

## **Report to Cabinet**

30 March 2017

By the Leader of the Council

**DECISION REQUIRED**



**Horsham  
District  
Council**

Not Exempt

### **Technology Strategy 2017-2020**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Council does not currently have a technology strategy. This report introduces a new strategy to the Council that focusses on harnessing the benefits of current and future technology to give accessible services to our customers and cost efficiency to the Council.

#### **Recommendations**

That the Cabinet is recommended:

- i) To adopt the Technology Strategy at appendix 1 of this report.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- i) The Council requires a Technology Strategy to provide strategic direction on the use of technology to deliver services.

#### **Background Papers**

None.

**Wards affected:** All

#### **Contact:**

- Jane Eaton, Director of Corporate Resources
- Dave Briggs, (Interim) Head of Technology Services

## **Background Information**

### **1 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Council does not currently have a strategy document covering IT and other technology matters. Such a document provides a clear strategic direction for the use of technology to support and improves service delivery. For the Council to maximise the opportunity that technology offers, a strategy must be in place.
- 1.2 Technology can support the ambitions of the Council in two main ways. Firstly it enables us to meet the increasing demands of our customers, by helping them to self-serve online, as they are used to with many retailers and service providers. Secondly, judicious use of technology in the redesign of services means that efficiencies can be realised and costs reduced. Reducing costs where possible is essential for the Council to meet the financial challenges of the next decade.
- 1.3 The current state of technology delivery at the Council is generally good, with a stable service that is well maintained and supported. However, for strategic, structural, cultural and technological reasons, opportunities for innovation and improvement have been missed, and the adoption and implementation of the Technology Strategy will ensure all opportunities presented by developments in technology can be realised.

### **2 Relevant Council policy**

- 2.1 The Technology Strategy supports the Council's ambition to provide great value services by introducing digital technology that makes our services cheaper to provide and easier to access.

### **3 Details**

- 3.1 The Council's Technology Strategy has been developed over the past three months, based upon findings from a short discovery exercise. Whilst technology delivery is generally good at the Council, and is a stable and well maintained service, frustrations have been expressed around the ability of the department to deliver what services require to be able to modernise their approach.
- 3.2 At the same time, developments within the Census ICT Partnership will see the partnership evolve into a smaller collaboration between the four member councils, focused on a shared cloud-based application and data hosting environment. Staff will all be directly employed by their host council, giving each council the flexibility to design their technology support teams around their own strategies.
- 3.3 The Technology Strategy has been written with the strategic aim of "enabling innovation and excellence in service delivery". It focuses on technology not as an end in itself but instead as a means for the Council to achieve its desired outcomes by making the most of developments in technology and new working practices around it.
- 3.4 The objectives of the strategy are:

- To develop the Technology Services division to become a key enabler of innovation and excellence in service delivery at the Council
- To articulate and promote the principles of good technology
- To govern the purchase and development of technology
- To grow the culture and operations of the Technology Services division to meet the technology needs of the Council
- To ensure that members and staff have access to the right tools for them to be able to do their work

3.4 The Strategy is focused on six key principles of good technology, and the means of ensuring that these principles are always met. The principles are:

- **Cloud native** - to ensure all the systems we use are designed for the internet age.
- **Mobile ready** - to ensure all the systems we use can be accessed anywhere, from any device.
- **Interoperable** - to ensure the data our systems use is easily shared between people and applications.
- **Flexible** - to ensure we make good use of shared platforms and capabilities across our services.
- **Enabling customers** - to ensure all the technology we deploy helps our customers enjoy a consistent journey across our services.
- **Proportionately secure** - to ensure that the Council's and our customer's data is as safe as it needs to be to enable us to deliver our best work.

3.5 As well as the principles, the strategy introduces a process through which technology requirements are identified, approved and taken forward. This is to ensure we only invest time and money in the right technology that meets the requirements of the strategy as well as delivering the value identified by the service area making the request. This process is designed to be lightweight and flexible, ensuring that the right decisions are made without holding up our ability to deliver.

3.5 The strategy also outlines the working culture and practices of the Technology Services department and the services they work with. This focuses on three main areas of change:

- **Agile** – adopting an agile approach to project delivery sees large, complicated technology projects broken down into a series of smaller, simpler ones. This significantly reduces the risk profile of a project, and enables regular feedback to be received on the work done so far, resulting in services that more accurately meet the needs of users.
- **User-centred** – taking a user-centred approach puts the customer at the centre of the design process. It involves conducting research into our customers want to interact with us and what their motivations are. The results of this provides us with the evidence we need to develop systems that are more likely to be taken up by users, helping us to deliver on our ambitions to increase levels of online self-service and create other efficiency savings.
- **The Local Government Digital Service Standard** – the standard, which has been developed by Councils themselves, sets out what a good digital service or product looks like. By measuring our systems against the

standard, we can both ensure they are of high quality, and we can benchmark our work against that of other leading digital Councils.

3.6 Finally, the strategy outlines how the Council will support members and staff with technology to enable them to do their work. This has four main elements and they are all explained in detail within the strategy.

- Giving colleagues the right devices to do their work where they need to
- Developing digital skills for everyone
- Training people to manage their information securely
- Encouraging colleagues to experiment with open internet tools

## **4 Next Steps**

4.1 Once the strategy is adopted, work will begin to implement it. This will involve:

- Completing a restructure of the current two team set up, that will integrate the teams into the right shape to deliver the strategy, and make savings included in the medium term financial strategy
- Producing a programme of projects and work to be delivered by Technology Services
- Putting in place the process by which technology investments are approved as being in line with the strategy
- Communication and engagement of the strategy and what it means for all staff and members will be carried out

## **5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations**

5.1 The strategy has been shared and discussed with the current two IT teams, with SLT and all the Council's managers.

5.2 An outline presentation on the strategy has been circulated to all Councillors. Councillors who replied were supportive of the proposed strategy.

5.3 Further work will be done in future to explain the strategy to members and staff.

## **6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected**

6.1 Not having a Technology Strategy has not delivered the potential innovations and improvements in ICT that might have been possible in the past. Therefore this option was discounted.

## **7 Resource Consequences**

7.1 The Technology Strategy does not commit the Council to any additional expenditure. It enables a restructure of the current two ICT teams into a single unit to deliver the strategy. This will release £100,000 of savings as outlined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 7.2 As part of the procurement process of any future technology, financial considerations will be a significant element of decisions made, as well as the technology principles set out in the strategy.

## **8 Legal Consequences**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications from the approval of this strategy.

## **9 Risk Assessment**

- 9.1 There are no risks associated with approving this strategy. There will be the usual project risks from the work that arises from the strategy and these will be identified and managed according to the Council's usual risk management methodology.

## **10 Other Considerations**

- 10.1 The Council's strategic preference for cloud based systems has a benefit in terms of our sustainability profile, as we will not have to be running our own data centre and other energy intensive infrastructure.
- 10.2 Our work to digitise our work will have to consider equalities and diversity in ensuring that what we develop works well for people of all skill levels and abilities. We will ensure that our services are also accessible to those without access to computing devices or the internet.