

Cabinet

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| Report Title | ICT Strategy 2024 - 2029 |
| Date of Meeting | 30 April |
| Report Author | Stefan Sabuda, Assistant Director - ICT |
| Director | Paul Robinson, Director Enabler Services |
| Lead Cabinet Member | Cabinet Member for Customer and Waste Services |
| Why is this a key decision? | <p>1. An executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates. NO</p> <p>2. or is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council. For these purposes, savings and expenditure are "significant" if they are equal to or greater than £500,000. YES</p> <p>For clarification, no treasury management decision shall constitute a Key Decision.</p> |
| Wards Affected | All |
| Identify exempt information and exemption category | N/A |
| Reasons for urgency (only where applicable) | N/A |
| Appendices (if any) | <p>Appendix 1: ICT Strategy 2024 - 2029</p> <p>Appendix 2: ICT Strategy Delivery Plan 2024 - 2025</p> <p>Appendix 3: Equality Screening</p> |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends that Cabinet agree to approve the ICT Strategy 2024 – 2029 and associated ICT Delivery Plan for 2024 – 2025.
- 1.2 The ICT Strategy sets out a high-level approach and direction of travel for the organisation's ICT that will provide the building blocks and foundation for the future technical requirements of Westmorland and Furness Council.
- 1.3 The ICT Strategy is supported by a delivery plan for 2024-2025, which will be updated on an annual basis.

- 1.4 Strong and secure ICT infrastructure is essential to deliver a wide range of council functions in an effective manner. Innovative design and the use of technology has the power to transform, making services simpler, easier to access, and efficient without compromising on quality.
- 1.5 Recognising that the significant scale and complexity of ICT changes outlined in the ICT Strategy will take multiple years to deliver, Full Council has agreed additional capital and revenue resources in the Medium Term Financial Plan so that our investment in technology will support the council now and for the future.
- 1.6 Bringing four legacy councils into one has created significant long-term opportunities for us as a new Unitary Council. It has also however created significant technical challenges in the short to medium term that will take careful planning, time and resources to overcome.
- 1.7 We are ambitious for the future, but also realistic. This strategy lays out our plans for the next five years, bringing together legacy council ICT services with new emerging technology, supporting our modern workforce, designing, strengthening and improving our offer and customer experience, ensuring always that Westmorland and Furness is 'a great place to live, work and thrive'.
- 1.8 The ICT Strategy will consider developments in technology to ensure service teams and customers have the best possible applications to support Members and Officers in carrying out their duties in the best possible way.
- 1.9 An equalities screening of the strategy has been undertaken and accompanies this report.

2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree the ICT Strategy 2024 – 2029 and ICT Strategy Delivery Plan 2024 – 2025.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The ICT Strategy is one of the council's foundational strategies that will support the delivery of the Council's vision and priorities. This will be done through supporting our customers and workforce:
 - Utilise the expansion of digital inclusion across the Westmorland and Furness area to increase digital engagement with the Council's services;
 - Ensure our customer facing applications are fully accessible and support the latest equality, diversity and inclusion standards;
 - Ensure information we hold on our customers is respected and well managed in line with our legal obligations by implementing a 'data protection by design and default' approach;

- Identify suitable devices and workplace software to maintain secure, collaborative working;
- Engage with staff to ensure that cyber security awareness is a key part of the council culture and embedded throughout our organisation

3.2 The strategy describes the changes and improvements needed to take place to ensure that the council has a fit-for-purpose, efficient, effective and secure ICT Service and infrastructure for the future. This includes:

- Govern ICT centrally to ensure alignment with the Council's target operating model;
- Provide safe, secure systems that are reliably available to employees, Councillors and customers;
- Use ICT to support the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral and minimise the impact on the environment;
- Support transformation across the Council
- Manage our cyber risk by ensuring we have the right cyber security skills, knowledge and controls in place.
- Provide agile infrastructure enabling new services to be created quickly or existing services scaled on demand
- Explore and utilise emerging technologies wherever appropriate.

3.3 The 2024 -2025 Delivery Plan sets out the key activities for year one of the ICT strategy, many of which are important to lay a firm foundation and building blocks for changes that will be implemented in short, medium and long term. The consolidation of teams, ICT infrastructure, disaggregation and aggregation of systems and the introduction of single policies and procedures is important, to get the basics right before making more significant changes. There are significant interdependencies with the Customer Strategy and People Plan; and alignment of activity across these three strategies is essential to ensure success.

4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (People, Climate, Communities, Economy and Culture, Customers, Workforce)

4.1 The ICT Strategy supports the delivery of the Council Plan priorities and will support the council's operations.

5. Consultation Outcomes

5.1 Engagement sessions have taken place with the following groups and stakeholders to gain initial feedback and ideas on approach to development of the Customer Strategy and its content: Corporate Management Team (CMT); Senior Leadership Team (SLT); All Councillors; ICT Extended Service Management Team; Cabinet, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny; and Trade Unions. The engagement and feedback that was received from the various groups was overwhelmingly supportive of the approach taken in the development of the ICT Strategy.

- 5.2 The scale of the challenge that the Council's ICT Service faces over the coming years was recognised in all the groups as being significant to ensure that the ICT infrastructure moves from four legacy ICT infrastructures to a single Westmorland and Furness ICT infrastructure.
- 5.3 There was also a recognition that it will take time and resources to fully deliver the ambitions of the ICT Strategy with a blended approach to stabilise, rationalise, improve and transform the council's ICT, with robust change and risk management arrangements in place to ensure success.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 Members may decide not to agree the ICT Strategy 2024 – 2029 and associated 2024 – 2025 Delivery Plan or may decide to amend the strategy to reflect a different organisational approach to how the Council's ICT will be developed, transformed and improved.

7. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 7.1 The Council Plan Delivery Framework places an emphasis on the use of technologies to ensure that employees and elected members can spend as much time as possible delivering the valued services we provide and allow the continuous improvement of those services.
- 7.2 The Council's operating model also puts emphasis on ensuring that supporting technology is fit for purpose and supports the delivery of services, promotes digital ways of working, and enables organisational efficiency.

8. Climate and Biodiversity Implications

- 8.1 The ICT Strategy states that it supports the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral. Through the better use of existing technology and the introduction of new technology can support a reduction in the carbon footprint of Westmorland and Furness Council. There is also potential for technology to reduce the need for travel and reduce the use of paper.

9. Legal and Governance Implications

- 9.1 This is a decision for the Cabinet and the item has been on the Forward Plan as a key decision.
- 9.2 Legal Services will support any legal work arising from the Strategy and Delivery Plan.

10. Human Resources Health Wellbeing and Safety Implications

- 10.1 The Council's ICT Strategy, together with the People Plan and Customer Strategy, will support the development of our workforce that operates in a customer focused way. These combined strategies will reflect the importance of developing a digitally skilled and confident workforce, with the ability to meet the expectations of effective and easy access to services.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications of the recommendation contained within this report. In anticipation of the scale of the ICT Strategy change programme, additional capital and revenue resources were secured in the Medium Term Financial Plan to invest in ICT as a key Enabler Service.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that existing resources will be used to support the delivery of the year 1 plan.
- 11.3 Should members not approve the recommendation within this report but wish to take a different approach, then the financial implication of this would need to be considered.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications (please ensure these are compliant with the EIA Guidance)

- 12.1 Equality Screening is provided as Appendix 3

13. Background Documents

- 13.1 Not applicable.