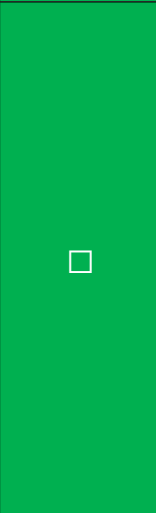
The existing 5 authorities and their current best practice arrangements.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age (young people – 25)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst 98% use the Internet constantly with high level of digital inclusion, this is more than likely to be around use of social media, email, streaming and downloading, shopping on-line. Understanding local government services and being able to access these on-line will determine how young people digitally engage 	□	□	□
Age (26-50)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This group is similar to the above have and high levels of digital inclusion Similar to the above age group they use a wide variety of applications to manage their lives and have probably seen a large shift to online usage over the last 10 years as lives become busier and more demanding 			

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<p>Age (51+)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the age that is more likely to be digitally excluded • All data suggests that the older age group of 70+ are not digitally engaged and thus as services go online are increasingly digitally excluded • They could well not fully appreciate the benefits of being online and as a result may lack interest and motivation to find out more • Fear and continual stories in the media about identify theft, cyber attacks which steal data, may well increase anxiety and lack of understanding of how data is safeguarded and protected only increases peoples fears • Cost of equipment could be a factor as is the increased costs of having broadband especially if on a fixed income • They are less likely to have the foundation skills 			
<p>Disability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with an impairment are 25% less likely to have the skills to access devices and get online themselves and will find themselves digital excluded • They are less likely to have the foundation skills with 19% having no foundation digital skills, with 14% having 1-6 skills, • Language and terminology could be an issue • The cost of getting online could be prohibitive especially if additional software or hardware needed because of their impairment, especially if on a fixed income • Fear and lack of confidence could also be factor; the fear of doing something wrong and not being able to understand what to do to correct the situation. • Motivation could be barrier for older disabled people 			

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Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impacts identified 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impacts identified 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impacts identified 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language can be a determinant of digital exclusion as most websites are in English and although translation facilities are available such as Google translate, it can be difficult to translate some words or terms into the language required Jargon can also be a problem as their country of birth may not have the same local government set up Low income or limited income could also be an impact with a reliance on smart phone either on pay as you go or data limited contract 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impacts identified 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Men are more likely to have a motivational barrier to getting online – 42% of men in comparison to 29% of women 	□	□	□
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impacts identified 	□	□	□
Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rurality of the County is an issue as several areas within it have poor connectivity to broadband or lack a mobile phone signal Somerset has a number of deprived areas and this can mean that a number of households within the County may have mobile phones but won't have a broadband line to the property as they are on low income or fixed incomes from benefits and are unable to afford the cost of broadband (average price £31 to £35 per month) Cost of equipment such as a laptop can be unobtainable for some with them relying heavily on their mobile phone to keep in touch and transact on line. Fear could also be an issue if there are low skills in literacy or numeracy 	□	□	□

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Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
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	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Completed by:

Kevin Chorley



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Date	22nd December
Signed off by:	
Date	
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	

