

CCC Digital Strategy 2023-2028

Version 1.0

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1. Introduction

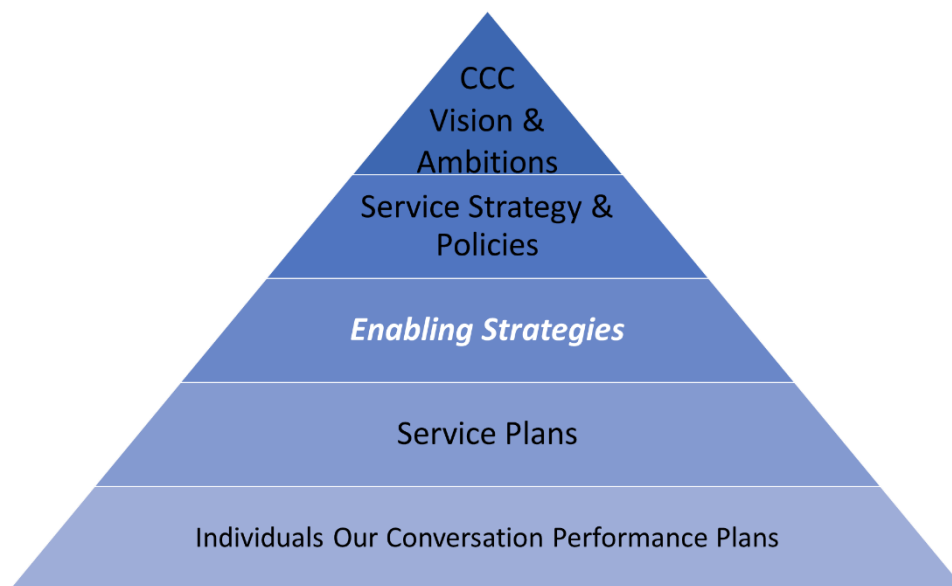
This Digital Strategy seeks to set out the drivers, vision and plans for services delivered by IT & Digital over the next five years, for Cambridgeshire County Council.

The previous strategy, agreed in 2019 focused on rationalising, centralising and standardising IT & Digital Services for Peterborough City and Cambridgeshire County councils which supported the shared services programme.

Post pandemic and in the context of national, regional and local changes and challenges the Council requires a fresh Digital Strategy that supports the vision and ambitions of the Council, focusing as our front door on:

- The customers journey,
- More automated first point of resolution for transactional services,
- Upskilling our staff, partners and communities' digital skills,
- Promoting and enabling the harnessing and using data to inform smart business planning
- Enabling technology to support better ways of working with customers and partners, as well as
- Driving efficiencies.

The Digital Strategy is an enabler to the delivery of our outcomes and services and supports our Strategic Framework



2. Executive Summary

Overview, & context

The IT & Digital Service provides IT infrastructure, support, project management and digital services across both CCC and PCC as part of a shared arrangement. In September 2022, IT teams from the two authorities were formally merged and restructured into functional areas. These functional areas are designed to ensure logical workflows and clear areas of responsibility.

The user community served comprises 7,200 staff across both authorities, as well as staff from partner organisations. Approximately 4,500 of those users work for CCC. All staff who require IT access are issued with a laptop which enables them to work remotely or from an office.

Our investment in Cloud hosted desktop services supplied through Microsoft 365 provides numerous Apps and collaborative working tools as well as increased resilience.

Supporting Corporate Objectives

ITDS strategic objectives sit squarely in support of Cambridgeshire County Council's Strategic Framework's aims of creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire.

The Digital Strategy itself is supported by separate Data, Technology & Cyber strategies

ITDS will act as an enabler for services within the council to achieve their own aims and requirements. We will support services not only in their day-to-day IT needs, but also by being proactive in engaging with the business. We will encourage a modern thought process regarding IT and digital provision, helping departments see the longer-term implications and benefits they can reap.

We will support better use of data so that the organisation can gain more insight into the needs of our communities across the county.

We will provide a working environment that meets the current and future requirements of our employees to work collaboratively and from remote locations, so reducing the need for travel. We will empower them with the skills and confidence to exploit the technology they have at their disposal and so enable optimum performance. For this, we will draw on experience gained during the pandemic when we, and the workforce in general, had to adapt to, and adopt, new ways of working almost overnight.

We will maintain a strong focus on service performance, honing processes and improving service delivery so that we are as efficient as possible both in meeting our customers' needs and in our use of resources.

The Challenges

The main challenge for ITDS is how to help frontline teams respond to an increasing demand in services from a growing and diverse population in the current economic climate. We need to make our IT and digital services work harder to help the organisation work smarter, whilst at the same time guiding the workforce through the IT changes that this will entail. We need our workforce to be equipped with the right hardware and system access so that their experience of IT is consistently good, across the board.

We must ensure that our service provision is as environmentally friendly as possible and that we support other services in providing environmentally friendly alternatives to the way the population lives and works.

The challenge of how we engage with all communities, translates into a requirement for us to support teams in making their public facing services available and accessible online and to ensure that those service users who have less opportunity or ability to access online services are not excluded in any way.

To meet these challenges, as well as making best use of internal resources we need to work collaboratively with partners and third parties which means we need to share our data. We must do this securely and appropriately but with as few barriers as possible. The huge increase in cyber-crime makes this ever more difficult and sadly this threat is only going to increase.

Our Data, Technical and Cyber Strategies to which this Digital Strategy is intrinsically linked are outlined briefly below. The full documents can be viewed [here](#)

Data Strategy - This focusses on the value of data as a core asset. It emphasizes the importance of data maintenance, quality and best practice whilst also promoting data availability and accessibility to those who need it.

It advocates the requirement for services to know their data and how it should be processed so that they can take advantage of speedier business solutions. It states that the cross-organisational nature of our data is aided and facilitated by shared technology and goes on to highlight the need for interoperability of datasets, facilitated by common standards, to support automation and consistency.

Technology Strategy - The Technology Roadmap uses the themes outlined in the main Digital Strategy and details the proposed technologies that will be delivered to help achieve each theme's vision. It should also be read in conjunction with the Digital Strategy Action Plan.

Cyber Strategy - The aim of the Cyber Strategy is to protect the Council and for it to have cyber resilience at its core. This means having a holistic approach to cybersecurity that includes preparedness, response, and recovery, and focuses on ensuring that the council can withstand and recover quickly from any cyber security incidents. It adopts national, government and industry standards and has five cyber objectives: managing risk, protecting against attack, detecting events, minimising impact and developing the skills, knowledge and culture necessary to mitigate the threat. To support these objectives, the strategy includes a comprehensive set of outcomes. Which not only cover technical themes, but also address the human element, governance and management of our cyber intelligence.

3. Our Vision

The ITDS strategic vision is for Digital Services that are **Secure, accessible, modern, and customer-focused to help create a sustainable 21st century council.**

ITDS will act as an enabler for individual services within the Council, supporting them in achieving their own aims and requirements while prioritising the customer journey. This customer focused strategy ensures that digital solutions align with the needs and preferences of the people that use Council services. We will not mandate a specific approach but will maximise the opportunities of digital solutions, suggesting and informing the adoption of technologies that enhance the customer experience.

By being proactive in engaging with the business we will encourage a modern thought process regarding IT and Digital provision, emphasising the importance of customer satisfaction and engagement. This approach will help departments see the longer-term implications ultimately leading to better outcomes for customers.

The legacy approach of 'This is how we've always done it' will be replaced by a more dynamic methodology that places the customer at the centre. There should be a move from manual operations using paper and post to 'digital by default' for all interactions with service users, partners, and community organisations. This will improve efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness of contact but also allow us Council services to use the customers preferred methods of communication, enhancing the overall customer experience.

We will exploit our position of being a trusted advisor to promote these changes; we have the skills, experience, and capability to provide a highly effective service.

ITDS will operate in an ethical manner promoting the use of digital technology and services for the benefit of all. We will be fair, transparent, and environmentally conscious.

This strategy document divides into themes of:

- **Community,**
- **Partners,**
- **Inclusion,**
- **Sustainability** and
- **Workforce.**

It defines our vision and plans for each theme as well as touching on our future ambitions.

The actions to support delivery of the vision are captured in a separate document. These actions may be delivered solely by the IT & Digital Service, jointly with partners or, in some cases, solely by partner organisations.

For Communities, the vision focusses on supporting digital engagement with service users, how this follows through to service delivery teams and the digital infrastructure required to effect positive outcomes for the community. This will form part of our customer contract.

The next vision, on the theme of **Partners**, looks at how we will engage and collaborate with partners and external organisations. It covers how we will work to common standards and ensure that data is shared safely, securely, and appropriately to enable us all to fulfil our responsibilities, solve problems and deliver services effectively and equitably.

The vision for **Inclusion** is that no one should encounter any barriers to using our digital services. Inclusivity should be built into our systems to ensure that everyone can benefit from them, regardless of ability or disability. It looks ahead to proactively embrace further opportunities to be more inclusive.

The **Sustainability** vision is for a service which uses digital technology to not only make the local economy work for the people of Cambridgeshire, but which does this in an environmentally and economically sustainable way. In enhancing Cambridgeshire's digital landscape, we will enable more people to benefit from services without having to travel, reducing inequality, and promoting fairer access.

The vision also proposes greater financial and environmental sustainability of IT delivery through, for example, the way we manage licencing and the reduced carbon footprint of storing data in the Cloud.

In the final theme we acknowledge the role that **our workforce** has in the success or failure of our IT systems.

We want all employees to have the right equipment, systems and training to do their jobs and have the confidence and skills to use them. This is essential if we are to reap the full benefits of our IT investment and if we want our organisation to achieve its efficiency savings and reduction in travel.

As provider of services, we value our ITDS staff and we are ensuring that we develop existing talent to its full potential, and future-proof the skill sets we have within the service, so that we have the right IT expertise at the right time.

Our priority actions

In support of our vision, we have prioritised elements of the strategy.

For Communities:

We are simplifying the customer journey, ensuring service users get to the right destination seamlessly and via any route and we're making more public access Wi-Fi available across communities so that no one misses out on opportunities to use online services.

Internally, we are working collaboratively with departments and partners to help them define their digital needs and working to be involved at an earlier stage in project work, so that we can assist from the outset to ensure that systems are secure, compatible and supported. As an example, we are providing the support and guidance needed for the smooth implementation of systems required for digital care assessments.

To promote and enhance community interaction we are ensuring social media can be used to communicate with service users and citizens and we are streaming Council meetings to increase engagement with the decision-making process.

For Partnerships:

We are developing our relationship with partners to support the delivery of digital skills and seeking early involvement when partnerships are being created or renewed so that digital solutions aren't compromised.

To facilitate this work and to minimise duplication and aid delivery of new projects we will create a central register of partners.

Ultimately, our ambition is for data held by CCC to be made available to partners in a secure and accessible manner. Where appropriate, reciprocal arrangements will be in place for CCC to access data held by partners. This will lead to improved knowledge of what data is shared and consumed, and by whom.

For Inclusivity:

It is vitally important for everyone to be able to access services they need both in the community and in the workforce. To this end we are currently running a trial of an Adult Social Care system to give service users more flexibility when submitting information.

Connecting Cambridgeshire is pursuing funding for a project to deliver a unified approach to deliver digital inclusion as widely as possible both internally and within communities. This project will provide leadership and coordination, a greater understanding of digital exclusion, analysis to identify unmet needs and support for funding bids for further activities and initiatives for improving digital inclusion.

We are incorporating Equality Impact Assessments into our work to ensure that everything we deliver has inclusion and equality at its core and we will review how we make sure that new systems meet accessibility standards. Similarly, we are using accessible social media information so that no areas of the online community are excluded.

We will collate information and ensure that it is more comprehensive and accessible. We will move away from using file formats which are limited in their usability for publishing information.

Inclusivity extends to ensuring our service users and staff have the skills to use digital services and to this end we will engage with a variety of partners to support the delivery of digital skills across Cambridgeshire so that no groups are disadvantaged.

For Sustainability:

The disaggregation of our datacentre, the transition to cloud computing and a cloud hosted Secure Web Gateway are all ongoing. As well as allowing better support for our remote users these projects will provide next generation connectivity and security.

Our 'Cloud First' strategy means that our energy usage for infrastructure equipment is minimised as far as possible, as we reduce onsite server use and transfer storage to the Cloud where economies of scale result in lower, relative energy use.

Our procurement criteria include elements that minimise the environmental impact of our purchasing and we ensure that wherever possible, our old equipment is donated to worthy causes at the end of its practical life.

Increased digitisation of services is reducing the need for travel for our citizens and giving them more options to use services whilst staying local. Similarly, staff travel is minimised by ensuring that employees have a consistently good IT experience wherever they work, be that in the office or from home.

For our workforce we maintain effective communication and collaborative working both internally and with external partners, through Microsoft Teams and hybrid meeting technology in offices.

Next steps include supporting our businesses and citizens in their use of the infrastructure that is in place, either directly or by signposting them to other organisations and making relevant information easily available to them regardless of age, ability, or device. This goes hand-in-hand with enhancing digital accessibility and services, to promote wider economic growth.

Workforce

We need to exploit the benefits of Microsoft 365 to its maximum and this includes making staff proficient in its use. We are already investing in upskilling through internal training, forums and online guidance via the 365 Hub. We will increase our advertising of training and tools and investigate how we develop a baseline of 365 knowledge related to roles.

We are promoting and supporting the accessibility of our documentation and of the tools provided to employees. We are making IT more accessible generally, both in terms of the language we use and in its availability through self-service options such as those available in Hornbill.

Through self-service, we are also giving our workforce greater control over such things as password resets and the information held about them in systems.

We have worked to ensure that employees understand their roles and responsibilities regarding data, security and systems, thereby reducing their reliance on ITDS and increasing their self-sufficiency.

Technically, work is ongoing to move our file storage from network folders to Teams and SharePoint so increasing collaboration. We are also implementing the Secure Web Gateway and AutoPilot, which will greatly reduce the need for employees to visit IT thereby saving time and travel.

We will continue to improve our offerings for hybrid meetings, reviewing and assessing the evolving range of products coming to the market. In the same vein we will work towards making our IT as intuitive and easy to use as possible, particularly for those staff members in job roles that are less IT oriented.

To ensure our involvement in all IT related activity, and avoid 'shadow IT' being created, we will move to a clearer and more robust process to respond to new opportunities, thereby emphasising the value of engaging ITDS in projects.

Strategy Principles

Throughout, this Strategy adheres to a set of principles which support best practice, value for money, inclusivity, agility, Cloud first and ease of use. [Technology code of practice](#) published by central government.

4. Current status and scope of services

ITDS currently provides IT and digital services to approximately 7,200 end users employed by CCC, PCC or their supporting partner services and organisations such as the NHS, around 4,400 of those users work for CCC. Services include standard desktop tools such as Microsoft Office, multiple line-of-business systems for services such as social care and many other smaller software packages used by teams.

Desktop tools (such as Word, Excel and Outlook) are now cloud hosted and delivered via Microsoft 365. Through this investment in M365 we are not only providing a more resilient method of storing data but also enabling the workforce to reap the benefits of collaborative working and making numerous Apps available.

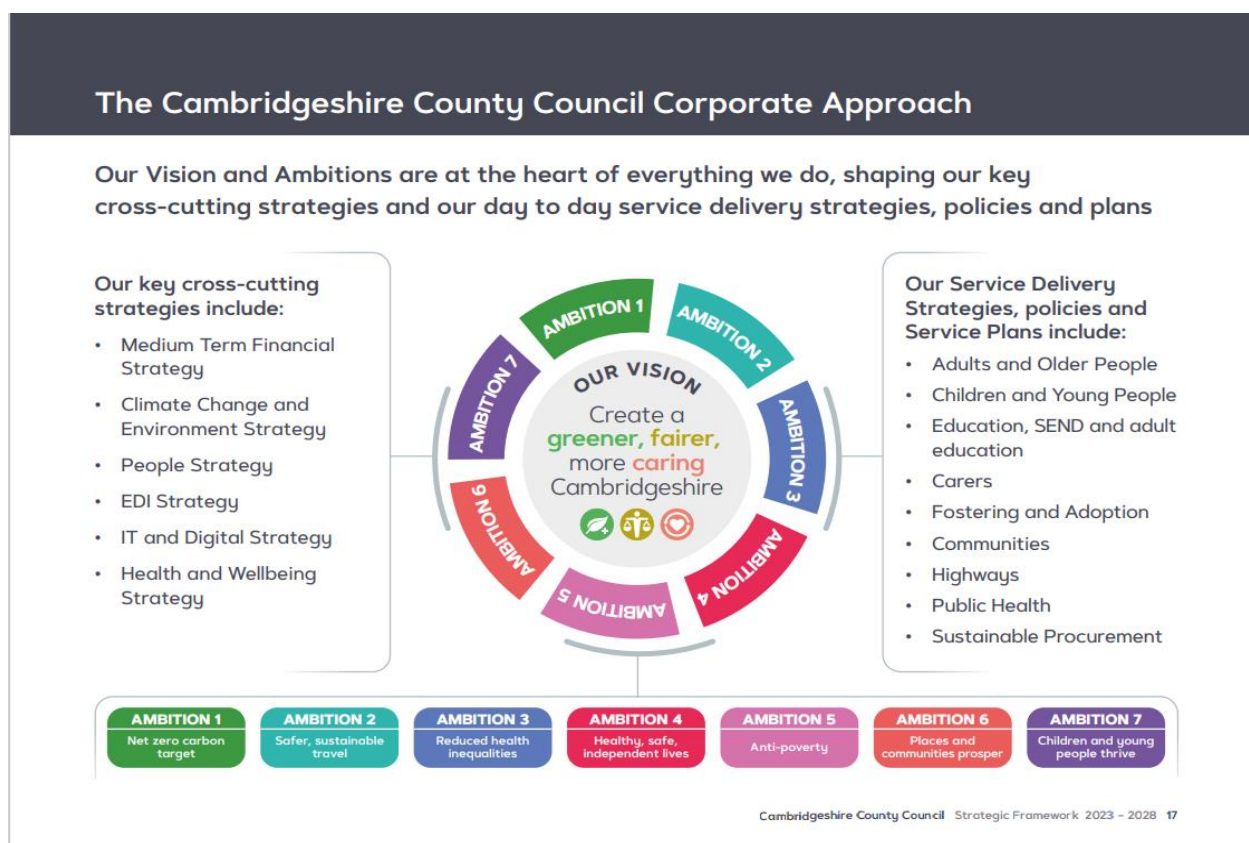
What we learnt from the pandemic

In 2019, no one could have predicted the events that were to follow in early 2020. Although the response to Covid presented huge technical, behavioural and time-critical challenges, it also provided opportunities to do and think about things differently.

- People are more adaptable than we thought, this may indicate that we should be braver with change.
- Customers will change their channel of choice, when the alternative is planned and delivered to a high standard.
- It is worth noting that some people feel less isolated now than they did before and as more people return to offices, we shouldn't default back to in person only meetings. We need to continue to work on making hybrid meetings more effective to ensure everyone attending feels included.

5. Strategic context & Digital Vision

The Digital strategy sits within the wider Strategic Framework of the Council and is one of the key cross-cutting strategies included in the framework.



Vision

Within that strategic context the vision for the Digital Strategy is " **Secure, accessible, modern, and customer-focused to help create a sustainable 21st century council.**"

The Digital strategy is made up of five themes –

- **Community**
- **Partners**
- **Inclusion**
- **Sustainability**
- **Workforce.**

Running through each of these themes are four 'golden threads'

- **Customer Journey**
- **Digital Skills**
- **Artificial intelligence**
- **Data**

ITDS will act as an enabler for individual services within the council supporting them in achieving their own aims and requirements.

This strategy will support the customer journey in a digital context, we will not mandate an approach but will maximise the opportunities of digital solutions and suggest and inform regarding the technologies that will help on the way. By being proactive in engaging with the business we will encourage a modern thought process regarding IT and digital provision, helping departments see the longer-term implications. The legacy approach of 'This is how we've always done it' will be replaced by a more dynamic methodology.

There should be a move from manual operations using paper and post to 'digital by default' for all interactions with service users, partners and community organisations. This will improve efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness of contact and use preferred methods of communication. As an example, social care financial assessments are currently paper-based and could be transformed by going digital.

We will exploit our position of being a trusted advisor to promote these changes; we have the skills, experience, and capability to provide a highly effective service.

ITDS will operate in an ethical manner promoting the use of digital technology and services for the benefit of all. We will be fair, transparent, and environmentally conscious.

Golden threads:

Customer journey

It is critical that the Council help the majority of people to help themselves through digital contact and on-line resolution, enabling the minority of highly vulnerable cases to be dealt with through professional staff supported with the best data and technology to improve their lives.

As we move towards making more services available digitally, we need our employees to be as invested in their service's online presence as they are in other areas. We need them to think about their own experiences of using websites, how these might translate across to the online services their teams deliver and where there could be opportunities for improvement or expansion.

Positive customer experience and outcomes encourage people to use our services. We need to provide customers with a comprehensive and consistent experience, irrespective of channel or status (staff, citizen, visitor or partner).

Being digitally aware and actively looking for opportunities within their own service area whilst being aware that the customer experience may touch multiple internal teams and how that can be improved.

Having digitally engaged communities promotes, trust, inclusion and builds strong and invested societies. Opening more channels of engagement encourages underrepresented groups to participate.

Where the customer journey cannot be optimised using internal resources, partnership working is critical. We will support partners to fully utilise digital and technology options and shape and guide the standards/specifications used to provide services.

It should not be the case that citizens cannot access services through lack of skills, poor system design or connectivity as this will mean that their options will be reduced, and their customer journey compromised. Customer experience should be so intuitive and accessible that they encounter no barriers to accessing digital services and skills.

Digital Skills

For communities to take advantage of our digital offerings and experience a good customer journey, they need the necessary digital skills. Having digitally engaged communities promotes trust, inclusion and builds strong and invested societies. Opening more channels of engagement encourages underrepresented groups to participate.

Ensuring that citizens are equipped with the digital skills they need to consume our services requires the combination of internal, partner and external services such as Libraries, Cambridgeshire Skills and Cambridgeshire Digital Partnership.

Those who lack digital skills have fewer options available to them when using public services or our internal services to staff. Without the confidence and ability to get online, they will become more isolated and less engaged. It is vital that they are provided with the skills to allow them to take full advantages of all the services and information available to them.

That our workforce should be skilled and confident in the use of technology hardly needs stating, but if we want employees to help improve the customer experience, we also need them to be 'digitally aware'. The customer journey may involve multiple internal teams and so we need our employees to have a broad understanding of how the 'whole' fits together and where their service slots into it.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

Over the last decade, significant advancements in AI have been witnessed, particularly in the field of Machine Learning. In 2023, there has been a notable evolution in the form of Large Language Models. These systems are designed to understand and generate human-like text. They are trained on vast amounts of diverse data, allowing them to learn the complexities of language, grammar, context, and even generate creative and coherent responses. Moreover, these models have further progressed to generate images, video, and voice.

These advancements have brought about the democratisation and increased accessibility of AI, thereby reducing barriers and making solutions more viable to support our work processes.

It is imperative to recognise AI as a "golden thread" that weaves through every aspect of the themes within this strategy. By leveraging AI technologies, unparalleled insights, enhancements to operational efficiency and delivery of personalised experiences can be unlocked. Although the following areas will be the main focus, other emerging technologies will be explored as the field evolves.

Enhance Customer Experience: Through AI-powered personalisation, the aim is to provide exceptional customer experiences across all touchpoints. By leveraging AI technologies such as natural language

processing and computer vision, the council can understand customer preferences, anticipate their needs, and deliver tailored outcomes and support services.

Optimise Operational Efficiency: AI will play a crucial role in streamlining and automating various processes within the organisation. By utilising intelligent automation, robotic process automation (RPA), and AI-powered chatbots, manual efforts can be reduced, repetitive tasks eliminated, and operational efficiency enhanced. This will free up valuable time for employees to focus on higher-value activities, including support activities that are challenging to recruit for, resulting in increased productivity and cost savings.

Data

Data is a core asset and threads through all the themes of the Digital strategy. Understanding, improving, and harnessing data effectively into insight and intelligence supports performance management and efficiencies in operational processes, informs better and more robust decision making and empowers our residents and staff across all aspects of council service design and delivery. A data centric culture will flourish across the organisation enhancing personalisation, prevention, automation and innovation in service delivery while being mindful of information governance, ethics and cyber security.

By carefully curating and developing data across all areas of our business and treating it like the asset it is we can use it to help achieve our organisational objectives. There are areas of the business in particular where we know that unlocking and exploiting data is paramount to overcoming challenges and pressures the council faces now and over the next few years.

AI will serve as the driving force behind our data-driven decision-making processes, enabling the extraction of actionable insights from vast amounts of complex data. By integrating AI algorithms and machine learning techniques, data can be analysed in real-time to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, and make informed decisions to optimise the council's operations.

Supporting Strategies (Data, Cyber Security and Technology)

By aligning data, technology, and cybersecurity strategies, the Council can generate and utilise data insights, streamline processes, build trust, and provide a superior customer experience, thereby driving transformation and positive change.

Data Strategy

In addition to the data as a golden thread, our Data Strategy focusses on the value of data as a core asset. It emphasizes the importance of data maintenance, quality and best practice whilst also promoting data availability and accessibility to those who need it.

It advocates the requirement for services to know their data and how it should be processed so that they can take advantage of speedier business solutions.

It states that the cross-organisational nature of our data is aided and facilitated by shared technology and goes on to highlight the need for interoperability of datasets, facilitated by common standards, to support automation and consistency.

Technology Strategy

The Technology Roadmap uses the themes outlined in the main Digital Strategy and details the proposed technologies that will be delivered to help achieve each theme's vision. Following advice from Strategy and Resources committee in 2022 this has been externally validated and should also be read in conjunction with the Digital Strategy Action Plan.

Cyber Strategy

The aim of the Cyber Strategy is to protect the Council and for it to have cyber resilience at its core.

This means having a holistic approach to cybersecurity that includes preparedness, response, and recovery, and focuses on ensuring that the council can withstand and recover quickly from any cyber security incidents.

The strategy adopts national, government and industry standards and has five cyber objectives: managing risk, protecting against attack, detecting events, minimising impact and developing the skills, knowledge and culture necessary to mitigate the threat.

To support these objectives, the strategy includes a comprehensive set of outcomes. Which not only cover technical themes, but also address the human element, governance and management of our cyber intelligence.

6. Delivering and measuring outcomes

Delivery

The Digital Strategy programme of work needs to sit within the affordability of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and as such its delivery will be set out in the prioritised annual Projects and Programmes schedule. Each project which is identified as part of the annual plan goes through the 6 gateway approval stages as set out in the Project Management system for the Council. The first gateway is Decide, at which point the scope of the project is outlined and presented to the relevant Financial Board (Capital or Revenue) to allocate budget for the project. Each of the next 4 stages, Define, Design, Develop and Deploy monitor the delivery against plan (timescale), budget, and quality, to ensure the project is delivering against the Strategy and the requirements of the service. Each project reports on delivery against outcomes and benefits as defined in the Project Document and is reported in the final Stage, Discharge.

The Council has 3 core programmes into which projects are categorised, Operations, Business Systems and Customer Optimisation & Digital Engagement. Additional programmes are established based on the annual requirements for services.

Measuring the success of the strategy

Measuring the success of this strategy will be an ongoing process. It is important to track progress over time and make adjustments as needed.

The actions needed to delivery this strategy are included in the [Action plan](#)

It is also important to note that although the strategy is for Cambridgeshire County Council, it crosses over and intersects with the digital delivery of other organisations, for instance GCP, CPCA, Connecting Cambridgeshire, the NHS and this is reflected in the action plan.

The action plan covers the following areas for each theme

- What we are doing now
- What we are doing next
- What are our ambitions for the future

In each of these areas the actions are listed and described along with the benefit of completing them, status and the responsible service/organisation.

7. Themes

Communities theme

People who have digital confidence and skills have greater resilience and opportunities than those who don't. Giving communities the ability to access services digitally increases engagement in the democratic process and self-service which allows the authority to direct its limited resources to the most needed areas.

What do we mean by Communities?

Our communities encompass all the residents of Cambridgeshire as well as those who come into the county for business or pleasure who use, access or support our services.

Why does this matter?

Having digitally engaged communities allows us to work collaboratively with partners and citizens leading to successful long-term initiatives. It promotes inclusion and builds strong and invested societies.

The growth in online services gives us the opportunity to increase engagement and trust; it allows citizens to feel part of the decision-making process and therefore makes it more likely they will embrace council and partner delivered services. A two way process allows the Council to respond to resident feedback and use that data to drive improvements

Targeted in the right way, we can reach those groups who are currently underrepresented; something as simple as making online meetings available to citizens can open a whole new audience who would not previously have been able to engage in public meetings.

Communities Vision

Our vision is to enable as many services as possible to digitally engage directly with its service users. This automated digital engagement should follow through into the teams and systems used within the organisation.

A key focus should be that this engagement drives more automated resolution where appropriate but also directs the most vulnerable quickly to the best face to face support.

To support and implement, where appropriate, the infrastructure required to deliver the innovative use of Internet of Things (IoT) and other services effecting positive outcomes for the community, such as improved access to public Wi-Fi and better air quality.

Partners' theme

Digital partnership working is fundamental to the successful delivery of place-based services. This is evidenced in system wide initiatives such as the shared health care record (My Care Record), population health management and early help.

What do we mean by Partners?

There are a diverse range of 3rd party organisations and services that partner with the Council. These can be broadly categorised as:

- Those consuming a service or services the Council provides e.g., 3CICT
- Providing a service or services to the Council e.g., Pathfinder Legal Services, Milestone
- Providing a service or services for the council e.g., Children's Centres
- Organisations that collaborate with the Council to deliver a service or services together e.g., EastNet, MASH, ICS or the NHS.

Why does this matter?

The Council cannot work in isolation and many of its functions are provided in partnership with other organisations. The key to successful partnership working is the provision and sharing of quality, accurate and secure data; this is fundamental to all our digital interactions with partners.

Partners Vision:

Where the requirement for a digital public service can't be efficiently fulfilled using internal resources, or a common outcome is identified across partners we will engage in partnerships with external providers to satisfy the wide-ranging requirements of local public sector. In line with Council objectives, we will support partners to fully utilise digital and technology options and shape and guide the standards/specifications used to provide services.

We will facilitate digital working across the board, with digital communication and collaboration as standard and work together to ensure that any service provided or consumed meets or exceeds expectations.

We will work with other councils and service provider organisations to ensure that data is shared safely and appropriately to enable us to solve problems for our citizens and make our services as effective as possible.

Inclusion theme

What do we mean by Inclusion?

The term 'inclusion' is often used with or instead of 'accessibility'. However, they have quite distinct meanings:

Accessibility – equivalent experiences for both disabled and able-bodied users.

Inclusion – experiences that are available to and usable by as wide an audience as possible

Digital inclusion can generally be thought of as consisting of three elements:

- **Skills** – The ability to use devices and applications to access resources
- **Connection** – Having a means of connecting to online services including access to a device
- **Accessibility** - Services designed to be available to everyone who might need to access them.

For much of society, using the Internet to access services is second nature but this is not the case for everyone. Headlines from national studies such as the [Motivational barriers of non-users of the internet - Good Things Foundation](#) report that:

- 3.88M adults think the internet is 'not for them'
- 1.62M adults lack the necessary support
- 1.41M adults find the internet too complicated
- 923K adults find the internet too expensive

Why does this matter?

It is vitally important for everyone to be able to access services they need, from banking to social care. A society in which people's digital needs are met helps bring about happy, prosperous, and healthy communities. An ever-increasing number of services are being delivered in a digital format. This is not only true for councils but more widely in society too. The Covid-19 pandemic greatly accelerated this transition; enforced isolation of service users meant that providers were challenged with continuing to deliver as before. This situation has brought about greater inclusion for some and conversely, increased isolation for others, highlighting the need for people to have both access to devices and the connectivity required to get online.

For those with online access and digital skills who might be housebound or unable to travel, having more services available online has resulted in an increase in available services and consequently, in their inclusion. With services and meetings moving from 'in person' to digital, they have been able to participate where previously they couldn't.

Predominately though, this move has meant a significant decrease in access to services. A huge section of the population doesn't have access to a device or the necessary connectivity to get online; as a result, they have become more isolated and, in some cases, had services effectively removed.

Access to good-quality, current information can overcome many of the challenges of everyday life and running a business. Once the issue of connectivity has been addressed, information (often in real-time) that would benefit citizens and businesses is critical. This information must be accessible to all, regardless of age, ability or the device being used.

Inclusion Vision

The ultimate vision is that no one encounters any barriers which prevent them from successfully accessing and using digital services.

Making technology and digital solutions accessible and usable for all. Individuals. This vision strives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in the design, development, and implementation of IT and digital solutions, ensuring that everyone can access, participate in and benefit from the digital world. This will require the Council to look not just at current barriers and how to tackle them but also actively look for further opportunities to be more inclusive.

Sustainability theme

What do we mean by Sustainability?

Sustainability is the ability of something to continue functioning without it depleting or damaging the resources necessary for its existence or function. How do we transition to net zero whilst improving social outcomes. The two most common references to sustainability are environmental and economic:

Environmental

The council has a detailed Climate Change and Environment Strategy which can be accessed [here](#). The ways in which digital supports that strategy and the ambition of the council to transition to net zero carbon target can be found in the [Action Plan](#).

Economic

Economic sustainability is driven by the practices we put in place to ensure the success of our activities while also managing their environmental, social and cultural impact. Being economically sustainable is about ensuring that the cost of us providing the services we do isn't worth more than the benefit they currently provide or will do in the future. It is also influenced by accurate analysis of data available to us to ensure that resources are used effectively delivering efficiencies and savings to communities and our budget.

Why does this matter?

The current economic climate is having an impact of the ability of authorities across the county to keep pace with resident's needs. Cambridgeshire is no exception. Higher economic growth leads to higher tax revenues, and this enables local governments to spend more on public services, such as social care and education. This can result in higher living standards, increased life expectancy, higher rates of literacy and a greater understanding of civic and political issues.

Money can be spent on protecting the environment. With higher economic growth a society can devote more resources to promoting recycling and the use of renewable resources.

Economic growth can be generated if an area is seen as an attractive place to base a business and to live. Problems such as traffic congestion, inadequate parking, poor internet connectivity and an unhealthy environment can be overcome or reduced using digital technologies. Tackling these issues can have a positive effect on sustainability and contribute to a reduced carbon impact.

Addressing the sustainability of IT & Digital services is critical to achieving our Net Zero Carbon goal by reducing the quantity of resources we consume such as energy and water, and by using IT to create more environmentally friendly alternatives for how we live and work.

Sustainability Vision

Through the implementation and use of IT & Digital services, make the County an attractive place to base a business and/or to live, whilst delivering net zero by 2045 and enabling our communities to adapt and thrive

Ensure that all aspects of council delivered/sponsored IT & Digital services are designed, manufactured, managed, used and disposed of in a way that minimises carbon emissions and maximises environmental benefit.

Workforce theme

What do we mean by workforce?

Workforce can be defined as any person providing a service for the authority. Those persons may be elected members, directly employed by the council or be contracted to us.

Why it matters

Skills - IT and Digital systems can only go so far in the provision of services, those systems are reliant on people feeding them information, maintaining them, checking the quality of what is being put in and their output. Having a workforce that has the confidence, empowerment, capability, and toolset creates not only a more effective resource but also gives them greater sense of wellbeing.

Digital solutions can, if delivered correctly, enable the simpler, and smarter delivery of services. This relies largely on those using them having the skillset to manage the data and processes on which the outcomes depend.

Leadership in this area should be by example, with our Corporate Leadership Team adopting the stance that their own digital skills should at least mirror what they expect of their workforce.

Usability - The Covid pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital services and we shouldn't waste that momentum. We should ensure that user experience is the same for all staff, be they internal or external to the organisation, working from an office or remotely.

We recognise that there are services that don't fit into the 'standard' mould, for example, Public Health who need specialised sets of software to effectively carry out their role. We will ensure that this is achieved in a secure, sustainable, and accessible way utilising cloud services to minimise the impact to the end user device.

Workforce Vision

The ability of the Council to provide effective services relies on its workforce being able to access and use systems effectively and efficiently whether this is delivered face to face, mediated route or entirely digitally.

Our vision is for all staff and elected members to be supplied with the appropriate equipment, software and digital skillset for their job role to efficiently and effectively deal with service needs and feel empowered and confident in their use of IT.

How staff and elected members work and are trained will be centred around digital technologies. We will encourage, promote and support digital ways of working for all. Development for staff and elected members in relation to improving and broadening technical expertise within the authority will be made available.

We put digital technologies at the heart of the way we work and train our workforce in how to use them. We have a culture that values, incentivises, and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. We actively develop our workforce's expertise within the digital, data, technology and cyber professions and have talent pipelines to benefit retention and relieve pressure on recruitment.

8. Strategic Principles

The strategy adheres to the following principles which support best practice, value for money, inclusivity, agility, Cloud first and ease of use. These principals are supported by the [Technology code of practice](#) published by central government.

1. **Secure and resilient by design** - *“Any digital service provided by the councils will be safe to use and protect data in accordance with required standards.”*
 - **Rationale:** In order for staff and citizens to feel confident using council provided services it is essential that those services are secure. All data used must be collected and stored in accordance with required government and industry standards.
2. **Exploit the investment in current solutions** - *“The service must take full advantage of investment already made in implemented systems and software.”*
 - **Rationale:** To save money and simplify our application and system portfolio, we need to use what we have to its maximum. This not only reduces duplicity but can provide familiarity for users across applications.
3. **Digitally accessible and Inclusive** - *“The authority will provide, procure and co-produce services that are built from the ground up with accessibility at their core. Inclusivity is assured where systems are device agnostic and where we provide the means to access digital services without the need to own a device”.*
 - **Rationale:** The benefits of delivering more services digitally are well proven. For these services to be truly effective it is imperative that they are accessible to all services users and staff including those with disabilities.
4. **Speed and agility** - *“The Service must adapt quickly to organisational changes, both internally and externally. It needs to respond rapidly and flexibly to customer needs and adapt and lead change in a productive and cost-effective way without compromising quality.”*
 - **Rationale:** In a constantly changing environment, agility and speed is crucial. To take advantage of opportunities and respond to the challenges the public sector will face in the future, the service must innovate and adapt quickly.
5. **Cloud first** - *“Services such as Software as a Service (SaaS), Platform as a Services (PaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) will be considered above local or collaborative implementations to ensure services can develop and evolve.”*
 - **Rationale:** As we move to an increasingly mobile workforce the benefits of hosting systems in a single, council owned datacentre diminish. Hosted systems remove the drawbacks of the council datacentre approach as well as adding significant benefits.
6. **Ease of use / intuitive** - *“Applications are easy to use. The underlying technology is transparent to users, so they can concentrate on tasks at hand.”*
 - **Rationale:** The more a user must understand the underlying technology, the less productive that user is. Ease-of-use is a positive incentive for adoption of corporate applications. It encourages users to work within the corporate IT environment instead of developing shadow IT to accomplish the task outside the organisation’s preferred and supported environments. Where ease-of-use is built into a system, the knowledge required to use it will be similar across systems; therefore, training is kept to a minimum, and the risk of using a system improperly is low.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions

IoT	Internet of things, describes the network of physical objects—“things”— that are embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies for the purpose of connecting and exchanging data with other devices and systems over the internet.
SaaS	Software as a service, a service where we consume products that have been developed by the cloud providers. They are configured, maintained and hosted by the provider in the cloud e.g., Office 365
SYaaS	<p>System as a service, the service is hosted by a provider, and they are responsible for its day to day running including maintenance. We are responsible for the systems configuration to ensure it conforms to and meets our business processes. An example of this is Liquid Logic, the children’s social care system in use in CCC and PCC.</p> <p>SYAAS is not an industry standard term but is useful to identify large vendor hosted systems that require significant authority led configuration.</p>
PaaS	Platform as a service describes a model where a third-party provider supplies hardware and software to run a particular system over the internet. A PaaS provider hosts the hardware and software on their own infrastructure or uses an established provider such as AWS or Azure. An example of this would be VMWare Cloud which is the management platform for CCC virtual servers.
IaaS	<p>Infrastructure as a service is a form of cloud computing that provides virtualized computing resources over the internet.</p> <p>In the IaaS model, the cloud provider manages IT infrastructures such as storage, servers and networking resources, and delivers them to consumers via virtual machines accessible through the internet.</p> <p>These environments are usually highly configurable, rapidly scalable and essentially mimic On Premis installations but are hosted in the cloud.</p>
On Premises	Physical or Virtual servers (running on physical hardware), storage (SAN) and networking located on a site (Sand Martin House) providing IT Systems and services.

Appendix 2 – Related information, strategies, guidance and information

The Digital strategy is informed by internal sources such as:

- Corporate Strategic Framework
- People Strategy
- EDI Strategy
- Wellbeing Strategy

The Digital strategy is informed by external sources such as:

- Local Government Association - [12 Digitisation outcomes](#)
- Cyber security strategy - [NCSC guidance](#)
- Digital Skills Foundation - <https://www.digitalskillsfoundation.org/>

And is related to the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Digital Connectivity Strategy](#)