

Agenda Item	18
Report No	RES/46/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resource Committee

Date: 30 August 2017

Report Title: **Digital Ambition - 2020**

Report By: **Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

“Digital” is increasingly integrated into many aspects of our day to day lives. It has the potential to transform Highland communities, the lives of our residents and businesses while generating long-term savings and income for the Council.

This document aims to do a number of things. It highlights the large number of successful digital projects, initiatives and achievements made by the Council to date while looking forward to what the Council’s digital ambition is for the next 3 years.

It also recognises that digital has many benefits that everyone in the Highlands should have the opportunity to enjoy, so developing digital skills and ensuring digital inclusion and equality for our communities, groups and individuals is a key theme.

We know that we can make the services the Council provides to all its customers better by redesigning them using technology and lean business processes, developing digital skill sets and opening up not just self-service, but moving to self-management channels or portals through the internet – which means that people can access services 24/7 from the comfort of their own home. It’s also more efficient for us to do things this way.

The Council already undertakes over 40% of its transactions with its customers using on-line services, making on-line the most popular way for our customers to access our services. The Council’s Digital Ambition is about how we take further opportunities and utilise new technology to the benefit of the organisation and the wider community.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Consider and comment on the Highland Council’s Digital Ambition - 2020;

3. Background

- 3.1 Digital is transforming everyday lives on a global scale and will continue to do so at an ever-increasing pace. Having access to the internet is now often described as the fourth utility – and is an important consideration for residents and businesses. This need to be better connected is also changing what people want from both the private and public sector – and this includes the Highland Council.
- 3.2 People want and expect transactional services and information to be available through their own devices, 24/7 – mirroring their experiences with on-line retail and banking. This means that digital engagement with the Council needs to evolve and expand from self-service to self-management so that customers are in charge; and are able to actively manage their own information and requests. Over 40% of transactions with Council customers are now undertaken on-line with high levels of satisfaction, making services more accessible and often improving the speed and efficiency of service delivery.
- 3.3 Digital is evolving throughout the Highlands. As an example, Chromebook deployment to our schools acting as a catalyst for change and it is important that Highland Council understands, embraces and supports such changes and uses it to best effect. Digital skills and knowledge helps people to find new and better jobs, work from home or in more flexible ways, enables cheaper forms of communication and supports social interaction within communities and with government services.
- 3.4 Being a Digital Council needs to be a fundamental part of who we are – it will allow us to work with our partners who are already engaged in digital innovation to support and develop the environment of the Highlands and deliver on the ambition of being an even better place to live in and do business.

4. Digital Ambition – 2020

- 4.1 This Digital Ambition tells our story and sets out a vision for how the organisation will use digital in the future. Through this the Council can ensure that Highland is well placed, in comparison to other areas in Scotland and the UK, to take benefits from a more digital approach. This is pivotal to our ability to transform services, reduce costs and improve the customer and community experience of Council services.
- 4.2 This ambition also tells us about our residents, our businesses, our staff, Councillors, partners and pupils. It talks about how they are using our services now on a daily basis and provides a vision of how digital can transform opportunities for all in the future. It outlines how “thinking and doing” digital will help us to increase our efficiency, automation and effectiveness. Our customer portals are central to this and will also move us onto the next chapter on our digital evolution providing customers, businesses and communities with options for self-service to genuine self-management, for example being able to track complaints and service requests.

- 4.3 The ambition also highlights how we can use digital to increase the productivity of our workforce – through flexible and agile working and increasing core digital skills. Using lean methodology we are beginning to see digital become the foundation for change and we can use this as an opportunity to rethink the way we deliver services rather than just computerising them.
- 4.4 Digital skills for all our residents and in particular our young people and schoolchildren are vital to the sustainability and growth of the Highlands. We are supporting this with innovations around how we deliver services and with practical actions such as the rollout of 22,000 Chromebooks in Highland Schools by 2020 and public access Wi-Fi in 14 towns and at libraries and Service Points. This will help to increase our children’s readiness for life and ability to thrive in work and maximise the use of technology to support health, wellbeing, community network and democracy.
- 4.4 Most importantly our ambition is that we do not to leave behind those who do not have the skills or access to take advantage of this opportunity. Digital inequality matters because those without access and the right combination of access, skills, motivation and knowledge are missing out on important areas of the digital world. This impacts on individuals, but also on families, communities etc. The strategy advises on how we will provide support from our digitally confident and aware staff and access by improving Wi-Fi at in our town centres and via our local libraries and Service Points.

5. Priorities and delivery

- 5.1 It is important that a co-ordinated approach is taken and the Council uses this ambition to inform how it develops policy, financial and service plans; the Digital Ambition attached to this report at Appendix 1 delivers the framework to achieve this.
- 5.2 We have outlined an ambitious, but deliverable 3 year plan that builds solid foundations in Year 1 that supports sustainable, effective and efficient digital delivery for Years 2 and 3. The delivery plan outlines our objectives, which will become our key indicators for change, can be measured and supports the continued growth of a digital Council.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Resource – within existing resource

Legal - no known implications

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - Incorporated within Appendix 1

Climate Change/Carbon Clever - no known implications

Risk – low, cohesive digital strategy enables council services delivery model

Gaelic - no known implications

Designation: Digital Services Manager

Date: 19 August 2017

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Background Papers: Appendix 1 – Highland Council, Digital Ambition - 2020

Highland Council

Digital Ambition 2020



Staff



Councillors



Pupils



Residents



Businesses



Partners

The Highland Community Planning Partnership



Parents & Carers



Visitors



Foreword

This document outlines our digital ambition and builds on our strong achievements to date to ensure we have a clear direction and priorities to continue our journey to provide the best possible services to our communities. An effective Digital Council provides the essential link between the aims of the organisation and the technology, lean business processes and the essential skills needed to deliver those aims.

This is not just about delivering our services better but also about doing them differently – giving more choice to our citizens about how and when they use our services, enabling our staff to work smarter not harder, making local partnership working easier and importantly helping to reduce our costs.

To purely focus on technology is missing the point. Digital is an opportunity for organisational and Highland area wide improvement including a stronger economy and social well-being.

It is important we do not leave individuals, groups of people or whole communities behind on our digital programme. Our ambition statement prioritises the development of digital inclusion, equality and essential digital skills in our organisation and communities.

We also look at how digital can be used amongst the communities we serve and sets our digital priorities for next 3 years to ensure that everyone in the Highlands benefits from the digital age and helps support their local priorities and aspirations.

Summary

This statement of our ambition does a number of things.

It “takes stock” of the large number of successful digital projects, initiatives and digital achievements made by the Council.

It looks forward to what the Council’s digital priorities are for the next 3 years.

It recognises that digital has many benefits that everyone in the Highlands needs the opportunity to enjoy, so developing digital skills and ensuring digital inclusion and equality for our communities, groups and individuals is a key theme.

Digital means different things to different people.

For many people especially those who have been brought up with technology in their homes, school and work, digital is central to how they live their lives and how they can enjoy the benefits that digital brings.

For some people, digital simply feels alien or out of their reach because they have not the same opportunities of on-line access, training and experience.

We need to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to benefit from digital and no one is left behind.

The Council like all large organisations globally is increasingly using more and more complex technology to run itself and deliver services its customers. This is a fact of modern life.

We need to ensure that we develop and use digital “the Highland way” which recognises the unique opportunities and challenges of our culture, communities and geography.

This document explains how we are going to do this.

Our Progress

The Council has already made significant digital achievements.

Digital First

Highland citizens now choose to undertake 44% of their Council transactions on-line (May 2017). Our online forms now include a wide range of online payments, reporting for everything from potholes to housing repairs, and applications including those for social housing, benefits and school enrolments. A significant achievement was the launch of our Apply Once form, allowing customers to find out all the Council benefits they are entitled to, and apply for them in one single form.

- 99% of Commercial Waste applications on-line
- 97% of Job applications on-line
- 92% of Building Standards applications on-line
- 82% of Planning applications on-line
- 66% of Brown Bin Garden Waste applications on-line
- 65% of Parking Permit applications on-line
- 57% of Highway Faults reported on-line

The situation is dynamic and changing quickly. With customers “shifting channels” they are actively choosing to go on-line to carry out their transaction rather than using the telephone or visiting a council office.

Who uses our on-line services?

In 2016, customers used the Council’s digital services to carry out 127,000 transactions, including making a payment, requesting a service or reporting a fault. Our Citizen’s Panel survey in 2016 showed that people under the age of 44 and parents and carers of school aged children were most likely to use on-line services with older people and disabled people being least likely.

The survey also highlighted that 75% said that they were very or fairly satisfied with on-line services.

- 85% said they would use online services again
- 75% agreed that online services were easy to use
- 71% said they were able to find the online services they needed
- 70% agreed that online services were quick to complete
- 68% agreed that online services were easy to find

Web Site

Our web site has been designed around and for our customers. It performs well on a range of mobile devices and where connectivity is limited. We have launched an “App”; which increases customer choice and simplifies regular transactions.

Many customers use the web site to regularly transact their business and for information. The Council has over 150,000 users of its web site each month (May 2017).

The Council's web site is accredited by the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC). This means that the site is recognised nationally as meeting the highest standards of accessibility.

MyAccount Users

MyAccount provides people with the ability to set up an on-line account for services in Scotland. Using a single user name and password, this is a simple and secure way for customers to access a range of on-line public services.

The Council has over 33,000 myAccount users (24% of eligible residents) (May 2017).

Automated Telephone Payments

Residents are able to make their Rent and Council Tax payments to our Service Centre using an automated telephone payments system with no queues or holding. This is available 24/7.

Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN)

The Council is the lead partner of the Pathfinder North (PfN) partnership of 6 Council's (Argyll & Bute, Moray, Western Isles, Orkney & Angus) who have successfully completed the rollout of a modern high speed communications network to 716 locations including 376 Highland schools and offices using the Scottish Government SWAN (Scottish Wide Area Network). This delivers a

number of benefits including reduced costs and increased bandwidth and resilience.

Technology Refresh

The Council has awarded a contract for the upgrade of all its corporate and schools computers to modern cloud based technology which will include the latest version of Microsoft Office software and the rollout of 22,000 Chromebooks in Highland Schools by 2020.

The Council has also awarded a contract for the upgrade of the local area networks (LANs) in its corporate buildings and school buildings, including increasing schools Wi-Fi capacity for the additional Chromebooks and free public Wi-Fi in Service Points. Work will also be done to increase the bandwidth currently available in busy locations.

City Region Deal – Inverness Free Public Wi-Fi

As part of its City Region deal, the Council has successfully completed a free public Wi-Fi pilot project in the Inverness Victorian Market and its immediate vicinity which has attracted up to 500 users each day.

The second phase of this project is to work in partnership with the Federation of Small Business (FSB) and local Business Improvement District (BID) groups including the Tourism BID to extend this free public Wi-Fi to the whole city centre.



The third phase of this project will install free public Wi-Fi in 14 other towns across the Highlands including Alness, Aviemore, Dingwall, Dornoch, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus, Fort William, Invergordon, Nairn, Portree, Tain, Thurso, Ullapool and Wick.

Next Steps

Our customers and communities are the central focus of our ambition for a digital council. It is therefore important that we consider how the impact of digital technology is changing their lives on a daily basis and how digital services will look in the future.

Digital Residents – The Future Vision

The Highland Council will give customers the opportunity to carry out their business with the Council anytime, anywhere, and on any digital device. Through a secure and easy to use Customer Portal, customers will have access to a single view of their data, including personal details and progress with transactions. This will help customers to self-serve and self-manage their data and contacts with the Council.

Customers have an increasing expectation that to suit their needs services will be available 24/7. The Highland Council will continue to develop on-line and digital services to help to meet those expectations.

With the development of a safe and secure on-line Customer Portal, customers will have access to their personal details as well as progress tracking for any payments and transactions. The portal will enable personalised information to be “pushed” to the

customer. This can include local bin calendars, Councillor details and events. Customers will have the option to “opt in” to receive updates and promotional emails on information that is important to them.

Customers will be encouraged and supported to keep their information up-to-date. Online forms will enable customers to apply, report and pay on-line. E-Billing will give customers access to their financial transactions and bills for such things as rent and council tax. For those customers who choose to pay over the telephone, there have been advances in digital automation which mean that customers can make payments supported by voice recognition software, enabling 24/7 payments for those who are not on-line.

The Customer Portal will allow customers who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction or Second Adult Rebate to securely access their personal details held against their claim, their historic and upcoming benefit payment dates, the make-up of their household, current and historic benefit entitlement and a full explanation of the income used in the calculation of their benefit entitlement.

In the future, SMS text and e-mail notifications will be used to notify our benefit customers when changes have been made to their claim which affects their overall benefit award, or when a new Benefit Decision Notice has been produced and is available for the customer to log in and view securely.

Integrations and automation will be developed to create an “end to end” on-line solution for customers. Application information will be automatically entered into back office systems, which reduces double handling, error rates and speeds up the time taken to resolve. Information on the progress of applications will also be presented to customers directly from back office systems, reassuring customers on progress.

Customers will be able to also contribute to Council consultations and decision making using on-line consultation tools, for example as part of participatory budgeting. Social media and other digital tools will enable customers to make contact and engage with council officers and local Councillors.

More digitally connected staff will also benefit customers. Vulnerable customers or those unable to go on-line can work with our staff to use our on-line services together, highlighting the benefits of being on-line but also helping the customer to benefit from improved submission and resolution times and the additional tools available on-line.

Digital Tenants

A specific portal will be developed to support our social housing tenants. This portal will give housing tenants access to details about themselves, their property, any applications and their rent 24/7 on any device. The Tenants’ portal will support rent payments and provide E-Billing for rent accounts.

Tenants will be able to report housing repairs and make amendments to their details and tenancy arrangements. The portal will also hold any tenancy documents in one place, available to the tenant 24/7.

SMS text and email notifications will notify and update tenants on appointments etc., decreasing the number of missed appointments.

The use of smart technology will be explored to look at the potential benefits for tenants of the “Internet of Things”. These tools could be used to help tenants manage their fuel budgets, or sensors to support social care for older tenants.

.... 2020, a day in the life of

Jane and John are council tenants. Unfortunately, John lost his job recently and they are now struggling to pay their bills. They were visited by a welfare support advisor who helped them work through the Apply Once on-line form. The form identified that they were entitled to a number of benefits, one of which they didn't know existed! The advisor helped John complete and submit the form on-line. She also suggested that John might benefit from some help with his basic digital skills so he could apply for things himself in the future and signposted him to a class run by a partner agency.

John attended a Highland Council job club where he was supported to use on-line search engines and websites to look for work. His new digital skills helped him apply for jobs online and he could list his digital skills on his CV.

And with a little help from his housing officer, he is now able to use the on-line tenants' App to check his rent balance and pay his rent on time. He was also able to electronically report his change of circumstances when he did return to work.

Digital Business – The Future Vision

The Highland Council will support businesses to utilise on-line tools and self-management to complete their business with the council. Using a secure Business Portal, businesses will have a 360 view of their transactions and relationships with the council, enabling on-line storage of documents and speeding up transactions.

There is increasing demand for businesses to be on-line and digitally connected to keep up with competition and to meet the demands of customers. To support businesses on-line, Highland Council will develop an on-line secure Business Portal. This portal will provide businesses with a view of their data, dealings and transactions held by the council, enabling easy and fast changes to be made when required. Licences, permits and contracts will be available to be viewed and amended on-line. On-line billing will

support easy and convenient payment for licensing and Non Domestic Rates.

Businesses in the Highlands also deal with the council as contractors and on-line tools will support supplier relationships. Contractors will be able to keep contact details up to date and use the on-line portal to view transactions and invoices.

.... 2020, a day in the life of

Barbara's Bakery is a small, local business in the Highlands. To make the most of the increased tourist trade in their area, Barbara's Bakery recently set up their own website, using Broadband Connection vouchers and support from Business Gateway. With improved internet connection, staff at Barbara's Bakery are able to make better use of on-line tools.

Barbara's Bakery now has an on-line account with the Highland Council. The manager can check her bills are paid up to date and also check when her licences and permits may expire. With business now booming, there is a need to increase commercial waste collections and Barbara can view and make any changes on-line. With plans to expand the business, she was able to submit a planning application on-line and check its progress.

With the on-line portal, Barbara's Bakery can manage their own information and upload documents that will be used for all their applications.

Digital Staff – The Future Vision

Highland Council staff will have the right skills and tools to do their job in an increasingly digital environment. Staff will have the flexibility to work anywhere, using on-line tools to work securely and collaboratively with colleagues, partners and customers. Digital skills will form a key aspect of staff recruitment, development and any redeployment.

In an increasingly digital world and to support customers' growing on-line expectations, Highland Council needs to adopt a digital council internally as well.

Council staff will develop basic digital skills for work which can also be used at home. Staff will have increased digital confidence to communicate, transact and experiment with new digital tools, as well as having digital conversations with partners and customers.

Staff will have access to devices and software that allow them to work anywhere, be that in an office, a partner office, at home or mobile. This will enable our staff to keep in touch and access documents wherever they need them and support flexible working and office rationalisation.

These skills will also enable them to engage with a range of digital tools to enhance how they work. This will include on-line collaboration tools which will help working with partners and

customers through communication services such as Skype, to aid remote conversations and meetings.

Mobile service delivery will enable the use of smartphones and mobile devices out in the field whether that is for maintenance staff undertaking repairs or roadwork, the review of planning applications on site or supporting customers in a variety of ways in their own home.

.... 2020, a day in the life of

Tom works in a Council job that requires him to work both at a desk and to be out on "in the field". Tom has a device to use in the office and has access to a mobile device when he is travelling. No matter which device he uses, he has access to the documents and software he needs. He can even work from home.

When Tom needs to work with partners, he can use a range of collaborative on-line tools to share documents and discuss ideas. He can also use skype and the webcam on his device to video conference with colleagues and partners and to attend meetings without having to travel.

Tom also has access to on-line forms that make his day to day tasks quicker and easier. He can view his payslip on-line and can use the Staff Portal to update his personal details. He is also able to monitor the movements of his staff, to track sick leave and approve annual leave.

Digital Councillors – The Future Vision

The Highland Council will support its' Councillors to carry out their duties efficiently, effectively and securely using on-line tools. Using a specific Councillors' Portal, they will have access to up-to-date information about their local area and service performance. Social technology will support Councillors to converse with their constituents on-line, particularly in remote areas.

Since the election of the new Council in May 2017, Highland Council has adopted a more digital approach to council committees and meetings. Councillors have played their part too as they use digital devices to access council papers and carry out their daily business.

This will be built on by offering additional services and support to Councillors to engage digitally with council officers, colleagues and constituents. This is particularly key given the geography of Highland and the rural nature of many of our Councillors' wards.

Mobile technology such as social media and webchat, along with digital communication tools such as Skype will enable Councillors to attend meetings remotely and engage with their constituents, perhaps through on-line surgeries.

A secure Councillors' on-line portal will provide access to up-to-date information and performance data for their local area,

including reports and personalised dashboard. This will give Councillors easy access to the information they routinely need and has the potential to help Councillors to manage their ward casework.

.... 2020, a day in the life of

Iris is a new Councillor with Highland Council. She lives in a rural area and represents a wide-spread ward. On her first day as a Councillor she was given a digital device so that she can access her emails and receive committee papers etc. Iris was also given training on how to use the software and on how to make best use of social media.

Video technology means that Iris can "call into" council meetings using video-conferencing. This saves her travelling time and saves the council travel expenses.

Iris hosts an on-line surgery using webinar software and a webcam. She is able to talk to her constituents via a video link or by using webchat. She can log enquiries or requests for service on behalf her constituents. When a constituent asks about potholes in the area, Iris is able to pull up-to-date information from the Councillors' Portal to look at. She can also check on the progress of a pothole complaint that she raised on a constituent's behalf.

Digital Parents & Carers – The Future Vision

The Highland Council will support parents and carers to engage with schools and teachers in a way that is easy to use, secure and convenient. By using a secure account on the Council's Parent & Carers Portal, parents and carers will be able to access information about their child's and school life, report absences, view homework, have two way communications to keep in touch and up to date and be able to make on-line payments for school meals, trips and materials.

Currently communication between schools, parents and carers is largely reliant on face to face and telephone contact, with paper newsletters and forms going home in school bags. Within a digital Council a secure Parents & Carers Portal will allow parents, carers and schools to communicate in a much more efficient way, supporting parents and carers to access and manage information about their children's education, at a time and place that suits them, and enabling two way communications between parents, carers, teachers and school admin staff.

A secure Parents & Carers Portal will give parents and carers access to homework, newsletters and exam results as well as payment facilities for school meals (balances and menus), school uniform, trips and events information.

Schools will be able to use a range of communication methods including email and SMS messaging to communicate with parents and carers around routine events.

Parents, carers and teachers will also be able to communicate directly and digitally, enabling more immediate reporting and follow up of absences, late homework or good news!

.... 2020, a day in the life of

Susan has 3 children at school. Her youngest is just starting school and Susan enrolled her in Primary 1 using the on-line form. She also used the same on-line form to enrol her other children when they moved into a new area.

On Sunday evening, she is able to check what homework her oldest two have using the on-line portal. Susan can also check how her oldest child did in his maths test.

Susan can also top up their school meals accounts, rather than have to search around for change on Monday morning, while checking what they ate for lunch the previous week! She receives an email about a school concert and she logs on to the on-line portal immediately to buy tickets.

Digital Pupils – The Future Vision

A large scale roll out of one-to-one devices for pupils in the Highlands is underway and along with the development of digital teaching resources, will form the basis of a digital learning environment for all pupils. This will enable pupils to develop digital skills to support their education, lifestyle and entrance into a digital workforce, but will also encourage young people into digital and technological careers.

Pupils will use digital skills and access to digital resources to expand their learning in all subject areas. Pupils will have access, through G Suite for Education and GLOW, to a wide range of tools to support their learning. This will include presentation tools, multimedia software and tools enabling pupils to work collaboratively on projects and documents. Digital devices will give pupils anytime, anywhere, access to educational resources and support.

The expansion of digital devices for pupils will also enable pupils particularly in rural areas to have access to learning opportunities beyond those presently available at their school. This could enable pupils to attend virtual classes and access learning resources for classes hosted elsewhere, therefore expanding career opportunities for those in remote communities.

Digital Partners – The Future Vision

The ability to share information with our partners is key to collaborative working, particularly with the mandate to work together provided by the Community Empowerment Act 2015.

Partners engaging with the same customer base will be able to share information securely to ensure the customer receives a joined up service. This includes child services, benefits information and health and social care. Customers should see a “one door, any door” approach to service where information they provide is shared and updated with appropriate partners (with customer permission). A current example of this is the Tell Us Once scheme where other agencies are updated when a customer registers a death.

As well as more formal, secure data sharing agreements, partner organisations will make use of collaborative digital tools to work together on projects and documents, reducing the need for email exchanges and supporting version control.

Infrastructure should also be available for use by partners. Highland Council staff and partner organisations should be able to access internet connections and work within each other’s buildings. Systems and software should also be accessible where appropriate; to ensure case documents are up to date and in one place. Sharing directories and calendar access will help partners arrange meetings and events more efficiently.

Digital Skills

Culture

Digital technology is at the heart of our modern society, transforming how we work, learn, connect and consume. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the workplace where digital skills are already essential to support continued service improvement and democratic engagement.

Vital to the development of digital skills is the need to identify current and future needs and deliver a blend of awareness raising, training and development that will have an immediate positive affect on performance and job satisfaction.

Effective leadership enables the digital skills transformation. Digital Leaders will be identified to support digital skills development and transfer of learning to the workplace across the Council.

The development of digital skills will support a culture of improvement where innovation in technology and its application will be embraced by staff, councillors and our communities as we all recognise and realise the benefits and opportunities that this brings.

Recruitment and Induction

Our staffs' digital journeys with the Highland Council will begin even before they are appointed or elected. Job and person specifications will identify the key digital skills required for their specific role. Online induction will further support the development of key digital skills and managers will discuss specific training needs. It is recognised that training in digital skills will often need to be provided and future staff will be expected to quickly understand and value the benefit of digital working.

The Employee Review & Development scheme will be reviewed to include reference to and guidance on development of digital skills. These schemes will open the door to digital learning at Highland Council, empowering staff and councillors to take full advantage of the opportunities to develop and contribute the digital agenda.

Developing Digital Skills

Service workforce planning will be pivotal in identifying training needs for groups and the Employee Review and Development scheme will identify the specific needs of individuals. In developing Service Learning plans managers will reflect on a number of key competencies to maximise digital competency.

- **Managing Information:** The ability to find, manage and store digital information.
- **Communicating:** The ability to digitally communicate, interact and collaborate and share digital skills with customers.
- **Transacting:** The ability to sell and purchase goods, organise finances and make use of digital government services.
- **Problem Solving:** The ability to discover new ways to use digital tools to solve problems and find solutions, increasing independence and confidence.
- **Creating and Collaborating:** The ability to discover new and improved ways to make connections and engage with people through the creation of digital content.
- **Digital Conduct:** Understanding the dos and don'ts of on-line communication. Maintaining a professional on-line

status, maximizing the opportunities to promote the Council and maintain our reputation.

- **Search and Research:** The ability to search the Internet and digital archives to identify relevant and accurate data and information.
- **Device and Application Flexibility:** Navigation across several devices and platforms (including smartphones, tablets, laptops, and other devices) and to operate applications to support more joined up and efficient service delivery.
- **Digital Information Security and Privacy:** Data and security breaches due to human error are a risk in the digital realm. Employees must be well-trained in security and privacy awareness, and know how to use their businesses' specific safeguard practices.
- **Digital Pedagogy*:** (*Teaching and related staff*). The ability to use digital content, tools and services in learning and for learning from any device at any time, including distance learning.

**This strategy recognises the important role that teachers play in delivering the digital skills of 3rd Millennium learners and support the ICT in Learning Strategy.*

Training and development solutions will be managed and delivered through the corporate learning and development plan. A blended approach will centre on self-learning through on-line resources and courses. As well as accessing solutions through Learning & Development, staff and councillors will be sign posted to the “My Online Learning” platform to seek out their own on-line solutions further building their confidence and skills.

It is acknowledged that some staff and councillors will come to the Council with lower levels of digital skills and provision will be made to deliver introductory face to face training to this group. On the other hand, a similar number of will come with a high level of skills and little immediate development requirements.

Digital skills will be a key building block of all future learning and development activities. Core digital skills will be promoted for all staff and councillors. They will be included in all future qualifications provided by the Council including Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and Institute of Leadership & Management certificates.

Digital core skills will be included in the programme for all future Modern Apprenticeships and specialist Digital Apprentices will be recruited and trained.

The biggest challenge for organisations committed to the development of a digitally skilled workforce is that rapid technological advancement, and the subsequent emerging opportunities, mean that development requirements need to be reviewed very regularly. A recent survey by Deloitte showed that

on average digital skills become obsolete within less than 3 years if training is not updated.

To address this challenge the Council will mainstream the identification of corporate digital skills development needs into a three year workforce planning schedule. Individuals’ skills will be reviewed at least annually as part of their Employee Review and Development meeting.

Developing Digital Communities

With approximately 10,000 staff and 74 elected councillors our workforce make up a significant proportion of our Highland communities. A digitally capable workforce is therefore a significant benefit not just to the Council as an employer but also the wider community.

Digital skills not only enable customers to access on-line council services, but also to seek and apply for work, manage their money, make savings, access and engage with healthcare, reduce social isolation and access learning opportunities, ultimately tackling issues relating to social inclusion, unemployment and poverty.

The Highland Community Planning Partnership has developed a ten year Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) that is seeking to address five core areas:

- Poverty Reduction
- Community Participation and Engagement
- Infrastructure
- Community Safety and Resilience (including Cyber)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing

One of the key priorities and themes running through these five areas is Digital which includes the development of community digital skills. Through the HOIP the Council will co-produce with Communities, other public sector bodies and the third sector the development and delivery of digital skills especially for digitally excluded individuals, groups and communities.

The Council will continue to be an active member of Digital Highland <http://digitalhighland.org.uk/> which helps Communities to find free places in the Highlands to get on-line or improve digital skills like searching, security, email, social media, form-filling, finding jobs, shopping and paying bills.

Digital Inclusion

Being a Digital Council means providing digital services which are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use digital services will choose to do so, **while those who can't are not excluded.**

Our ambition is to transform how we deliver services and the ways that people interact with us through continued development of digital tools. To do this we need to make our digital services easy to access for as many of our customers as possible. Our approach needs to encourage a digitally inclusive culture by building in accessibility, allowing access through a range of devices, and creating digital services that are straightforward and attractive to use.

Research carried out by the Digital Highland Project highlighted 4 areas within Highland where efforts on digital inclusion would yield the biggest benefit:

- Low income, urban households
- Remote and rural communities
- Retired life in rural communities
- Rural unemployment and skills for job finding.

Older people, particularly those on a low income, are less likely to use digital services than the population as a whole, and in Highland we have a considerably higher older population than in Scotland or the UK. There is also a peak of digitally excluded within the 25 – 40 year age bracket in Highland, particularly in low income households, where affordability and skills are the main barriers.

Government estimates indicate that around 10% of the population will continue to present a demand for alternative channels for communication and transaction.

The increased use of the internet by much of the population along with improvements to digital infrastructure has led to a move towards digital channels being the default when designing services.

For many people, digital services are essential for daily social and economic inclusion. Digital delivery has the potential to increase efficiency and reduce costs for the Council which can help to protect vital services. It can also create opportunities for customers and staff to have more control, to encourage learning and more widely to develop local business and economy.

However, we recognise that people are at different stages of involvement in the digital journey. We need to ensure that customers are not left behind and unable to access Council services because they are not on-line - whether this is due to poor broadband or other factors. We also need to ensure that there is support for people to get on-line and stay on-line, and that support or alternative channels are available for those who most need them.

Being Digitally Inclusive

The development of a new ambition for our Digital Council presents us with opportunities to:

- advance equality and meet community needs

- encourage digital inclusion by our staff signposting customers to digital skills education and free on-line access provided by the 3rd sector and the Council
- consider assisted digital approaches (either directly or through the 3rd sector) and the availability of alternative channels (face-to-face, telephone, paper copy)

Digital inclusion is not only about the way we interact and transact with customers. It is about developing the skills of our communities and our staff, and promoting benefits:

- Ability to apply for benefits and access opportunities to save money e.g. on-line price discounts for goods and services. Support and tools to support money management.
- Developing skills and access to e-learning and training opportunities – enhancing employment opportunities and business skills, access to social media, increasing confidence and reducing isolation.
- Supporting communities – adaptive technology to support students; creating ‘fit’ houses, aids and adaptations supported by technology for independent living of elderly and disabled residents; improved access to information.

Digital Priorities and Delivery

The Council has already made significant cost savings by making its services available digitally. Customer transaction costs have been progressively reduced through a process of Channel Shift – with customer contact shifting from face-to-face to telephones and now with increasing frequency our customers are choosing to go on-line to transact their business, the least costly transaction method of all.

With increasing customer choice, demand and expectations around on-line services, we will need to continue to support the wider digital agenda by further increasing the number and range of transactional services available through our website and telephony automation. We will also make sure that we support the mobile on-line delivery our customers choose to use, such as smartphones and tablets.

Opportunities to support and promote digital services

Developing and promoting digital access channels will reduce transactional costs and improve service availability. To make this happen we will need to -

- Support the development of more on-line transactional services
- Develop a better understanding of customer data, allowing us to transform it into business intelligence and use it to inform service planning and policy development
- Promote not just self-service, but self-management to customers, businesses and communities
- Ensure our services are efficient and lean so that customers really only need to ‘Tell Us Once’ about a change in circumstances that might affect service delivery across a number of areas

While we wish to maximise take up of all digital access channels we cannot leave behind those who are unable or unwilling to make the change. We will need to ensure that as many citizens as possible actively choose our digital channels first in order to bridge the digital divide. This can be achieved by -

- Supporting digital leadership within the Council to advocate and promote the wider adoption of digital throughout our services.
- Support measures to change attitudes by encouraging the adoption of social media and its use to reach out to

customers in the format with which they feel most comfortable.

- Ensuring that new and redesigned transactional services are operated and improved by skilled and experienced managers, with clear accountability for quality and take up.

Key Dependencies

Continuing development of the Highland broadband infrastructure, Wi-Fi and mobile data coverage

The Council will continue to work with communities, public and commercial partners to develop high speed broadband, Wi-Fi and mobile data coverage in the Highland area to improve digital equality and inclusion. This includes:

- Installing free public Wi-Fi in Council Service Points as part of its Network Refresh Project.
- Working with Capita the supplier of the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) who provide the Council's corporate and schools wide area network, to open up connectivity for rural communities.

Smart Cities Deal – Open Data, Smart Waste and Smart Mobility

The Highland Council Smart Cities Project aims to use technology and data strategically to improve citizen well-being and economic development. It also aims to engage with citizens and stakeholders to ascertain the best solutions to improve citizen experience.

This will be achieved by the following digital projects.

- **Open Data** – The Council is working in partnership with 6 other Scottish cities to develop an open source platform for the open sharing of Big data* with customers, businesses, schools and universities to promote citizen engagement, academic and economic development.
- **Smart Waste** – The Council is developing the use of routing software and location aware “in cab” technology in vehicles to improve the efficiency of waste collection and other transport related services such as community transport, home/school transport and gritters.
- **Smart Mobility** – The Council is developing an integrated traffic management system in Inverness including traffic control, digital signage, smart parking meters and cashless parking payments.

**Big data refers to voluminous amounts of structured or unstructured data that organisations can potentially mine and analyse for community or commercial gains.*

Internet of Things (IoT)

Internet of Things (IoT) refers to the ever-growing inter-networking of physical devices, vehicles (also referred to as "connected devices" and "smart devices"), buildings, and other items embedded with electronics, software, sensors, actuators, and network connectivity which enable these objects to collect and exchange data.

As an example the Council is working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to develop Smart Street Lighting with street lamps that report themselves when they fail, reducing the cost and time needed to keep streets well-lit and producing corresponding benefits for traffic and public safety.

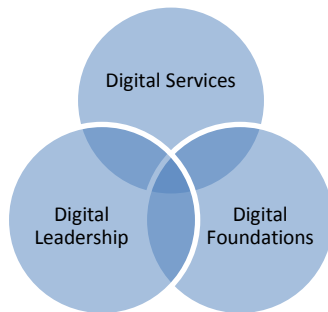
The Council is looking to develop applications such as –

- water quality testing in schools
- pollution and traffic sensors
- smart bins with just in time “empty me” alerts
- fit homes to support independent living for vulnerable people

The 3 Year Delivery Plan

Highland Council's Digital First Board provides governance and direction to the Digital First programme. This programme has been successful in increasing digital take up and reducing service delivery costs.

Over the next 3 years we understand that it is important to build on the digital foundations that are currently in place and that these in turn support the growth of digital services and are interwoven with strong digital leadership.



We also know that there is a significant level of change underway to the services we provide and the ways in which they are provided. Our internal business processes are changing as well. Digital is at the heart of this change and we need to ensure that our digital investments are maximised.

We also understand that digital technology is changing and evolving at an incredible pace. To keep pace with this change we

will focus on ensuring that our knowledge and understanding remains up to date so that we can flex and adapt our plans as technology advances.

There are a number of activities that will underpin our delivery plan.

- Commitment to digital skills for staff and communities.
- Closely working with partners to progress the digital agenda, with a focus on connectivity for citizens who are unable to take advantage of faster broadband speeds.
- Embed in the employee survey, specific questioning regarding staff confidence in the use of digital.
- Deliver more on-line services while continuing to understand and improve the customer experience.
- Capture gaps in areas of coverage or access to services for inclusion in the next evolution of this document.

Year 1

Year 1 will lay the foundations for sustainable, effective and efficient digital delivery.

- Expand our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to deliver self-service and evolve self-management via an on-line portal. This portal will be transformational in the ongoing delivery of services and we will be undertaking promotion with all stakeholders.
- Develop a programme of assisted digital that will target customers and communities that are excluded.
- By December 2018 our 6 largest Service Points will be digital service points, providing customers with support, encouragement and access to digital services. The service points will have assisted digital pods that will be able to provide remote assistance to customers.
- Review progress and build more digital integrations between back office and front office systems. For example the integration between our CRM system and our trade management system so that customers can book their repairs appointment “at first point of contact” by the end of 2018.

- Develop CRM access to give councillors the facility to track and manage their cases and those that they are progressing on behalf of their constituents.
- Define and deliver a series of ward reports to support localism.
- Use the benefits myAccount offers by increasing the number of trusted accounts from 400 to 4,000 by the end of 2018, 10,000 by the end of 2019 and 21,000 by the end of 2020.
- Free, public Wi-Fi in 14 other towns across the Highlands including Alness, Aviemore, Dingwall, Dornoch, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus, Fort William, Invergordon, Nairn, Portree, Tain, Thurso, Ullapool and Wick.

By Year 3

- We will see a clear shift in the way our customers engage with the Council. As the uptake and usage of digital services increase, customers will expect a seamless multi-channel experience, mirroring their experiences across wider sectors. By the end of 2018 we will open up Social Media as a contact channel for customers.
- We will also define training for staff that is mandatory during induction phase and as a core competency by 2019.

- Stretch our targets for on-line transactions from 40% to 60% by April 2020.
- 2019 will see the completion of our network refresh, which will bring increased bandwidth and resilience.
- By the end of 2020 we will have fulfilled our Chromebook commitment to every child in secondary school.

Responsibilities for different elements of the plan are held within different areas of the organisation. However, Digital Services will lead, co-ordinate, review update and report on the plan to the Digital First Board.

Appendix

Equality Impact Assessment:

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Impact Assessment –Rural and Poverty Impact Assessment Screening:

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Information Management and Privacy Impact Assessments

[\\ntsp2010web\DavWWWRoot\sites\Projects\ps\DigitalFirst\DigitalCouncil\Information Management and Privacy Impact Assessments Appendix.docx](#)