HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resources Committee

Date: 8th September 2022

Report Title: **Digital Strategy & High-Level Implementation Plan**

Report By: Depute Chief Executive

1.   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report brings to members the proposed Digital Strategy for the Highland Council. It represents a significant update to the current approach as set out in the Digital Ambition 2020 and seeks to build on excellent examples of digital delivery that have been implemented to date. The pandemic has shown us, more than ever the power of digital to transform how, as an organisation, we can deliver services. Our citizens, staff, members, pupils have all evidenced an incredible ability to adapt and embrace digital technology. We must now look to take that positive momentum forward and more broadly integrate digital as a fundamental part of the Councils organisational change and improvement activity.

The Digital Strategy sets out a vision of what sort of organisation we want the Council to be, what we need to put in place to support that change and a delivery framework for specific digital projects in service areas. It is not setting out a finite programme of digital projects, but it does list some projects that are either already underway or in discussion. A rolling programme of work will develop as the strategy is implemented.

1.2   Clarity is needed on what the terms "ICT" and "Digital" mean to the Council. Various definitions exist, but for the purposes of The Highland Council, the following meanings have been adopted:

Digital – means *the use of technology to modernise and transform the way services are delivered*. This is an all-encompassing definition that covers the people and process aspects as well as the technology itself. It is as much about a new way of thinking about service delivery as it is about technology. Digital transformation begins and ends with how we think about and engage with the customers and users of the services.

ICT – means the *day-to-day provision of technology to allow Council services to be delivered*. This technology, and the support and management of it, is critical for service delivery but on its own it does not provide direct benefit. ICT is one the components, alongside people and processes, that enable services to be delivered.

1.3 The Forward and Executive Summary in the Strategy document provide a good overview and summary of the strategy; this report therefore will not look to repeat these.

1.4 The reimagining of business in the Digital Age is Digital Transformation, it transcends traditional organisational structures. Digital is much broader than digitising records or recreating existing business process using technology, it is as much about a different way of thinking as it is to do with technology. As such, this Strategy focuses on laying the foundations that will allow the Council to meaningfully progress digital, with a focus on people and processes as well as the practical actions required for its implementation.

1.5 The Strategy has been developed with support from the Local Government Digital Office for Scotland, is aligned to the National Digital Strategy for Scotland and is based on best practice as set out by Audit Scotland in their key characteristic for a digital council.

1.6 Alignment with other strategies; The Digital Strategy does not stand alone, there are interdependencies with the Council approach to technology, data, information, and business intelligence. Recognising those interdependencies, the Digital Strategy is presented as part of a package that also includes a new ICT Strategy and Information Management Strategy. The ICT Strategy sets the overall direction for the development of the ICT infrastructure and the service to meet the Council's future needs. The Information Management Strategy details how we will ensure data is managed effectively, securely and in line with legislation

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

1. Agree the Digital Strategy & associated High Level Implementation Plan

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource**. Implementation of the foundations outlined in the Strategy should largely be achieved through existing resources with the right support from leadership teams and engagement with our people across the organisation. This includes formal and informal roles to support digital and will require some realignment of job roles.

Digital implementation projects resulting from Service engagement will most likely require additional temporary staff resources and external costs for ICT systems. These costs will have to be considered as part of the business case of any new project, with funding options assessed alongside the financial benefits.

3.1.1 **Digital Champions -** A network of Digital Champions is proposed to provide peer to peer support. These would not be additional roles but based on existing staff dedicating a small amount of time each week to help others. Best practice taken from other organisations with a Digital Champions Network has shown they work best where people volunteer to join as opposed to being nominated by line management.

3.1.2 **Digital Hub –** A centre of excellence for digital, working with to services as they integrate digital and data into service plans and supporting operational delivery of these plans. The Digital Hub will also leverage key strategic suppliers such as Microsoft, maximising this investment in our current technology and capability. It will connect more closely with key partners such as the Local Government Digital Office for

Scotland connecting Services with opportunities to adopt best practice and providing opportunities to develop digital skills. This resource can be created through existing budgets and augmentation of the existing ICT & Digital Delivery Team

3.2 **Legal**. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** Digital has the power to support significant improvements to both service delivery and community engagement. The needs of our citizens will be at the heart of change & improvement activity with digital inclusion will be key to this. Approach to Service design will be based on best practice, as set out in the Scottish Approach to Service Design. Serving the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities is of paramount importance, we appreciate the advantages, benefits, and specific requirements for face-to-face interaction, we also recognise the role of digital in achieving better outcomes for our citizens through improving the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services.

3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever.** The Council has already benefitted from the use of digital technologies to support climate change and carbon reduction initiatives for example, reducing the requirement for travel. With the adoption of more remote and blended working, further benefits continue to be seen. There are projects underway that continue to support climate change and carbon reduction for example, the provision of e-billing for Council Tax scheduled to go live later this year, reducing the requirement to print. It is also understood that carbon reduction and achieving the corporate ambition for a carbon neutral Highlands by 2025 will come through societal change. Digital offers the opportunity to engage with communities more effectively, through different applications and social media to promote this change, ICT & Digital Teams will work in collaboration with the Carbon Clever Team to evaluate and implement these.

3.5 **Risk**. The risk to the Council not meeting its corporate priorities will be reduced through the approval and implementation of this strategy. Digital offers a significant opportunity to drive efficiency, reduce cost and improve outcomes for our citizens and our people. The development and adoption of digital technologies does, in itself, of course carry some inherent risks, for example, with regards to security and data but assurance is given to members that these are developed in line with industry best practice and the relevant expertise of our ICT Team & suppliers.

3.6 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4.   An Informed Approach

4.1 The Strategy has been developed in conjunction with a wide range of best practice and stakeholder engagement as detailed further below.

4.2 **The National Context –** The Digital Strategy is aligned with the national digital strategy for Scotland (A Changing Nation – How Scotland will thrive in a digital world). The national strategy was co-authored by central government and the Local Government Digital Office. The national strategy built upon the on the findings of Audit Scotland with regard to progressing digital and of particular relevance are the key characteristics identified for developing a digital council which are:

- Digital Leadership
- User Focused

- Digital Workforce
- Collaborative
- Technology & Data Enabled
- Innovative

The Council's Digital Project Team have worked closely with the Local Government Digital Office in developing the Councils Digital Strategy and, in particular, the Council's Digital Maturity Assessment.

4.3 **Digital Maturity Assessment** (DMA) In 2022 the Council, in conjunction with the Digital Office for Local Government conducted its second Digital Maturity Assessment. The assessment is founded on a recognised approach by Gartner and is designed to evidence the progression of digital within an organisation as well as the actions required to further develop its digital maturity. It involved significant input from the Council's Executive and Senior Leadership teams. Scoring is based on 1-5 rating with 1 being low, the Council scored a 3 showing improvement from 2 when the first assessment was carried out in 2017. As such, this Assessment has played a significant role in shaping our Digital Strategy and the actions required to implement it (Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy)

4.4 **Staff Survey –** In 2021 a staff survey was carried out to

1. To gather the views of staff regarding Digital Transformation
2. To gather ideas from staff for how might use Digital Transformation to transform services
3. To understand the digital skills within our organisation, identify any gaps

4.5 The questions were based on best practice established by the SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations).

There were 1912 respondents to the survey, it is recognised that the majority of these were office-based staff, efforts were made to reach non-office-based staff with limited success. It is understood in general that engagement of these staff needs to be improved with HR taking this forward.

Key findings evidenced a good foundation for digital skills and for well used Microsoft applications such as Word & Excel, confidence levels did however drop away sharply when looking at applications such as SharePoint and data analytic tools such as PowerBI. They also showed that staff were keen to be part of a Digital Champions Network.

Actions resulting from the survey findings form key elements of the implementation plan. Some of these are already being taken forward already, with the Digital Project Team working collaboratively with HR on the corporate approach being taken to workforce planning, with Digital Data & Technology Skills (DDaT) being an integral part of the wider approach. We have also, again in conjunction with HR, specifically Learning & Development, sought to provide additional learning opportunities for digital and expect to make these available in September 2022 alongside the re-launch of the Councils Learning Management System.

Valuable insight was also gained from the respondents about progressing digital within Services, which are being taken forward as part of the implementation activity.

4.6   In informing the strategy and developing the approach, the Project Team have engaged with a wide range of other organisations including other local authorities, SOCITM (Society for innovation, technology and modernisation) which is, the professional network for leaders engaged in innovation technology and the modernisation of public services as well as the SCVO

5.   Implementation

5.1   In line with best practice, and fundamental to the successful implementation of the strategy, will be a change in approach in how digital projects are delivered. Historically, digital development has progressed well, but this has not been across all Services. To build from where we are now requires a far broader adoption of the responsibility for digital across the organisation. Digital can no longer being seen as a bolt on activity but an integral part of the corporate approach to service planning and workforce planning with Digital Leadership, Executive sponsorship and Member support being key.

5.2   Implementation of the strategy is structured around putting in place the Foundations required to enable success and the Digital Projects that will deliver changes to specific service areas. These projects will be added to reflect the Council's priorities and the outcomes identified in Service Plans. The high-level implementation plan summarises the key focus areas and themes, what the strategy means for different stakeholder groups, as well as the wide range of ongoing and implementation initiatives. A number of these initiatives are underway, being taken forward by the Digital Project Team in collaboration with other Services, as well as specific project teams for operational improvement, such as the Connected Customer Programme.

5.3   The Digital Project Team was established to create a digital strategy and high-level implementation plan and the Project is due to complete once these things have been established. With the creation of the Digital Hub, it is likely that some resource aligned to project will transition into the Digital Hub ensuring there is continuity for the initiatives underway and that planned activity, post approval of the Strategy, can start in earnest.

6.   Governance

6.1   Project governance has been through the Digital Transformation Board. It is intended once the Strategy is approved, with Digital Transformation playing a key role in the Councils wider change and improvement activity that governance and oversight will be provided through the Change & Improvement Board.

6.2   Delivery of the strategy will be the responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive with progress reports going to the Change & Improvement Board and Corporate Resources Committee as appropriate.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive
Date: 5th August 2022
Author: Daniel Scott, ICT & Digital Transformation Manager (Delivery)

![The Highland Council · Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd]

Digital Strategy 2022

Ro-innleachd Dhidseatach

Photo: Inverness Castle, Ewen Weatherspoon

Photo: Richard Sawicki

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Foreword

"Digital Technology is transforming the way people live their lives across Scotland" National Digital Strategy 2021

We live in a Digital Age, in which a large percentage of the population interacts digitally with their banks, shop online and are familiar with self-service online, at a time when it's convenient to them.

We can already see that Digital solutions are empowering our staff and enabling our organisation to deliver positive outcomes for citizens of Highland and our people. New Ways of Working have been adopted and continue to evolve with Services actively utilising digital platforms to collaborate daily.

To build on the successes achieved to date, digital needs to become an integral part of our approach to organisational development with strong leadership, sufficient funding and resources.

Digital as an enabler

Serving the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities is of paramount importance, we appreciate the advantages, benefits, and specific requirements for face-to-face interaction, we also recognise the role of digital in achieving better outcomes for our citizens and our people through improving the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of services.

Digital has an ever-increasing role to play in the delivery of Council operations; we encourage our people to develop their digital skills and understand that digital needs to be an integral part of how we approach the delivery of services. As a leader I believe it is important to act as a role model for digital transformation and I am keen to develop my own digital skills.

Digital Inclusion

Covid has further highlighted digital exclusion that can result from different levels of access to digital devices, skills, and connectivity, both within our communities and the Council. This Digital strategy will focus on reducing this divide and through the provision of the right solutions, will release resources for those circumstances where digital delivery does not meet the need.

The Highland Council recognises the importance of understanding the needs of its people and communities. It is essential that they are involved in the design of products and services, a user-focused approach will be central to service design and improvement.

Photo: Inverness Castle, Ewen Weatherspoon

We recognise the key factors in achieving this: a dedicated team to support digital development throughout the Council, looking outwards and learning from others and the responsibility for digital being broadly adopted across the organisation. The transformation of services will happen over time through incremental development, the Council must not be afraid to be innovative and try new things, accepting that not all will succeed, building a culture that is creative and encourages some qualified risk taking to deliver better outcomes.

A Collaborative Approach

The Digital Strategy does not stand alone, it is aligned with our ICT Strategy and approach to utilising data to drive insight and improvement. These in turn are aligned with our corporate priorities and are adaptable as these priorities change over time.

In developing the Digital Strategy we have worked closely with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, looked to identify best practice and sought the views of our staff, all of which has provided valuable insight in helping us to shape our approach and plans to implement our strategy.

I look forward to seeing us continue to develop as an organisation that thrives in the Digital Age, working smarter and making the Highland's a better place to live, work and grow.

Kate Lackie
Depute Chief Executive & Executive Chief Officer for Digital Transformation

Photo: Ullapool (THC)

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Executive Summary

This Digital Strategy is designed to be achievable. It has been created with its implementation in mind, with clear focus and key themes. It has been informed by a broad range of activity to ensure it is based on recognised best practice. This includes a Digital Maturity Assessment (measuring how well the Council is making use of digital technology) carried out in conjunction with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, requiring input from all the Council's Executive and Senior Leadership Teams. It also included surveys of our staff and elected members to assess current levels of digital skills as well as learning from a variety of other public sector bodies.

The Strategy is fully aligned with recommendations from Audit Scotland who set out six key characteristics of a digital Council in 2021, on which the National Digital Strategy for Scotland (A Changing Nation: How Scotland will thrive in a digital world) is based.

This Digital Strategy supports the organisations requirements to effectively operate in a challenging environment and continue to deliver high quality services in an ever-changing world. Understanding that Digital transformation begins and ends with how we think about, and engage with, the user and not technology is key. For the purpose of the strategy 'Users' are defined both as internal and external to the Council. Seeing both our people and citizens as customers of a service whether the service is delivered externally or internally.

The reimagining of business in the Digital Age is Digital Transformation, it transcends traditional organisational structures. Digital is much broader than digitising records or recreating existing business process using technology, it is as much about a different way of thinking as it is to do with technology. As such, this Strategy focuses on laying the foundations that will allow the Council to meaningfully progress digital, including the practical actions required for its implementation. This includes the development and co-ordination of Service led plans for digital development, supported by a centre of expertise, and it's at this next level of planning we expect to see a range a business led projects. A number of these are already underway and are set out in the High-Level Implementation Plan (appendix 3).

"Digital transformation is 80% about the people and ways of working and 20% about the technology."
The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government - Highland Council's Digital maturity assessment 2022

Actions to implement the strategy will require leadership support, resource, and collaboration. This includes upskilling staff and freeing up resources to ensure no-one is left behind, utilising data to drive business intelligence and insight that support the design and delivery of technology enabled services.

These actions sit under the three areas of focus:

Lead Digital   **Think Digital**   **Do Digital**

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And three USER-focused themes for Delivery:

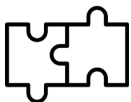**People**   **Insight**   **Design**

Strategy Outcomes

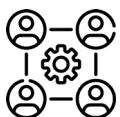1. Our citizens and our people are at the heart of service design and development .

2. Digital & Data and Technology (DDAT) skills and development are a core part of workforce planning.

3. Digital is an integral part of Service Planning and delivery.

4. Elected Members are supported in the development of digital skills.

5. Core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital.

6. Digital is sponsored by the Council's Executive leadership Team and is a core component of the Authority's organisational development journey

7. Established and accessible Digital Champions Network in place.

8. A Business Intelligence and Data-informed, collaborative cross service approach is adopted throughout day-to-day operations.

9. The Council has an agile Digital Strategy that continues to evolve and improve with active monitoring and adoption of new technology, innovation, and skills development.

10. The Council's Digital Maturity reaches Level 5 on the Gartner Model* by 2027.

Note: Actions to achieve the outcomes can be found in section DO DIGITAL, page 20
*Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) carried out in conjunction with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government as further detailed in the Introduction on page 7. The full results of the DMA are set out in Appendix 1.

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Digital refers to the use of technology to modernise and transform the way Council services are delivered and support staff wellbeing.

Transformation is the process of using digital technologies to create new, or modify existing business processes, culture, and customer experiences to meet changing business and citizen needs. It is achieved through development over time.

The Highland Council's Digital Strategy must be one that everyone understands and can easily be part of as inclusivity and collaboration are essential to its successful implementation.

This Digital Strategy is founded on the National Digital Strategy for Scotland's approach, and, recommendations from Audit Scotland on the six key characteristics of a digital council. In 2022 the Council, in conjunction with the Digital Office for Local Government, conducted its second Digital Maturity Assessment (Appendix 1). The assessment is founded on a recognised approach by Gartner and is designed to evidence the progression of digital within an organisation as well as the actions required to further develop its digital maturity. Scoring is based on 1-5 rating with 1 being low, the Council scored a 3 showing improvement from 2 when the first assessment was carried out in 2017. As such, this Assessment has played a significant role in shaping our Digital Strategy and the actions required to implement it.

The Digital Ambition Implementation plan set out in 2020 has driven digital solutions to support delivery throughout Education, Planning, Housing, Waste, and the Council now has a new Customer Relationship Management system in place.

> **"We need to ensure we keep pace with ambition as we transform and progress. We need to ensure we keep backing this up with appropriate resources."**
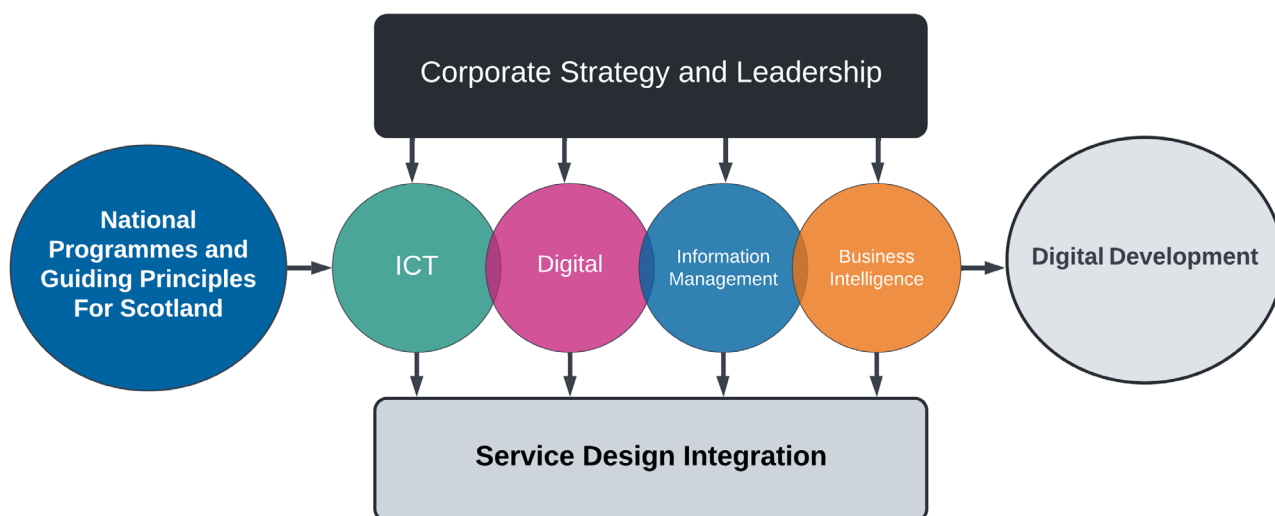> **Staff Quote – THC Digital Maturity Assessment 2022**

This strategy sets out the next phase of digital development for the Council with key areas of focus and realistic goals that can be delivered throughout the organisation.

A joined-up, cross service collaborative approach, recognising that Digital does not sit on the periphery of service plans and service re-design. In order for the Council to maximise the potential that digital offers, LEAD, THINK, DO digital must be fully integrated within daily operational practice, led by services, supported by a core team and sponsored by our Executive Leadership Team.

Digital, ICT, Data and Information Management

It is important to make a distinction between Digital, ICT, Data and Business Intelligence Insight. There are inter-connections across the respective strategies with implementation plans being developed for each. Each strategy links back to, and is in alignment with relevant National themes, characteristics, and guiding principles.

Collaborative implementation of Strategies-a Joined-Up Approach

Corporate Strategy and Leadership

National Programmes and Guiding Principles For Scotland

ICT

Digital

Information Management

Business Intelligence

Digital Development

Service Design Integration

What is Digital and how does it differ from ICT?

The reimagining of business in the digital age is digital transformation. It transcends traditional organisational structures. Digital transformation begins and ends with how we think about, and engage with, customers. Digital is as much about a different way of thinking as it is to do with technology.

What is Information & Communication Technology (ICT)?

ICT refers to the day-to-day provision of technology to allow Council services to be delivered.

Although there is no single, universal definition of ICT, the term is generally accepted to mean all devices, networking components, applications and systems that combined allow people and organisations to interact in the digital world.
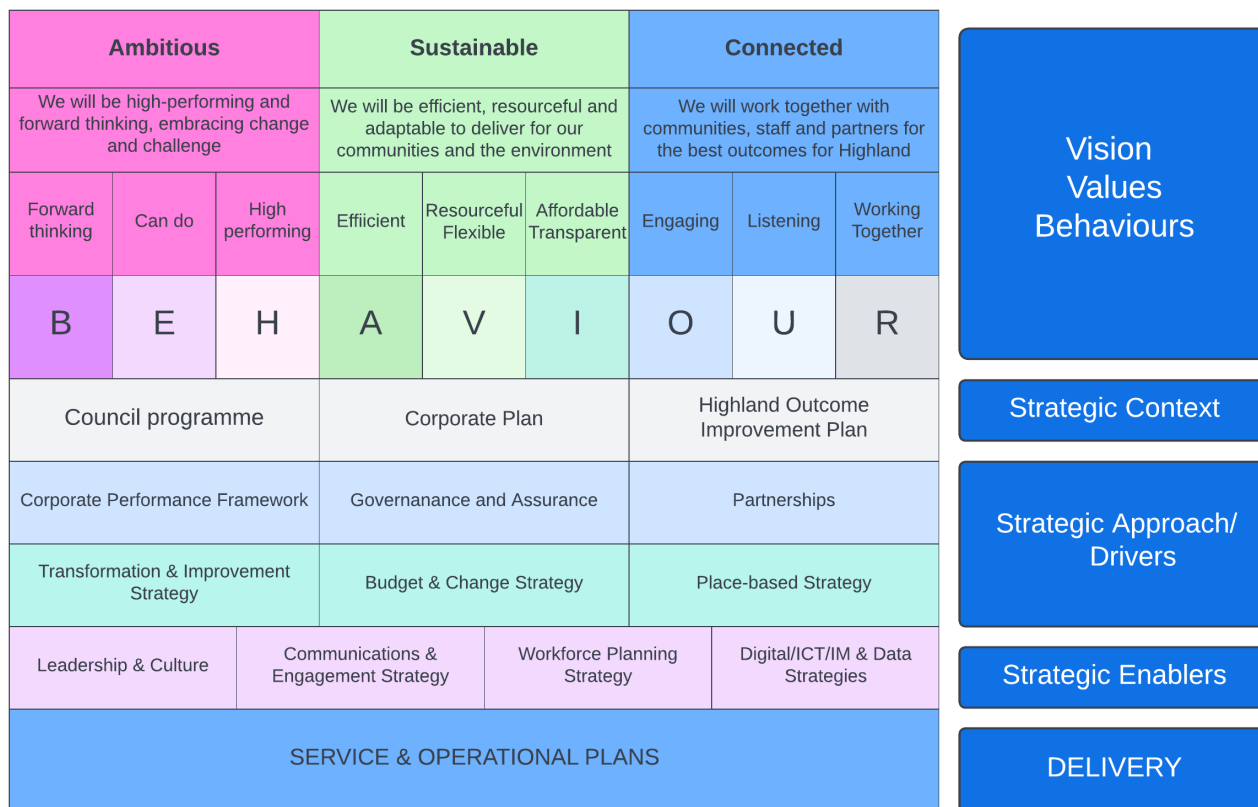
What is Business Insight, Data, and Information Management?

Good Business Intelligence and insight is essential to the daily operations of any organisation. The data we use comes from a wide range of sources, including the way citizens access services, the number of people that live in a specific area, our assets, our staff and where they work.
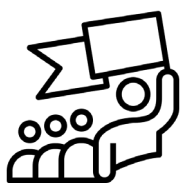
Accurate Data allows the council to produce the information it needs to make informed decisions. This insight helps the council to understand service demand and can help to ensure an effective and cost-efficient service is provided. Data can be generated in many formats including structured data from IT systems, databases, and spreadsheets to more unstructured data such as internet cookies, online analytics, and shared content.

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Information management is about getting the right information in the right format to the right people at the right time in the right place. Good information management and accurate data helps to produce positive outcomes for our citizens and our people.

Digital Strategy position within the Highland Council's Organisational Framework

Ambitious			Sustainable			Connected		
We will be high-performing and forward thinking, embracing change and challenge			We will be efficient, resourceful and adaptable to deliver for our communities and the environment			We will work together with communities, staff and partners for the best outcomes for Highland		
Forward thinking	Can do	High performing	Effiicient	Resourceful Flexible	Affordable Transparent	Engaging	Listening	Working Together
B	E	H	A	V	I	O	U	R
Council programme			Corporate Plan			Highland Outcome Improvement Plan		
Corporate Performance Framework			Governanance and Assurance			Partnerships		
Transformation & Improvement Strategy			Budget & Change Strategy			Place-based Strategy		
Leadership & Culture		Communications & Engagement Strategy		Workforce Planning Strategy		Digital/ICT/IM & Data Strategies		
SERVICE & OPERATIONAL PLANS								

Vision
Values
Behaviours

Strategic Context

Strategic Approach/ Drivers

Strategic Enablers

DELIVERY

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Photo: 'Portree' by Skye Photo Centre

Vision

Digital Transformation is recognised as an integral part of the Council's organisational development and is consistently aligned with the corporate vision for the Highland Council and is supported by strong leadership.

It is enabled by an engaged, valued and committed staff with a transformative digital culture where people take pride in constantly learning and evolving to meet customer needs.
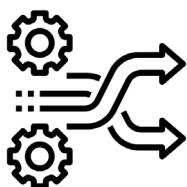
Digital Tools and transformative digital solutions are integrated throughout the organisation. This is evident across all services.

Digital is led and owned by services teams, supported, and enabled by a dedicated Digital team and powered by ICT.

Photo: 'Bettyhill' by THC

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A Digital Highland Council

Delivering change requires a culture of collaboration and innovation, aligned strategies, utilising best practice, engaged and informed elected members, as well as effective governance.

It is through a joined-up approach with other related strategies and plans, such as ICT & Business Intelligence, aligning with the national approach, utilising best practice and focusing on the key themes of LEAD, THINK & DO Digital, that this strategy lays the foundations that can support and enable the overall vision for digital in Highland Council.

Alignment With Recognised Best Practice And The National Digital Strategy

The National Digital Strategy for Scotland 2021, 'A changing Nation how Scotland will thive in a Digital World', co-authored by Central Government and the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, as well as Audit Scotland's 'Digital Progress in Local Government' report, (dated January 2021) were key to developing the Council's own approach. By aligning at a national level, the Council is working in synergy with the National programme and implementing an approach that can be applied to the Council's priorities as these evolve over time.

Digital leadership	User focused	Digital workforce	Collaborative	Technology & data enabled	Innovative

Source: https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/digital-progress-in-local-government

These key characteristics formed the backbone of the National Strategy and its Principles which can be seen in the following diagram, further explanation of each of these principles as set out in National Strategy can be found in appendix 2.

- Inclusive, Ethical and User Focussed
- Digital Leadership and Culture
- Collaborative
- Data-Driven
- Technology-Enabled
- Innovative and Sustainable
- A Skilled Digital Workforce
- Secure By Design

Principles for a Digital Nation

Source: https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-changing-nation-how-scotland-will-thrive-in-a-digital-world/pages/principles-of-a-digital-nation/

Lead Digital

> "**Digital strategies are most effective when leaders champion change and staff are engaged**"
>
> **Audit Scotland January 2021**

An effective and efficient Digital Council communicates a clear digital vision and ambition. It creates an innovative and collaborative culture that drives change.

Digital requires sponsorship from the Chief Executive, and the Executive Leadership Team with support from Elected Members. Digital leadership will need to be developed, at all levels within the Council as part of an approach to drive broader adoption of the responsibility for it. The approach must be clearly defined, ensuring wide engagement across the organisation, with implementation of this strategy being driven by leaders in the teams delivering front-line services, with support from ICT, Digital, HR and Change teams.

Recommendation from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

"Work should be done with Elected Members to understand their role in Digital, Digital Skills Development Plans and the Digital Board—suggested use of Member Scrutiny checklist developed by Audit Scotland."

Insight Driven & Outcome Focused

A Digitally Mature Council understands the potential of people, data and digital technologies to transform services for citizens.

The Digital Transformation Project launched in 2021, developed and implemented activities to gather insight, data, and examples of best practice. These were designed to ensure that we are equipped with the knowledge and intelligence required to create and implement a sustainable and agile Digital Strategy that lays the foundations on which, as an organisation, we establish a continuous improvement approach to Digital Transformation.

The Digital Transformation Project has engaged internally and externally with the Digital Office Scotland, SOCITM and other local authorities across Scotland to create extensive insight into best practice. As a result of the Digital Transformation staff survey and the latest Digital Maturity Assessment, the Council is equipped with detailed feedback from staff. There is now momentum and further opportunity for engagement within the whole organisation to create a digital culture that is transformative and sustainable.

At the core of the Digital Strategy, and the development of digital within the Council, are the three themes – Ambitious, Sustainable, Connected.

Ambitious   **Sustainable**   **Connected**

Digital Maturity

Elements for success

People

Empowering our PEOPLE through digital, data and technology skills development, inclusivity, and accessibility to resources, learning pathways and tools.

Adopting an engaging and enthusiastic approach that is led by our services and supported by Digital, ICT, Transformation, HR, Learning & Development (and external partners, when required).

Enabling through support and equipping people with the right tools, skills, and technology, enabling day to day efficiency, and freeing up more time to ensure our people and members can carry out their respective roles in a healthy, pro-active, and sustainable way.

Insight

Driving a Data and Intelligence informed approach that provides the INSIGHT to understanding the evolving needs of our customers and our people. Ensuring that we have the skills required to effectively manage, and, utilise data, and, information, understanding the insight this provides can create broad opportunities to deliver better outcomes. Ensuring that services connect and collaborate utilising data to its maximum potential creating an environment that allows our people and services to openly share challenges and ideas and to co-develop and co-produce innovative solutions to old problems.

Design

Councils can no longer deliver services as they have always done. Service DESIGN should begin and with the customer's needs. With increasing budget pressures and rising demand, there is a need to find new ways of thinking to evolve services, working with partners, using new technologies, and empowering staff with skills to support these changes

In alignment with the recognised national approach, (the Scottish Approach to Service Design) the Council will strive to understand the needs of our people and our communities and involve them in the design of products and services. There will be a focus on outcomes, designing services from a user's perspective, rather than from an organisational perspective. The Council will design and deliver products and services that are inclusive, ethical, resilient and uphold people's digital rights.
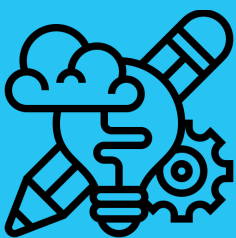
Think Digital

People

Digital Skills and Workforce Planning

Insight

Vision for Business Intelligence and Information & Governance Strategy

Design

User-Focused Service Design

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Photo: Tain, THC

People: Digital Skills and Workforce Planning

The Digital Transformation Staff Survey conducted late 2021 and the Digital Maturity Assessment, published along with this Strategy, have provided the organisation with broad insight into the Digital Maturity the Highland Council is currently operating within.

The advancement of Digital, Data & Technology skills should be an integral part of corporate workforce planning and organisational development. A user-focused approach with engagement and collaboration of internal and external stakeholders has gathered extensive feedback and suggestions from all areas of the Council. By understanding future requirements, the Council can effectively plan for the workforce of the future and continue to improve service delivery ensuring no one is left behind.

As the Council embraces the adoption of new ways of working, there is opportunity to continue the development of the way we work through training, support, and mentoring with a focus on maximising the benefits from investment in our current technology. For example: Digital Champions can support the adoption and use of underutilised functionality within our Microsoft Platform, creating a community of support with a range of digital skills that are easily accessible and inclusive. An effective Digital Champions Network can work across all levels of the Council and this approach has a proven track record of creating a positive impact with great feedback from staff. Good examples of how this can work effectively can be seen at Dundee Council, Aberdeen City Council and North Ayrshire Council.

Resource & Support

Digital offers the opportunity for simple solutions to be put in place that solve complex business issues, delivering outcomes that save time and enable Services to free up resources for the people and communities who need it the most. It will be a key enabler in allowing the Council to operate effectively within a challenging operating environment.

To achieve this, we need to resource and support digital. The information gathered from other local authorities and the Scottish Government evidence that the Council could derive great benefits through the creation of an internal Digital team. Designed to drive forward digital maturity and support Council wide innovation. Operating as an enabler, championing the integration of digital solutions that will enable the Council to meet its priorities. Working in collaboration with ICT, HR and frontline Services to support a thriving Digital Culture with Citizens and our people at the heart of the approach.

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Findings from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

"Digital technology has become a lifeline, allowing the continued delivery of public services, often to the most vulnerable in society. Its use has also exposed the risk of digital exclusion – not having the skills or resources to access vital public services, maintain learning, and stay connected with others, this includes those that work for our public service organisations."

"Digital transformation is 80% about the people and ways of working and 20% about the technology. **Maximising on the technology currently available, such as the MS365 platform. Identifying skills gaps of the workforce and understanding the needs for the future workforce.**"

"Equipping staff with Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) skills and specialists to reimagine service delivery will be key to delivering future services to offer the best possible outcomes for residents, the economy and those who work for the Council. THC operates in a very tight budget envelope so growing the skills of internal teams and careful workforce planning for the modern workplace will be required to keep pace with the changing digital world."

Recommendation from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

"Opportunities to implement and grow a Digital Champion network and provide essential skills training will be beneficial, the council is a participant in Connecting Scotland. Analysis of the Digital Skills of the workforce taking a systematic approach to the analysis is crucial to progressing in this area along with embedding digital skills into personal development from the point of recruitment."

"We seem to be Digital First in infrastructure but Digital First in skills needs to be maintained and enhanced."

Staff Quote
THC Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

Insight

Insight: Information Management and Data Strategy

Overview

Developing a digital and data-centric, data informed organisation, is essential to the successful transformation of Council operations. As a data informed organisation, and in line with the National Digital Strategy for Scotland, the Council understands the transformational role that data can play in increasing transparency, empowering communities, transforming products and services, fuelling innovation, and improving outcomes. A Digitally mature Council will use data and insight effectively to increase understanding and drive efficiencies throughout services.

The Information Management Strategy & Vision for Business Intelligence are being developed with approaches being defined in alignment both with National guidance and the overall Digital Strategy. The respective teams will continue to work together ensuring continued alignment, between these interconnecting approaches along with the ICT Strategy.

Growing as an ethical digital nation and developing trust in the way we use data and apply digital technology is a collective responsibility"

National Digital Strategy for Scotland

"Digitally mature councils have digital strategies with a focus on data"

Audit Scotland Report, 2021.

Findings from Digital Maturity Assessment 2021/2022 facilitated by Digital Office

"Opportunities around user focused design and the use of data was a key theme by respondents in the latest Digital Maturity Assessment as next steps in the digital transformation journey. Looking at how can data be utilised better. There is currently no single unified data tracker. There is huge potential for data intelligence and modelling."
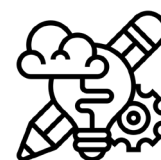
Design: User-focused Service Design

Overview

For the Council to now further progress digital it must become integrated into the way we approach service delivery, improvement, and design. Digital now requires far broader responsibility for it to be adopted across the organisation, it cannot be a bolt on approach or driven solely by a small core team. The customer must be at the heart of service design with the Council adopting a balanced approach based on the people who do the work, the processes that underpin the work and the technology used to enable it.

The Council will put the needs of people first when designing user services with 'Users' defined both as internal and external to the Council. This will involve seeing both our people and citizens as customers of a service, whether the service is delivered to the outside world or purely internal.

The continued development of user-focused services, delivered through service planning and respective programmes for change and improvement activity, will allow the Council to create a seamless and joined-up approach to meeting requirements in an intelligent and effective way. It will also lead to increased satisfaction from customers which increases take up of digital solutions which, in turn, can lead to efficiencies and savings.

Collaboration

Councils provide a broad range of services which can be accessed and delivered in different ways. Services should work together to understand problems, collaborating to ensure our citizens and our people can access services effectively and efficiently.

Significant improvements and efficiencies can be achieved through developing our internal processes, using end to end digital delivery with human intervention as required to manage exceptions. A focus on collaboration across service areas and partners will lead to improvements in information sharing, accountability, and service delivery and maximising the benefits that can be achieved for the whole organisation.

Data Informed

A data informed approach will allow the Council to develop and evolve, based on the information it holds. Establishing a more co-ordinated approach to data will support the insight required for the Council to make informed, sustainable, and impactful re-design improvements.

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Citizen Engagement

The Council and its services, in alignment with the National Digital Strategy for Scotland, can use digital technology to facilitate better citizen engagement and participation, further developing approaches such as online consultation. This will ensure that citizens can play an increased role in decision making in the issues that matter to them.

Service-Led Implementation

Digital Technology can provide the tools and enable the flow of data. However, real improvement can only be achieved through Service led re-design and implementation. It is critical that business processes and required outcomes must be fully understood before re-design activity commences. Data and Intelligence, with insight coming from human experience and expertise will support Services to make informed decisions and implement improvements to service design including the improved integration of processes and associated flow of data. It is also important that service and operational plans consider how digital technology can contribute to furthering their respective ambitions and goals.

Digital by Default, Human by Design

Findings from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

"When discussing challenges, the single biggest challenge facing The Highland Council that most respondents highlighted was the availability of resources and finances to deliver on ambitions and maximise the opportunities of digital especially as move away from crisis mode responding to the pandemic and into renewal."

Recommendation from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022

Service plans with a digital focus
"Current service plans do not have a sufficient digital focus. With the insourcing of ICT delivery providing closer relationships between ICT, Digital Transformation and service teams it is recommended that service planning processes are updated to allow a more significant reference to digital as an enabler. Mechanisms to be created to link service plans and outcomes with corporate goals, particularly around digital."

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Overview

The Digital Transformation Project has sought to continue the Council's digital journey and in creating the Digital Strategy is laying the foundations for the next stage of development and implementation. The Council is now equipped with knowledge and insight, with guidance and direction from the National programme and a Digital Strategy that sets the direction for the journey ahead. To ensure the Strategy can be implemented, resources will be put in place to continue implementation, supporting and enabling the whole organisation to thrive in the Digital Age.

The Strategy will be delivered through a set of activities as set out in the High-Level Implementation Plan (Appendix 3). This includes the work required to build our organisational capability for digital, as well as initiatives for operational improvement, which will grow and change over time as digital becomes embedded in Service planning.

The Digital Implementation Plan will follow the guiding principles of the National Digital Strategy for Scotland with a collaborative and engaging approach to the implementation of the three key themes of LEAD, THINK & DO DIGITAL, as set out through this document.

The approach will focus on sustainability and governance, communication and engagement, secure design and data security, ongoing review, measurement, including benefits realisation. With technology advancing continuously, the approach should also be agile and adaptive to meet the changing needs of our people, our citizens, and the world around us.

Photo: Shieldeg KJF

Digital Maturity – Five Year Outcome
Based on Gartner Digital Maturity model 2021
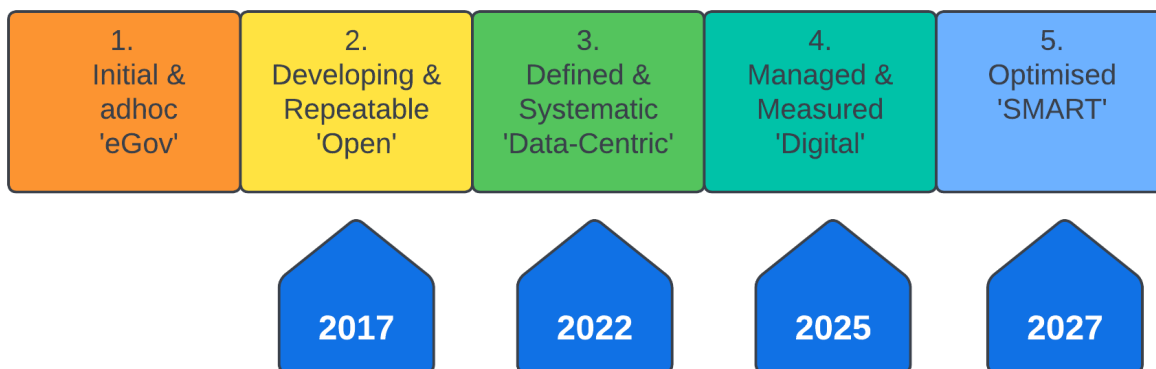
1. Initial & adhoc 'eGov'	2. Developing & Repeatable 'Open'	3. Defined & Systematic 'Data-Centric'	4. Managed & Measured 'Digital'	5. Optimised 'SMART'

2017 **2022** **2025** **2027**

Outcomes

1. Our citizens and our people are at the heart of service design and development.

2. Digital & Data and Technology (DDAT) skills and development are a core part of workforce planning.
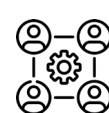
3. Digital is an integral part of Service Planning and delivery.

4. Elected Members are supported in the development of digital skills.

5. Core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital.

6. Digital is sponsored by the Council's Executive leadership Team and is a core component of the Authority's organisational

7. Established and accessible Digital Champions Network in place.

8. A Business Intelligence and Data-informed, collaborative cross service approach is adopted throughout day-to-day operations.

9. The Council has an agile Digital Strategy that continues to evolve and improve with active monitoring and adoption of new technology, innovation, and skills development.

10. The Council's Digital Maturity reaches Level 5 on the Gartner Model* by 2027.

Delivery

As a result of the Digital Maturity Assessment Final Report published by the Digital Office and the Highland Council Digital Transformation Staff Survey findings, the Council will deliver the following actions.

1.   DIGITAL SKILLS & CORPORATE WORKFORCE PLANNING
•   The Council will create a Digital Hub as part of a wider Organisational Development approach, with the authority, remit, time, and specialist skills required to drive effective change.
•   The Council will create a Digital and Data Skills Development Programme integrated into Service-Led workforce plans, supported and in collaboration with HR, Learning & Development, and ICT.
•   A Highland Council Digital Champions Community Programme will be launched.
•   Staff will be supported and enabled through upskilling, training, and development opportunities.
•   Staff will have the right tools and technology, supported by clearly defined requirements and outcomes. Identified through working with services to look at the provision of different devices or new requirements, depending on the business need.
•   Members will be supported through digital training and equipped with the right tools and technology to operate efficiently

2.   BUSINESS INSIGHT & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
•   The Council will implement an Information Management & Data Strategy.
•   The Council will produce a Business Intelligence Vision.
•   A sustainable approach to identifying clear ownership and stewardship of data in alignment with the recommendations within National Digital Strategy and Audit Scotland recommendations will be put in place.

3.   USER-FOCUSED SERVICE DESIGN
•   User-focused Service Plans will be driven forward with supporting Implementation plans.
•   Ownership and accountability for the implementation of digital projects are to sit with each of the Council's Services, aligned with this Strategy and supported as required by ICT & Digital Services.

Resource & Implementation

•   The Council will resource a dedicated team to run the Digital Hub
•   A structured and sustainable approach to engaging and working with strategic partners, led by the Digital Hub to support best practice, insight and access to technology and innovation opportunities
•   The vision for Business Intelligence, due to published Autumn 2022 is adopted by all Services supported by Corporate Performance, HR, ICT & Digital Teams, who will act as a facilitating resource, reporting progress directly into the Executive Leadership team, ensuring alignment with Corporate Plan.

- Service Plans will be supported by a Digital Team who will provide guidance, best practice insight, framework and roadmap templates, engagement and communications support and facilitation of relationships with internal teams, suppliers, and strategic partners.
- Resource pressures can make it difficult to give staff the time and space needed to explore new ways of doing things and test things out.

Innovation:

"People need to be outward looking and be given the space and time to innovate."

Audit Scotland 'Digital Progress in Local Government', 2021.

Measurement, Accountability and Governance

As mentioned above, the delivery of the Digital Strategy will be achieved via the actitivies set out in the High-Level Implementation Plan (appendix 3). These will be further supported, as required, by the development of detailed, operational delivery plans, with operational improvement activities growing and changing over time as digital becomes embedded in service planning.

The High-Level Implementation Plan shows digital initiatives already in progress across several areas, that will deliver real benefits to the citizens of Highland and our people.

Progress will be reported to the Corporate Resource Committee with oversight, governance and direction being provided through the Council's Corporate Change & Improvement Board.

"Governance with board structure and prioritisation of projects should be renewed in line with the refreshed digital strategy, workforce plans and council renewal plans."
Digital Office 2021

Findings from Digital Maturity Assessment 2022
"The Digital Maturity Assessment findings also highlighted that focus is required on benefit realisation which would also support prioritisation. Benefit realisation must be outcome focused"

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Photo: Houses at Glencoe KJF

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

DIGITAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS

FINDINGS FROM THE DIGITAL MATURITY
ASSESSMENT OF
THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
(NOVEMBER 2021 - JANUARY 2022)

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SUMMARY AND RECOMENDATIONS

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the way we lived and worked, and how organisations operated, delivered public services and interacted with citizens was rapidly changing.

Since March 2020, the pace of that change has accelerated. Organisations have had to innovate and collaborate on a scale never seen before. Digital technology has become a lifeline, allowing the continued delivery of public services, often to the most vulnerable in society. Its use has also exposed the risk of digital exclusion – not having the skills or resources to access vital public services, maintain learning, and stay connected with others, this includes those that work for our public service organisations.

Digital transformation is **80%** about the people and ways of working and **20%** about the technology. Therefore, organisations should fundamentally rethink the approach taken to delivering services with people at the heart of this redesign and technology supporting new ways of working. Identifying skills gaps of the workforce and understanding the needs for the future workforce is also a priority.

Citizens today expect more transparent, accessible, and responsive services from the public sector and those expectations are rising. Councils must put the needs of people first when designing services. It is vital that the Council does not design and deliver services based on their own requirements, hierarchies and processes instead focus on the needs of the people they serve and importantly the outcomes. Service-led, service partnership, service design and user needs are a key focus and ambition for The Highland Council. Furthermore, there is a particular focus around up-skilling all staff across the organisation and linking to Council Plans and National Strategies.

Councils provide a myriad of different services, and these can often be accessed and delivered in many ways. We need services to work together to understand problems. By working together in a common way, they can design effective service journeys that help people out of a difficult situation as efficiently and effectively as possible. Prioritising effective collaboration across service areas and partners will lead to better information sharing, improved accountability and coordination on council-wide initiatives.

Equipping staff with Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) skills and specialists to reimagine service delivery will be key to delivering future services to offer the best possible outcomes for residents, the economy and those who work for the Council. The Highland Council operates in a very tight budget envelope so growing the skills of internal teams and careful workforce planning for the modern workplace will be required to keep pace with the changing digital world.

When discussing challenges, the single biggest challenge facing The Highland Council that most respondents highlighted was the availability of resources and finances to deliver on ambitions and maximise the opportunities of digital transformation especially as the Council moves away from crisis mode and into renewal.

Given its successful widespread roll out, there is now a consensus that remote working should be adopted for the long-term although recognised that more work needs to be done with the workforce ensuring that all staff have equitable access to the right tools for their ways of working and roles. Personas and work styles following engagement with the workforce would support this. Particular focus on frontline services such as Depot Workers, HSCP Workforce and Teaching Staff will need to be key priorities.

Generally, The Highland Council demonstrated a committed workforce with appetite to change, however this is difficult on top of day jobs. There is still more to be done to break down silo working, create space for tests of change, creativity and agility. There was a lot of focus on structures, processes and rules which can hamper digital transformation. There is some work to be done potentially using personas to understand software, hardware and training needs of all users as some reported barriers to accessing the right tools.

> We need to ensure we keep pace with ambition as we transform and progress. We need to ensure we keep backing this up with appropriate resources.

> The last 18 months have dragged everyone into a different space. Now we must build on and embrace.

> IT is a tool, digital is an attitude.

> We need to do more around service design. Public want things delivered and to work.

METHODOLOGY AND SPOTLIGHT

METHODOLOGY

A Senior Digital Office Assessor carried out a series of one-to-one interviews with Executive Chief Officers, across all services in The Highland Council between November 2021 and January 2022.

The purpose of the Digital Maturity Assessment was to determine current baseline for the digital leadership and transformation journey and to identify opportunities and appetite for change.

At the same time, an online survey was also sent to wider management groups which closed at the end of December 2021. There were **32** responses in total including the interviews. **6** focus groups were also held with key stakeholders, including High Life Highland, to understand service specific digital maturity in line with Audit Scotland's 6 characteristics of a Digital Council. There were **58** attendees at the focus groups.

The Digital Office combined the information and user research collected from all methods into this report to provide an overview, recommendations, insights and signposting details of the opportunities for The Highland Council.

CONFIDENCE LEVELS

Confidence levels of those assessed in relation to their understanding of how digital is transforming services and citizens expectations was above average. However, this varied from not at all confident to very high with most stating a generally high understanding of their own service areas with less understanding of wider Council transformational and strategic activity.

Only **25%** of those responded felt their understanding was low generally. As recommended above, greater engagement and communication corporately on what digital transformation can offer the workforce, communities and service areas would continue to strengthen confidence in this area.

SPOTLIGHT

There are key areas and initiatives in which the Council are progressing well on their Digital Maturity journey. It should also be noted the opportunities to amplify the work that is happening across The Highland Council and High Life Highland. Many cited there was not enough showcasing happening internally.

COUNCIL WIDE

LEARNING AND TEACHING
- Digital Strategy for learning in 2015, Google tenancy, equitable model, targeted on year groups for all devices.
- Digital refresh for staff (not everyone had a laptop, then moved to BYOD for 365 particularly).
- Google Classrooms for staff.
- Online Learning including Online Academy particularly transformative for vulnerable pupils.
- Every child for 121 devices from P6 to S6 (pre-pandemic 2020). Currently being extended to offer for each child from P1.
- Schools Hub (School SharePoint).
- Teachers delivering online teaching during lockdown using Google Classrooms.
- Every day at 3.30 Google Meet - 3rd Sector, parents, young people.

HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND
- Utilising High Life Highland to extend services across Highland.
- Online Music Tuition throughout pandemic – exemplar service delivery.
- In house development of solutions, commitment to digital across High Life Highland.

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE
- Conducting virtual citizen ceremonies. Held doing this initially as we thought they should be held face to face. However, we found that citizens love it so we now offer both. Virtual ceremonies are super-efficient, they can be set up in a day.
- Autumn 2019 roll out of laptops, roll out across the estate, we were able to adopt home working very quickly. Very fortunate that we were able to function immediately. Virtual planning committees ran from the onset. Second Council in Scotland to go live with this.

MICROSOFT 365 ADOPTION
- Microsoft 365 adoption, use of MS Teams and SharePoint.
- Hybrid working and ongoing approach to flexible and agile working.
- Microsoft Ideation sessions.
- Virtual and Hybrid Meetings for Council and Committees.

PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE

USE OF DATA
- It was highlighted that there was a good example of use of Power BI for taking datasets and spreadsheets and analysing complex data – including estates data and applications data, to work with this data and present informative dashboards to managers on homelessness. Opportunities to scale the use of data analytics underpinned by Power BI.

DIGITAL MATURITY
NOVEMBER 2017

The Highland Council underwent a Digital Maturity Assessment in November 2017, being one of the first Councils to participate in the Assessment. A number of one-to-one interviews were held with the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service over 4 days in November 2017 (25 staff). In addition, an online survey with Service Managers (36 respondents) was issued.

Whilst The Highland Council has made good progress in all areas, particularly in the last 18 months, some of the key recommendations around responding to customer needs, digital vision for service areas and digital skills remain. The Original Roadmap is outlined below.

	1. Initial & Adhoc	2. Developing & Repeatable	3. Defined & Systematic	4. Managed & Measured	5. Optimised
Digital Strategy and Benefits Realisation			Develop understanding for all managers that digital is more about changing processes and less about technology. Embed digital vision into planning structure so staff understand what direction is. Improve understanding of Council's vision amongst workforce.	Clarify role that digital services/ IT and improvement will fulfil. Agile decision making. Revise policies to drive more digital culture and develop clear goals and CMT process for decisions to escalate. Become more responsive to customer needs. Longer term investment plans.	
Digital Skills and Culture			Embed programme for empowering Frontline staff to make changes. Develop basic digital skills and buddy/champion system. Include as part of induction training and ongoing ERDs; make available digital training on a regular basis.	Retrain staff to develop digital, data and technology specialisms. Consider sharing model for niche roles. Focus on developing skills to use VC and work remotely. Develop self-serve and data skills across the Council.	
Capacity for Digital Transformation			Review change and improvement capacity (joint approach) and prioritise work at CMT level. Re-think services to be based on user needs. Ensure the design of self-service is intuitive.		Review technology implementation capacity and the value from the new contract. Prioritise areas such as remote working/ Skype and ensure escalations are taken to CMT. Enable more choice for staff on suitability of equipment.
Capacity for Digital Research and Innovation			Develop an innovation strategy to work out new ways to gain new thinking involving innovation centres, small businesses and other sectors. Consider innovation champions and a programme to embed approach across services.	Empower managers to invest time to re-think service delivery and adopt innovation solutions. Encourage the development of communities of interest and the involvement in Local Government Digital Partnership to gain best practice.	

digitaloffice.scot

DIGITAL MATURITY SCORE

Outlined in the table below is the Digital Maturity Model describing how this is applied over the 5 stages from **1 Initial & Adhoc (mainly transactional)** to **5 Optimised ("Smart").**

APPLYING MATURITY MODEL TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL STRATEGY

YOUR SCORE

3

Most Councils are in position 1, 2 or 3 on the Maturity Model overall and across the 4 pillars of the Maturity Assessment, they will have differing levels of maturity.

The Highland Council have scored a 3. This has improved from the first Digital Maturity Assessment carried out in 2017 which the Council received a 2.

5 Optimised "Smart"
- New "smart services" are enabled that are more targeted, proactive and personalised that enable early intervention/prevention;
- Decisions are increasingly automated (e.g. artificial intelligence).

4 Managed & Measured "Digital"
- Services designed around the customer;
- Greater use of (real-time and predictive) data analytics to reduce transaction volume;
- Seamless integration between partner organisations;
- Wide-spread use of smart devices (i.e. IoT);
- Focus on digital shifts from the Council to "place" and enabling community empowerment.

3 Defined & Systematic "Data-Centric"
- Data-centric approach to digitisation (e.g. data-driven service design);
- Corporate-wide systematic approach to digital service design and innovation;
- Initial use of data analytics to enable targeted and preventative services;
- Corporate approach to open data and data sharing;
- Initial use of smart devices (i.e. IoT) to provide real-time control, and real-time data.

2 Developing & Repeatable "Open"
- Advanced Online Services - reduction in manual activity underpinning online transactions;
- Mobility enable automated job scheduling, management and data capture;
- Greater transparency through repeatable approach to open data/shared data;
- Repeatable (and open) approach to digitising services (for example a channel strategy and service design) and innovation.

1 Inital and Adhoc "eGov"
- Basic online services for high volume transactions;
- Manual job scheduling, management and data capture;
- Limited access to data (e.g. open data/shared data);
- No consistent approach to digitising services.

ROADMAP

The table below provides examples of the typical characteristics of an organisation in levels 2, 3 or 4 of the Digital Maturity Model. This will assist with understanding the operating models needed for moving forward with becoming a digitally mature organisation.

Successful projects dedicate time from the outset to fully understand the challenges that need to be addressed. To do this, Councils will have to consider how to incorporate some flexibility and freedom into their change and improvement arrangements, to allow some of the early thinking and design work to take place. The Highland Council has a mature approach to agile service delivery, however a fixed monetary saving was seen as the key driver for implementing change rather than outcomes against wider strategies. Benefit realisation was identified from many as an area for improvement, particularly iterating and responding to benefit realisation to evolve transformation plans.

	2. Developing & Repeatable	3. Defined & Systematic	4. Managed & Measured	5. Optimised
Digital Strategy and Benefits Realisation	• Digital goals and objectives defined. • Digital principles defined. • Value of digital emerging amongst Senior Management team. • Digital is recognised as an enabled for transformation.	• Digital Strategy in place. • Roles and responsibilities for delivering the strategy are clear and understood. • Benefits are well-defined, understood. • Focused on audiences and their needs and emerging technologies.	• Digital Strategy implemented into departmental planning processes influencing organisational structure. • There is a clear roadmap for implementing digital. • Digital projects are governed in line with the Digital Strategy. • Benefits of digital are well-defined, measured/ tracked. • KPIs and benefits to the Council and customer understood, monitored and reported on.	
Digital Skills and Culture	• Some cross-organisational awareness of digital opportunities. • Silos breaking down and collaboration emerging. • There is an emerging approach to developing digital skills.	• There is a plan for developing basic and (relevant) advanced digital skills. • Staff understand the benefits and opportunities to them and customers of the Digital Strategy.	• All staff fully embrace the Digital Strategy and are driving cultural change. • These is an active programme of (basic and advanced) skills development and digital methods are widely adopted and monitored. • People have the training to fulfil their assigned roles and responsibilities for delivering for the Digital Strategy.	
Capacity for Digital Transformation	• Some cross-organisational awareness of digital opportunities. • Silos breaking down and collaboration emerging. • There is an emerging approach to developing digital skills.	• The relevant skills are widely available to deliver digital transformation. • Digital team embedded in organisational structure. • Digital Transformation Change Plan implemented.	• People have the resources to fulfil their assigned roles and responsibilities for delivering the Digital Strategy to meet customer needs. • Digital is fully integrated into organisational plans. People organised in teams around customers and customer functions. • The supply and demand of the required transformation skills is monitored. • The effectiveness of the delivery methods is monitored.	
Capacity for Digital Research and Innovation	• Exploring the impact of innovation and emerging technologies. • Research is done on a project case by case basis.	• Research is recognised as a core responsibility. • The potential for new and emerging use of digital technologies is explored. • All business functions are reviewed and prioritised for conversion to digital channels.	• Customer needs and expectations drive innovation in service delivery. • Experimentation is encouraged across all channels. • Research is embedded and is informing strategy. • Innovation is embedded into processes and culture, and is monitored.	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Digital Office have broadly outlined recommendations below. These are very much an initial direction. It would be useful to discuss these with the Senior Leadership team to agree the next steps through facilitated workshops to develop a Roadmap to supplement The Highland Council's Plans and the Digital Strategy. The Digital Office have also provided signposting to relevant work underway in other Councils and at a National level.

1. Refresh transformation focus and governance
It will be important to refresh transformation programmes to refocus and jointly agree the future priorities across the whole Council and have mechanisms in place to align delivery with strategic aims. It is essential to understand the future business models required in service areas so that the technological foundations can be developed strategically and adequate investment secured, and more importantly prioritised. Resources with the right skills aligned to these programmes is essential. A refocus in this area will ensure delivery on vision and strategy delivers real benefits and improved outcomes to citizens of The Highland Council. Appropriate levels of assurance will be needed but not as a hindrance to agile delivery. Many respondents were keen to learn from the response to COVID-19 by continuing to deliver at pace.

2. Service plans with a digital focus
Current service plans do not have a sufficient digital focus. With Project Dochas (the move to in-house provision of the Councils IT Service) providing closer relationships between ICT, Digital Transformation and service teams, it is recommended that service planning processes are updated to allow a more significant reference to digital as an enabler. Mechanisms to be created to link service plans and outcomes with corporate goals, particularly around digital.

3. Citizen focused changes to service delivery
The aim of transformational change is to improve outcomes for services users by improving the effectiveness of services to communities. Transformation requires moving away from established ways of delivering services and this can bring considerable challenge. Many respondents were also concerned about excluding citizens as transformation accelerated. A robust and embedded design model will ensure that Council services are co-designed with users ensuring inclusivity and equity.

4. Move to outcomes from efficiencies
Successful projects dedicate time from the outset to fully understand the challenges that need to be addressed. To do this, Councils will have to consider how to incorporate some flexibility and freedom into their change and improvement arrangements, to allow some of the early thinking and design work to take place. The Highland Council has a mature approach to service delivery, however a fixed monetary saving was seen as the key driver for implementing change rather than outcomes against wider strategies. Benefit realisation was identified by many as an area for further improvement, particularly iterating and responding to benefit realisation to evolve transformation plans.**"Financial savings still the driver for transformation. We were previously more focused on benefit realisation pre-pandemic. Previously we had a good methodology, CRIME acronym, investment in benefit realisation previously."**

5. Dedicated transformation resource to support pace of change
There are current concerns that there is not enough dedicated resource in both change and technology implementation with the appropriate skills to support the required pace of change with many people on projects on top of their day job. It is clear from the assessment that there are skilled resources in areas across the Council, although these are within pockets within services. Utilising transformation and IT resources to upskill staff as well as support transformational activity will increase understanding and agility within services. Co-ordination of resource and pooling of this resource would increase pace of change. The Highland Council identified that some work has already begun in this area, however a gap analysis in relation to these skilled resources against plans and aspiration will be required to fill these gaps within services.**"There are no resources to spend time on developing transformation capability development".** Development of a Skills Capability Matrix, also recommended by Audit Scotland, would help significantly in this area, the Digital Office can support this work in partnership with other interested Councils.

6. Getting the best from existing technology and data
The Highland Council has made significant investment in technology and data. In order to increase digital maturity, this needs to be scaled up and opportunities maximised, for example bringing together teams around data and data analytics (GIS, Power BI skilled teams). This is successful in Aberdeen City Council and North Ayrshire Council to lead on the use of data and would bring benefit. A focus on defining data standards, data ownership and data ethics is a foundational activity that must be included in the Digital Strategy,

Maximising the use of Microsoft 365, CRM and Self Service tools as an integral part of cross cutting transformation will also be key to breaking down silos and increasing innovation and efficiency. Aligning skilled IT, Change and Transformation resources to these themes will be key to capitalising on these opportunities.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Collaboration internally and externally
Multidisciplinary teams are key to successful delivery of transformation projects. Resources with design, organisation development, finance, technology and business subject matters coupled with user research aligned to strategic outcomes is seen as best practice in delivery of transformation programmes. Teams within Glasgow City Council and Fife Council have been identified as good examples of this. In addition, increased partnering with other Local Authorities, at all levels of the organisation in the wider Digital Partnership and the Digital Office will accelerate the pace of change for The Highland Council.

8. Citizen and user focused services
Engaging citizens in the delivery of services is a fundamental part of what Christie talked about, and is of course integral to public sector reform: Changing the way an organisation delivers by putting a focus on users, introducing new ways of working and using technology as an enabler for change. There is still work required to design service journeys around people and not around how the organisation is structured. The Highland Council must seek citizen participation in projects from day one. The Highland Council must also build on methods of exploring problems that remove service boundaries. The embedding of service design across the Council will provide a framework to become more citizen focused and encourage collaboration across traditional service boundaries.

9. Collaboration across services areas
There will also be real value in sharing lessons learnt in good practice across the Council. Re-use of best practice exemplar projects and skills across services will accelerate the pace of change and grow the skills of the workforce. Communication was a key theme across all service areas, with a particular desire for innovative and digital approaches to corporate communications and engagement. Many highlighted that services were not good at promoting success and best practice.

10. Digital skills
Opportunities to implement and grow a Digital Champion network and provide essential skills training will be beneficial. The Highland Council are participants in Connecting Scotland. Analysis of the Digital Skills of the workforce taking a systematic approach to the analysis is crucial to progressing in this area along with baking digital skills into personal development from the point of recruitment. The development of specialist digital, data and technology skills will also be important. There is also a recognition that staff across the Council would benefit from a better understanding of the systems they are using to maximise the effectiveness of their work and give them confidence in technology. This would be particularly important for frontline services such as those in education establishments, depots and in the field as many felt left behind. **"We seem to be Digital First in infrastructure but Digital First in skills needs to be maintained and enhanced."**

11. Equity for all needs to keep up with new ways of working
As well as undertaking a gap analysis and skills audit of the workforce, a review of the tools and kit required for the new ways of working should also be completed alongside this framework. It was highlighted that some departments do not have access to the right equipment to increase their digital skills or work in new and different ways, particularly some frontline services. The use of personas has been successful with many Councils in this area, again the Digital Office can help with this. **"Having the correct "kit" to do the job - software that is relevant to what is needed - communicate with us, ask but actually listen to what is being said".**

12. Research and innovation
Creating a culture of innovation would help to tap into the potential this has in reaching strategic aims and benefiting the citizens of The Highland Council. Greater involvement with local City Deals, The Digital Office, CivTech and Scottish Enterprise are areas that could fill gaps in this area. Focusing on engaging with experts with a view to upskill internal Council staff. Open Innovation is identified as an area for developing skills. Participation on the Digital Office Open Innovation course in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Strathclyde University could help build and innovation culture.

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SECTION 1: DIGITAL STRATEGY

Overall, it was evident from the responses that The Highland Council has an appetite for change and desire to understand the ongoing potential of digital transformation. A recognition that things have changed considerably since March 2020 and the accelerated understanding of digital opportunities along with accelerated adoption of some digital tools has increased digital awareness for The Highland Council and indeed citizen's expectations of Council services.

Project Dochas was referenced throughout the Digital Maturity Assessment with many citing this as an opportunity and catalyst to re-invigorate the Digital Strategy and transformation as ICT is moved back in house. **66% of respondents confirmed the Digital Strategy was in place,** however only **41% were able to say that there was a clear strategy linked to corporate plans for implementing digital approaches.**

A key gap for implementing the digital vision for The Highland Council is the links between the Corporate Digital Strategy and Service Plans with only **40% able to confirm their areas had clear strategies in place for digital transformation.**

Many referenced the opportunity Project Dochas offered in relation to bringing digital transformation closer to service areas and citizens. With more control over the ICT function, it was felt that this closer relationship would reap benefits for digital transformation.

The Highland Council are currently refreshing their current thinking taking into account what has happened with the response to the pandemic, the recent Audit Scotland report, the new Digital Strategy for Scotland and where they what want to be as a 'Digital Organisation'.

It was evident that the majority of respondents do not want to put digital in a box that is separate from other corporate and service plans. Many highlighted examples such as what role does digital play in child poverty, council efficiency, healthcare and digital technology is an enabler that should underpin these aims.

Post pandemic in March 2020, there was a recognition that Digital Skills development accelerated and Microsoft Teams adoption accelerated. Now The Highland Council workforce are more skilled, there was a view that the Council needs to capitalise on these advancements and accelerate plans around office workspace and building on our experiences of the last few years.

Given the uptake of home and flexible working, a review of property assets will be a priority. Huge chunks of working will now been done from home. Opportunities for spaces to be used for collaborative team work and briefings, shifting how The Highland Council uses space.

Many identified there could be more space for Social Workers for example. Maximise the digital contribution to all key objectives. Some are explicit such as transactional online, connectivity and digital skills.

Despite clear understanding of the existence of a Digital Strategy, it was evident from the responses that many felt the Digital Strategy had not been well embedded in the organisation. Many respondents from the wider organisation highlighted that it is difficult to know what the corporate digital priorities are and how these align with service priorities.

It was evident that The Highland Council was in a period of transition and reorganisation with the transition of IT back in house and the recruitment of a new Depute Chief Executive and the realignment of ECO for Digital & Transformation. Some streamlining of governance arrangements for strategy and delivery will be needed to move forward as a digital organisation. Many mentioned that they did not see communications or outcomes from the Digital Board and that this would be beneficial in helping them at service level.

More work is needed to bring to life corporate plans and strategies and make these accessible for all those who work for The Highland Council.

Clear service transformation plans aligning to corporate aims with digital underpinning actions should be a priority for moving forward.

The majority of respondents recognised that Digital was not a clear pillar of service plans and that there would be a an opportunity to revamp service plans to include Digital. A focus on Frontline Workers and those not in the traditional corporate centre of the organisation should also be prioritised.

Only **38% of respondents were able to confirm that benefits of digital projects within service areas were being measured and tracked in line with the Digital Strategy or Transformation Plans** and only **26% confirmed the relevance of the Digital Strategy was updated based on outcomes of benefit realisation.** Whilst many were able to advise that some level of benefit tracking was evidenced, this tended to be bottom up or financial benefits alone rather than long term outcome focused transformation. The approach to transformational and iterative benefit realisation linked to transformation plans and digital strategy themes should be reviewed to ensure benefits are identified and measured to understand true economic impact, citizen outcomes as well as financial efficiencies.

DIGITAL STRATEGY SUMMARY

> The current Digital Strategy is out-dated and didn't really go anywhere. It is a good ambition document. However, it doesn't relate to how services might deliver. We need to understand the difference between IT provision and digital strategy. IT provision is about the provision of the technology. Digital strategy is about how we make use of applications and technologies. The Digital Strategy should be about the ambitions of how the services will use digital.

> As well as DT Board, we are in the midst of putting in the ICT board for changes to systems to ensure they are future proofed. Change or Design Board. Currently two boards but requirement to review governance arrangements.

> Aspiration is there, delivery and building blocks (DMA, workforce surveys), Digital Strategy and Plans to launch simultaneously. It is more important to take stock of things before we roll out these plans and strategy to ensure the largest impact that have plans to deliver true transformation.

- The previous ICT Strategy has progressed The Highland Council's Digital Maturity. The revised Digital Strategy will build on these building blocks.

- Governance with board structure and prioritisation of projects should be renewed in line with the refreshed Digital Strategy, Workforce Plans and Council Renewal Plans. The majority of respondents identified there were boards in place but highlighted links to overall Transformation Plans and Service Plans was fragmented.

- Service Plan templates and processes to be reviewed and incorporate digital themes and actions.

- Ensure delivery of new Digital Strategy is supported by service-led Transformation Delivery Boards/mechanisms and to ensure new governance structures enable both scrutiny but more importantly removing barriers, identifying best practice and keeping pace with change.

- Education has an established Digital Strategy. Health & Social Care are in the process of having their Digital Strategy signed off. High Life Highland are drafting a Digital Strategy. Suggestion that service specific strategies should form part of a Digital Action Plan and be underpinned by Corporate Plans and Strategies.

- Review levels of investment required (technology, people, skills) to deliver transformational activity with transparent mechanisms for prioritisation. More time and investment needed to further advance digital evolution.

- Some work with new Elected Members in May to understand their role in Digital, Digital Skills Development Plans and the Digital Board – suggested use of Member Scrutiny checklist developed by Audit Scotland.

- Potential for having a Member Action Working Group for Digital similar to those in Dumfries & Galloway and Glasgow as Elected Members not currently represented on the Digital Board.

- Focus required on benefit realisation which would also support prioritisation; benefit realisation must be outcome focused and not solely on financial benefits. Benefit realisation approach to be revamped (aligned to new Digital Strategy and other Corporate Plans) with a focus on outcomes and iteration.

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SECTION 2: TRANSFORMATION AND CULTURE

For Councils to embrace digital transformation and become digitally mature, organisation's, methods and capability for delivering transformation as opposed to improvement should be consistent and well understood. Councils should have a focal point for developing the skill set required for transformation and a longer-term plan to embed this across the Council. Transformational activity must be centred around the customer experience through methodologies such as the Scottish Approach to Service Design or Design Thinking. All service areas across the Council must come together to work on service design and transformation.

Governance structures for transformation (including investment) should support collaboration across service areas with sufficient resources available for both service redesign and technology implementation (to support required pace of change).

The Highland Council has a well-established culture of transformation delivery (particularly using Lean Six Sigma and project management methodologies) along with progress against the aims of becoming a digital Council. There is evidence of great strides in transformation and culture, however teams should guard against complacence and instead view digital transformation as an evolution and an ongoing journey. The lessons learned from Project Dochas and other change programmes should form some of the planning of next steps, particularly around service planning for digital transformation and the availability of skills.

Of those who took part in the assessment only **41% agreed that adequate provision for implementing digital technology has been agreed in the financial plan.** The majority of respondents acknowledged that the appetite and ambition was there, however resource constraints prohibit doing more. Many also acknowledged that "IT and digital are often regarded separately. Some things are done corporately. When this is down a service level, we lack resources in services. How do we develop digital/IT resources for services? ".

A significant majority, **71% of respondents felt there was adequate resources for change management and service redesign within the Council**. Whilst delivery methods were well understood and utilised, key skills gaps were highlighted in data literacy (ability to read, work with and analyse data), service design and open innovation. It was acknowledged that some work has been done with communities but that there are real opportunities here to engage with them better using digital solutions.

Whilst it was recognised there was evidence of good transformation and change projects, it was also strongly noted that there was a heavy reliance on teams to complete change management on top of day jobs without the time and space to devote to this properly.

The majority of respondents spoke positively of the organisational culture, mentioning digital focus, inclusivity and progressive as key values they identified as part of the way

The Highland Council works. A keen focus on delivering for the people of The Highland Council while supporting the wellbeing of the staff. The ambition of the Council was evident throughout the responses. It was felt that this was hindered mostly by capacity and availability of funding and resources.

Opportunities around user focused design and the use of data was a key theme by respondents as next steps in the digital transformation journey. How can data be utilised better, currently there is no single unified data tracker. Data intelligence and modelling for example utilising HR data for workforce planning and modelling, dashboard for schools, Health & Social Care and whole of The Highland Council measures and draws information together to target improvement. Questions around what data the Council should gather. This is a large undertaking. Considerations should be given to a Data Strategy or theme as part of Transformation and Digital Plans. Some evidence of work underway in relation to data standards, data tracking and use of tools such as GIS and Power BI.

> "
> We have a change programme yet change is glacially slow. The focus of our change resource is on managing the programme not delivering change. Services often feel that they are not equipped to support change activity as they have inadequate resource to meet service delivery priorities. The organisational behaviour is that change is a luxury delivered off the edge of a desk as an add-on, notwithstanding the existence of a change programme.

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TRANSFORMATION AND CULTURE SUMMARY

Below is a summary of the key points from the transformation and culture section:

- Ensure Delivery plans for Digital Strategy aligns sufficient resources with the right skills to deliver programmes. These resource plans should focus on cross functional, multidisciplinary teams with a variety of specialisms (e.g. HR, Procurement, IT, Subject Matter Experts, Change, OD and Finance).

- Some investment in Service Design capabilities to focus service redesign and digital programmes around customers/ users/people. There is some evidence of this but a long way to go and still silo working evident across the organisation.

- Strong evidence of Lean Six Sigma skills and experience. Utilise some of the resources in this area to grow Service Design and User Research skills.

- Focus on improving customer experiences rather than just moving everything online. There was a lot of focus on websites and online access as significant transformation, however this alone will not be transformational, wholesale change of delivery models is needed in conjunction with this.

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> Big transformation, across all services is challenging. Traditionally service specific transformation but this is rarely cross cutting.

> No citizen engagement or service users (no focus on digital), not wide spread service design. Preceding separately alongside and not aligned.

> Investment for enablement. Plan for the benefits and deliver on the benefits.

> Better utilisation of workforce, creation of a portal to capture skills/appetite for doing things differently, to match skills to roles. As a team we always give consideration to what digital can do for our service. Our organisation does not have the capacity to meet the appetite. We have so many ideas, we would be sector leading but the organisation does not have the capacity to support all ideas. Biggest constraint is the investment in the resource to deliver on ambitions. Significant capacity and investment required. Cannot be done on a shoestring or off the sides of desks.

> Lots of good will and positively. External audit 2 years ago, it is an improving Council. Pace is the current challenge. 4 Jobs (Business As Usual, Response to COVID, Transformation & Improvement, Wellbeing). Everyone is at different place with "4 jobs".

> We are concentrating on the day job of ICT as opposed to thinkng about strategic vision. Not the ambition or aspiration. Time to take some of this forward.

> Digital Transformation Board - I think this is a closed shop, not prioritising effectively what will offer the best value for the organisation.

> Digital Transformation Board (started in 2021) but review of Digital Strategy. Audit of skills. Commitment for it. Good move from WIPRO in house. Staff have a good understanding of systems and Council.

SECTION 3:
DIGITAL SKILLS

Digital skills are key life skills enabling people to realise financial benefits and access vital services. While Councils have been working on ensuring citizens have the right digital skills, particularly post pandemic, there remains work to do with the wider workforce. Overwhelming responses confirmed that not enough has been done to understand the skills of the workforce or indeed the skills required for the modern digital workplace.

The business areas need to review how people work and what approach would work best for the citizen. Changing the hierarchical structure of service areas enables greater employee empowerment. There are good examples in other Councils around the creation of digital champions or change champion networks and communities to support and mentor others.

As the Council accelerates adoption of Microsoft 365 and the opportunities, in particular around SharePoint and the Power Platform, this has for transforming the way people work this, training, support and mentorship will be even more crucial. Good examples of how digital champions can support the implementation of new technology can be seen at Aberdeen City Council and North Ayrshire Council. Materials are available within Digital Office Teams community.

Only **31% of respondents felt their service had a clear understanding of how the core skills would be affected by Digital** and similarly only **31% stated there had been an assessment on the Digital Skills needs across their service.** There has been a significant workforce survey undertaken corporately in recent months. This is currently being analysed by UHI, however it was evident from the Digital Maturity Assessment that this was not accessed across the whole organisation with a significant gap away from the traditional corporate centre of the organisation. This suggests further focus required on workforce plans, training and all-round upskilling. This should be made more of a priority moving forward.

Positively, **87% of respondents agreed there are appropriate levels of basic digital skills within the Council**, although some sited gaps with Frontline staff and more to be done to assess any skills gaps and needs. There were key areas, around Elected Members and other Frontline Field Workers, that require more intervention. Generally, it was recognised that some analysis of baseline was required, particularly across non-corporate teams.

A majority, **62% of participants, felt there was political engagement in the use of technology and digital services**, with **59% also feeling that developing the digital skills and understanding of digital transformation was part of your Council's vision.**

"Elected Members bring a balanced view. We already have New Ways of Working (NWOW) and Asset Rationalisation Strategy. NWOW looks at how we work differently such as hybrid working.

There has been a major drive to maximise the use of Teams and SharePoint. NWOW has a vision; and we are waiting for sign off from the Chief Executive. Once this happens, staff can drive NWOW, share the Vision."

As mentioned in the recommendations, the Council needs to develop specialist digital, data and technology roles and skills to prepare for the modern digital workplace. In addition, as automation enables staff to work in different ways or different roles, the softer skills such as creativity, coaching, mentoring, collaborating, testing and experimenting will become much more important.

While good practice was evident, more could be done to understand the gaps and utilise Champions Networks and National Initiatives to bridge the divide. Undertaking a gap analysis or skills audit across each service area will identify the skills needs from essential to technical. Underpinning this with a strategic Workforce Plan and associated organisational development interventions will accelerate maturity in this area.

Respondents gave significant responses in relation to the improvement of digital skills and the need for prioritisation in this area, especially within service areas.

Suggestions that The Highland Council need to commit to getting everyone who uses tech now to have basic / foundation digital skills and offer training and support to close those gaps. There is a need to plan ahead for the skills needed for the future workforce. The Council also has clear aspirations to upskill all across Highland with significant goals around coding and access to devices for young people being a key pillar of this.

"This is about digital skills for life and work as per the SCVO Essential Digital Skills Framework. Then you build from there offering job specific / software specific upskilling and training programmes that are online, in person and we focus on building digital confidence in everyone particularly our leaders so they feel empowered and informed as technology changes so fast. We offer digital leadership training and support. We target Elected Members and take a combined approach of delivering essential digital skills, digital confidence and digital leadership to empower and inform our Elected Members and leaders".

Training may take a hybrid approach with services informing and designing training content but it being delivered and promoted by HR & OD. Many of those responding to the assessment highlighted sufficient support for training and adoption of technology should be a priority for increasing digital skills and confidence.

Collaboration and the ability for services to take ownership of training content is vital. For example Cyber Security or O365. "We need to accept that technology training needs are lifelong and need to be updated and refreshed. We can benefit from utilising staff skills and expertise by creating a digital champion pool."

DIGITAL SKILLS SUMMARY

Below is a summary of the key points from the Digital Skills section:

- A majority, **60%**, agreed that developing digital skills among Elected Members is part of the Council's vision although practical implementation of this was less convincing. Digital skills audit coupled with training and development to continue to include Elected Members as key digital leaders in the organisation. More engagement with members at Board level.

- Active Senior Leadership role models driving new ways of working and behaviour are evidenced within the Council with every respondent either strongly agreeing or agreeing that it was important to act a role model for digital upskilling.

- Reviewing workforce plans and identifying gaps in skills now and in the future as service delivery models change should be a key priority.

- A Digital Champions programme would support the ongoing transformation agenda and achieve aims of the Digital Strategy. This was identified by most respondents as a key action to take forward to improve digital skills. There is evidence of this underway with the Leadership and Skills theme but more work to do to embed this and align with service plans.

- Complete a Council wide skills gap analysis and skills audit. Focus on user research rather than surveys. Embed this actively into service improvement planning.

- Work towards implementation of Digital Skills Competency Framework (Digital Office and SPDS working on this so can support).

- Align Digital Strategy fully with workforce and people strategies. Digital must be central to the workforce of the future, incorporated into Workforce Plans, Personal Development Plans and recruitment. Fife Council have already started work on this and are seen as exemplar in this area.

- A blended approach to learning incoporating digital champions and a variety of tools (Aberdeen City Council, North Ayrshire Council, Dundee City Council and Perth & Kinross Council are good examples of this. Significant resources available in the Modern Workplace SharePoint Hub (LGDO).

> Lots of training opportunities but not necessarily tied into transformation or workforce planning.

> I look at organisations and where they are going. Pandemic and climate change have a huge impact. Workplace planning will be key to moving organisations forward in digital.
>
> Teach current staff but bring in younger people (key talent management). Culturally we need to get this right.

> In house digital teams (in house in Highland) they are very effective, use IDOX. Model has worked very well. Infrastructure is with IT, better now since move back to Council.

> Discussions about how we can use digital approaches and technology to support Elected Members (Case Management Member Portal). How can we support Elected Members going forward?

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SECTION 4: RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Councils can no longer deliver services as they have always done. With increasing budget pressures and rising demand, they need to find new ways of thinking to evolve services, working with partners, using new technologies, and empowering staff with skills to support these changes. Innovation is an overarching approach – a different mind-set – which will facilitate all of this, and which works in synergy with other projects in the Digital Leadership programme to offer a holistic approach to problem solving.

Changing to a culture of innovation can be challenging. It requires a clear and consistent approach that is understood at all levels of the organisation. There are key factors in achieving this: using early case studies to build understanding, training champions to spread the approach and understanding that not all projects will succeed. Innovation can transform how an organisation develops and delivers its strategies and services, and change the workforce culture, motivating and encouraging staff to think differently, building a culture that is creative and encourages some risk taking to achieve deliver better outcomes.

Building an innovation environment where trying out new ideas and solutions is made easier will help grow understanding of customers, services to embrace their problems, enhance staff motivation and build new skills internally. It will also expand the range of partners a Council can work with and the opportunities made available through funding sources and new skills for all.

96% of respondents said time and cost was the main barrier to developing innovation across services. Even though there are widely known funding difficulties across local government, such evidence suggests that funding should be prioritised more along the lines of exploring new innovative ways to deliver public services to all, incorporating fresh ideas on how best to deliver public services in an increasingly digital world. There is merit in refocusing the Council's recruitment and learning and development strategies to enable, encourage and develop creative and innovative talent.

In addition, only **38% of those responding to the assessment had a clear appreciation of the rate of relevant digital change and actively keeps up to date with the changing landscape through research and innovation**, however **68% felt that service management had a good understanding of citizen's expectation of service delivery as a result of the changing digital landscape.** A mechanism by which key resources can engage with services to work with them on research and digital will be key to supporting an innovation culture moving forward.

It was clear from the assessment that The Highland Council utilises many networks to collaborate and understand innovation and research locally, nationally and globally. Many sited wide reaching organisations in academia, public and private sectors in understanding research and innovation. The Digital Office and wider Digital Partnership were also highlighted as key to supporting research and innovation.

There are well established communities of practice in Education (ADES, Education Scotland, SDS,) and Social Work as well as Planning/ Building Standards. Professional bodies such as SOCITM, SLAIG, SOLAR, SPDS, LGIU or APSE can help The Highland Council tap into research and opportunities for innovation through their networks.

Partnerships with Microsoft, Firmstep, ESRI (for GIS), Capita and other technology partners are also a source of ideation and reason. Identifying business problems or priorities to take to these partners will improve this collaboration and opportunity.

Overall, there is a lack of specific roles within The Highland Council to focus and lead on how they can develop an innovation culture. There is a need to explore whether there is sufficient time, risk appetite, understanding and priority to do this. Open Innovation was identified as a significant skills gap.

To maximise innovation opportunities as well as grow much needed DDAT skills, we would recommend joining up approaches, skills and opportunities, across the workforce in the Council, the innovation hubs and wider collaboration with neighbouring authorities. Many of those participating in the assessment felt that there was too much reliance on the central Digital/IT team sharing ideas around research and innovation. Glasgow City Council has good examples of this with their Centre for Civic Innovation in the Tontine Centre.

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RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SUMMARY

Below is a summary of the key points from the Research and Innovation section:

- Staff can manage complex environments through maximising cloud storage and data analytics.

- Develop Council wide challenges which may be suitable for open innovation providing opportunities to engage with academia and innovation centres.

- Partnership with organisations and building on these good relationships are hugely influential on digital transformation. Great evidence of collaborative and partner working with Microsoft, City Region Deals, SCVO, Connecting Scotland, CIVTech etc. Continue to strengthen these partnerships to tap into more opportunities for innovation.

- Focus on M365 applications, significant investment in M365. Continue to work with partners to really leverage innovations, automations and data opportunities (Power Platform, SharePoint & Teams particularly).

- Continue to leverage technology already in place to maximise ROI and faster routes to innovation for example scaling up Microsoft 365, Northgate, CRM.

- Review the use of innovation in Councils such as Aberdeen and Renfrewshire for IOT and intelligent automation.

- The Local Government Digital Partnership offers a concierge service to introduce Councils so they can start innovating together. This has proved very popular amongst the Partnership with regular requests to match up areas of expertise.

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> More yes than no. Very often we know what is happening elsewhere. We are aware, but making the jump to where we want to be is the difficult side of things.

> Yes absolutely, we have this space and time to review innovation and research. Communities sharing best practice across Local Authorities. Utilising networks. How services are delivered in a modern way. Digital Transformation team review this (Digital Office, SOCITM etc), looking outward.

> But how fully do we do this? IT Manager has a good handle on this. Leisure Management System is not fit for purpose, we might need to develop our own service. IT manager keeps up to date.

> We do try and keep up to date but don't have a lot of resources to keep up to date. Change from WIPRO to in house will be of benefit.

> In terms of theory and strategic vision yes. Huge lag between implementation and being cutting edge. Translating this into practice is challenging. Our customer service in comparison to financial services looks like it is in the dark ages.

> IT and Digital not in core business functions. For example active travel is well developed. We make a good effort but not against private organisations. Focus on efficiencies.

> We need the time and space to be creative and innovative. ICT don't understand all service needs, it needs to be service-led in partnership with ICT.

OPPORTUNITIES

Key opportunities identified which we can use to support a facilitated session:

- Embed the refresh of Digital Strategy and Roadmap to align with the Scottish Government Digital Strategy published in March 2021. Include Data Strategy to underpin this.

- Re-organisation of governance to align strategy and vision with transformation plans that have multi-disciplinary teams with the right skills aligned to actions and outcomes. Create time and space for delivery but also iteration based on retrospectives and show and tells.

- Continued engagement with Elected Members to support their understanding of digital transformation and evolution, utilising tools such as the Audit Scotland Scrutiny Checklist.

- Additional Mobile working ensuring staff have the right tools for their roles, both software and kit. Long delays, inadequate hardware and significant gaps reported around equipping all staff with the right tools. Particular professional groups such as Teachers, Healthcare Workers and Social Workers were identified by many in lacking some of the key equipment, in some cases some relying solely on paperwork.

- Embedding Service Design principles across all the workforce and developing coherent plans for understanding the digital needs of communities. Delivering on these needs not just organisational goals.

- Development of data driven decision making and innovation, better use of data and tools such as Power BI was a key aspiration for most respondents. Linked to the better use of data, opportunities with GIS and IOT were also opportunities identified by many.

- Integrated digital solutions were seen as critical to delivery, particularly in the HSCP. Having multiple solutions and records of customers with no integration was identified as a significant risk.

- Aspirations for more automation across the organisation. Removing human interjections (HR process hand offs between business support and HR as an example), more streamlining and automation of HR Self Service. More Integration of systems.

- CareFirst was identified as needing updated and reviewed (implementation in 2003), opportunities to utilise the Social Care Replacement Framework to replace legacy systems with modern, user-friendly solutions.

- A move from paper-based approaches, HSCP still rely heavily on paperwork for many service areas (school nurses, district nursing as examples). Ensure digitisation at a foundation level across the board.

- In schools, the huge demands, but considerable professional learning that has characterised digital, remote, online learning has progressed and enhanced the skill set of the largest number of teachers and support staff and has opened up many possibilities. This has given scope for developments in ways of working and approaching the role in the classroom and the wider role of the School and our Team supporting pupils, parents and carers as well as expanded our skills in online pedagogy and learning.

- Opportunities in education such as Digital classrooms, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR).

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USEFUL RESOURCES

National - Audit Scotland

- [Digital Progress in Local Government Report](#)
- [Planning for Outcomes](#)
- [Good Practice Guide](#)
- [Digital E-Hub](#)
- Audit Scotland Checklist

Scottish Government

- [Digital Strategy - a changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world](#)
- [Scotland's Digital Health & Care Strategy](#)

Digital Leadership

- **Aberdeen City Council** coaching and mentoring leaders and bringing in art of possible to test thinking (part of digital leadership programme). TOP approach and commissioning approach. Governance & Digital Strategy.
- Fife Council alignment of Workforce & Digital plans & strategy
- [Scottish Digital Academy](#)

User Centric Services and Redesigning Services

- [Glasgow Centre for Civic Innovation Tontine](#)
- [CGI Glasgow Toolkit](#)

Design Thinking Training

- [Scottish Approach to Service Design Training Digital Academy](#)
- [Service Design Academy PDA](#)

Digital Skills

- [Supporting Workforce Digital Skills in Local Government](#)
- [Future Skills Tracker](#)
- [Digital Skills Packages - Essentials](#)

Elected Member Engagement

- **Dumfries & Galloway** Member Action Group and transformation structure
- **Glasgow** Digital Glasgow Board and Councillor for Digital Leadership

Agile

- Agile used in **Fife Council, Angus Council, The Highland Council and Orkney Islands Council.** View webinar recordings on **Modern Workplace Playbook.**

Driven by Data

Scottish Government:
- [**Data Standards in Public Sector**](#)
- **Data Maturity Assessment**
- (Shona Nicol, Scottish Government) West Dunbartonshire part of initial assessments
- **Digital Office Data Advisory Board**
- (chaired by Kimberley Hose, Head of Business Intelligence Glasgow)

Digital Office Power BI Community:
- **Aberdeen City Council:** Martin Murchie Team set up and skills (see power BI insights for use cases)
- cases)
- **North Ayrshire Council:** Craig Valentine Team set up and skills (Power BI and Workforce planning)
- **Fife Council:** Use of Power BI for care at home support (Fiona Mackenze business/James Dawes IT)
- **North Lanarkshire:** (Susan Cloke)

Innovation

- **City of Edinburgh Council** work on innovation, creating [Edinburgh Living Lab.](#)
- **Glasgow City Council** developed the Tontine which is a [**Centre of Innovation.**](#)

This report was produced in June 2022.

For further information or if you have any queries please email **info@digitaloffice.scot**

DIGITAL PARTNERSHIP

Scottish Local Government

Appendix 2. National Guiding Principles as set out in the National Strategy

Inclusive, Ethical & User-focused We will strive to understand the needs of our people and our communities and involve them in the design of products and services. We focus on the outcomes we want to achieve and design services from a user's perspective rather than from our organisational perspective. We value and strive to design and deliver products and services that are inclusive and ethical and resilient and uphold people's digital rights.

A Skilled Digital Workforce To develop and sustain a digital future for the Highlands, and to ensure no one is left behind, we need to ensure that our young people are equipped with the skills to thrive in the digital world. Simultaneously, we need to ensure that our staff today are empowered and equipped with the support, skills, and tools to ensure the organisation continues to serve our customers our organisation should be adept at planning for the digital roles that will be needed in the near and longer term.

Digital Leadership & Culture We recognise that digital can deliver better outcomes for the Highlands and adapt our leadership style to champion change and engage and empower our staff to innovate.

Collaborative We recognise that digital solutions have the potential to deliver improved outcomes when we collaborate. This means collaborating at a community, local, regional, and national level, and collaborating across the public, private, voluntary, and academic sectors.

Data-Informed We value the transformational role that data can play in increasing transparency, empowering communities, transforming products and services, fuelling innovation, and improving outcomes.

Tech enabled We recognise that digitisation is underpinned by technology that is evolving at an exponential rate of change and actively seek opportunities to explore how new and emergent technologies can improve outcomes for Highland.

Innovative & Sustainable We understand that digitisation now provides unprecedented opportunities to deliver better outcomes in Scotland and create an environment that allows organisations to openly share challenges and ideas and to co-develop and co-produce innovative solutions to old problems.

Secure by Design We recognise that there are many threats to the privacy, integrity and availability of digital products and services and build security into digital services by design.

Why Does Digital Matter?

Digital offers the opportunity for simple solutions to be put in place that solve complex business issues.

WHY?

Being Digital can have a positive effect on our environment by reducing paper, waste, and stopping unnecessary travel.

WHY?

Doing things digitally saves time and money which means our people can be where they are needed the most and limited finances are put to the best use.

Living in a Digital Age where most of the population consume services online each day, Highland citizens expect their Council to provide an online experience that is quick and accessible.

WHY?

By developing Digital, Data and Technology skills of our people and elected members, we can improve services for the public, increase efficiencies, and make sure we all move forward together.

WHY?

Having the skills and resource to collect, manage and utilise Council data and information, allows for informed decision making around future services, for the benefit of our people and our customers.

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd
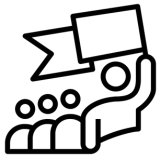
Making Digital Happen 2022

ⓘ **Please roll over items to read more**

Digital Strategy: an informed approach

» **Best Practice**

Digital Strategy Vision

Digital Transformation is recognised as an integral part of the Council's organisational development, is consistently aligned with the corporate vision for the Highland Council and is supported by strong leadership.

It is enabled by an engaged, valued and committed staff with a transformative digital culture where people take pride in constantly learning and evolving to meet customer needs.

Digital Tools and transformative digital solutions are integrated throughout the organisation. This is evident across all services.

Digital is led and owned by services teams, supported, and enabled by a dedicated Digital team and powered by ICT.

How do we become a digital council?

The three main areas of focus:

Lead ›

Think ›

Do ›

Digital Strategy Delivery:
three user focused themes

People   **Insight**   **Design**

Digital Foundations

Making Digital Happen
Developing Organisational Capability

(i) **Please roll over items to read more**

- Digital Strategy and implementation Plan
- Communications & Engagement
- Digital & Data - Service Planning
- Business Intelligence & Data Maturity
- Digital Hub
- Strategic Partnership Engagement
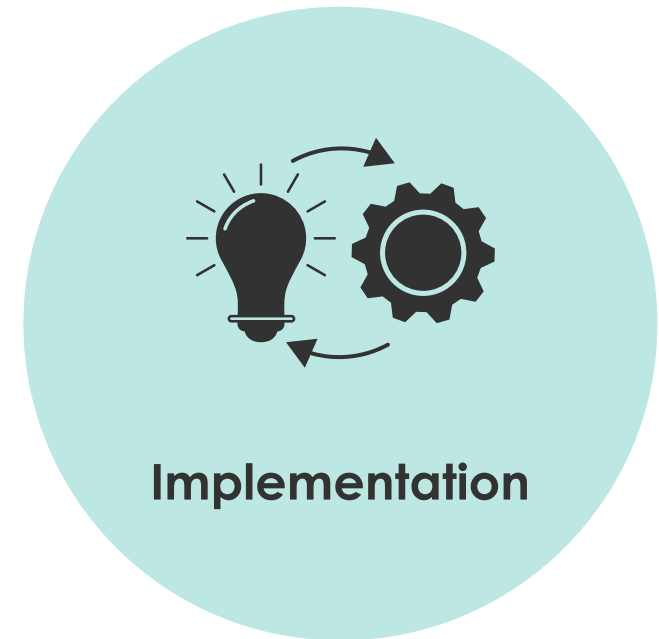- Leveraging Key Suppliers
- Digital Champions
- Digital, Data and Technology Skills (DDaT)
- Digital - Corporate Workforce Planning

Implementation

Making Digital Happen
Current Digital Initiatives
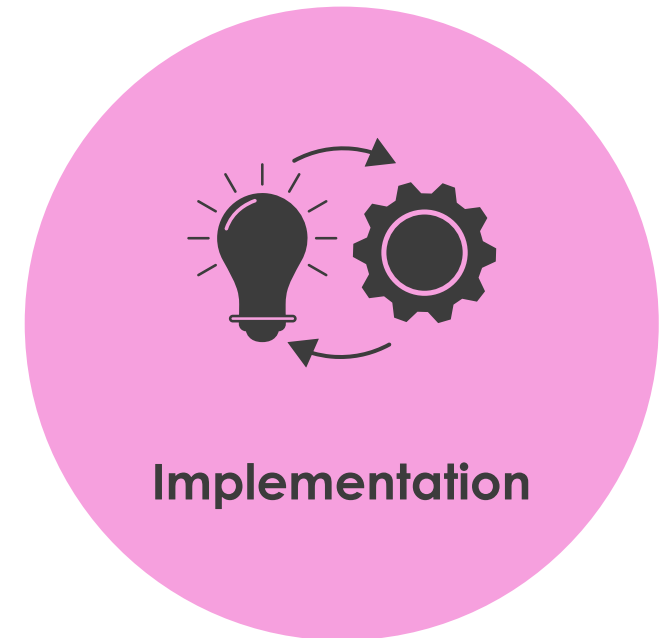
Digital Projects

Connected Customers

Maximising Use of our Microsoft Platform

Health and Social Care - Secure Communications

Short Term Lets Licensing

Roads and Transport - Digital Engagement

Implementation

High-level Implementation plan

Researching and planning →
Implementing →

August 2022-2023

Months: ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺ ❻ ❼ ❽ ❾ ❿ ⓫ ⓬

Digital Foundations

Outcome Alignment

- Digital Strategy & Implementation Plan
- Communications & Engagement
- Digital & Data in Service Planning
- BI & Data Maturity
- Digital Hub
- Strategic Partnership Engagement
- Leveraging Key Suppliers
- Digital Champions
- DDaT Skills
- Digital in Corporate Workforce Planning
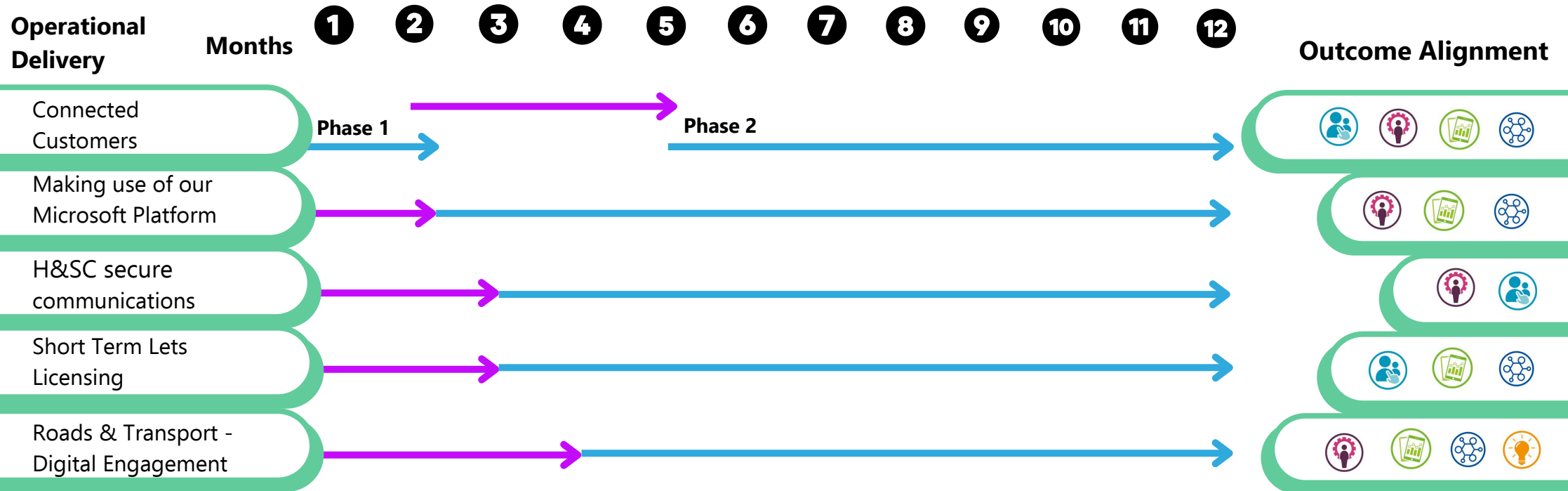
High-level Implementation plan

Researching and planning →
Implementing →

Audit Scotland's 6 key characteristics of a Digital Council

Digital leadership | User focused | Digital workforce | Collaborative | Technology & data enabled | Innovative

Audit Scotland, 'Digital Progress in Local Government', 2021.

Operational Delivery

Months — August 2022-2023

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Outcome Alignment

Operational Delivery	Timeline
Connected Customers	Phase 1 / Phase 2
Making use of our Microsoft Platform	
H&SC secure communications	
Short Term Lets Licensing	
Roads & Transport - Digital Engagement	

Making Digital Happen

What does it mean for me?

As the Council takes its plans for digital forward, citizens should expect an experience with their council, similar to how they engage with their bank, retailer, or social media platform.

Citizens should anticipate that through digital technologies, the Council is easier to transact with, and be assured that alternative ways of accessing services and information are available where digital is not suitable.

This will be achieved through the Connected Customers Project, with new services, such as online access for Council Tax, Benefits and Housing Rent Accounts being made available online late 2022. The Project will go on to improve the way customers can contact and get support from the Council through 2023.

In developing its use of data and technology the Council can release more resources to support in-person service delivery for those situations or people that really need it. The Council will use data, information, and technology to improve services and save money, protecting front-line services, especially to the vulnerable.

Citizens can expect that their needs will be considered first where the Council is looking to change and improve service delivery through more effective use of data, assessing demand as well as promoting greater participation in the changes to the way services are provided.

Citizens

Ambitious   Sustainable   Connected

Making Digital Happen

What does it mean for me?

Our People

Our people will be supported in the development of their own Digital, Data & Technology skills (DDaT), with easy access to both self-learning and supported learning.

There will be opportunities to be part of, and benefit from, a Digital Champions Network which will provide peer to peer support for digital skills development.

Our people can expect that DDaT skills will form part of the Council's approach to developing the workforce for the future, ensuring that we all move forward together.

It is recognised that significant parts of the Council's operational service delivery are manual, but the Council will look to understand, and develop, the role of technology in supporting people to carry out their roles.

Our people should expect that leaders throughout the organisation create a culture of innovation, with digital becoming a core part of plans for change and improvement. They will be encouraged to take responsibility for improving service delivery, developing their own digital skills and will have access to the right tools, data, and resources.

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Ambitious   Sustainable   Connected

Making Digital Happen

What does it mean for me?

Digital transformation is the reimagining of business in the digital age and effective leadership is fundamental for its development and success.

Leaders set the tone for the culture within an organisation, and digital leadership focuses on creating the environment where our people can be innovative in the way they deliver services to the public.

To develop our approach across the organisation there must be much wider responsibility for Digital transformation, it will be central to both planning and providing services.

Sponsorship for digital must come from the Council's Executive Team with leadership for digital being adopted at all levels within the Council.

Leaders understand that digital is as much about people and process, as it is technology. This means that support should be given to develop digital skills across the organisation, with sufficient resources aligned to a core digital team. Within Services, teams will be inspired about the benefits of digital transformation and all development work will start with an understanding of customer needs.

Leaders

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Making Digital Happen

What does it mean for me?

The Highland Council is moving forward with its plans for digital and citizens expect a similar experience to how they engage with their bank, retailer, or social media platform. Elected Members roles are evolving to keep up with these demands, whilst helping to support better outcomes through these new services and channels.

Members have a key role to play in digital leadership, supporting the Council's Digital Strategy, and the resources required to deliver it.

Members recognise the potential of digital to help and support our citizens. Digital can improve how we the Council support citizens needs and engage with them to make improvements.

Digital can drive efficiencies through innovation, ensuring the Council can continue to meet the needs of its citizens, especially the vulnerable, by making the most of the resources it has. Members should expect to have the right tools and technology to carry out their role, with access to training and support, to develop their own digital skills. As the Council develops its use of data, Members should expect to see timely, accurate, data, evidencing how digital is improving outcomes and citizen engagement.

Elected Members

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Digital Strategy: an informed approach

The Highland Council's Digital Strategy is founded upon The National Digital Strategy for Scotland and is aligned with the six key characteristics of a digital council, defined by Audit Scotland in their 2021 report.

**A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world**

Audit Scotland: Digital progress in local government

The Digital Team continue to work in partnership with the Digital Office for Local Government, in both the delivery of the Digital Strategy and the implementation of current digital initiatives. The Digital Office operate in alignment with both the National Strategy and Audit Scotland.

Key insights were captured from council staff in 2021-22 through the Digital Transformation Staff Survey and the Digital Maturity Assessment (conducted by the Digital Office.)

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
DIGITAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS

We need to hear from you!
Digital Transformation Staff Survey

Microsoft

We continue to work with our key supplier Microsoft to increase the adoption of Microsoft tools across the council and encourage working smarter, not harder.
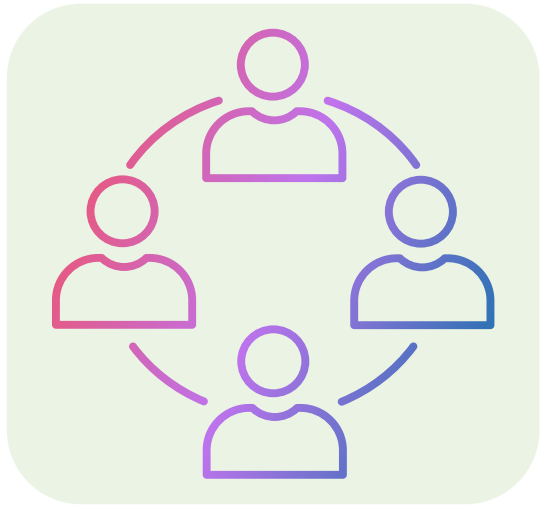
Key external Engagement:

For learning and innovation:
Improvement Service, SOCITM, COSLA and the SCVO.

Best practice gathered from:
Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Dundee City Council, The City of Edinburgh Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Scottish Borders Council, Shetland Islands Council, West Dumbartonshire Council and West Lothian Council.

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