Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	12 February 2020
	Overview & Scrutiny		2 March 2020

Subject:	**Digital Strategy**
Report Of:	**Leader of the Council**
Wards Affected:	**All**
Key Decision:	**Yes** **Budget/Policy Framework:** **No**
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Appendices:	**1. Draft Digital Strategy for Gloucester v1.0**
	2. Local Digital Declaration

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To adopt a Digital Strategy for Gloucester and to put this out for consultation and public engagement.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information contained in the report and make any recommendations to the Cabinet.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

(1) the Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, is authorised to consider comments from Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the attached draft Digital Strategy for Gloucester (appendix 1) and to finalise the strategy for adoption

(2) this draft Digital Strategy be put out for public consultation, and as part of this engagement, proposals for delivery of elements of this strategy are sought and considered

(3) the Managing Director is authorised to sign the Local Digital Declaration (appendix 2) on behalf of the City Council.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 At its meeting in February 2019, Cabinet agreed a set of priorities for a digital strategy for Gloucester, and asked officers to work up a more detailed draft Digital Strategy with partners.

3.2   Taking the UK Government's Digital Strategy as its starting point, the five strategic digital priorities identified for Gloucester were:

1. **Developing our infrastructure** – making sure that Gloucester maintains the very best digital infrastructure for technology providers, businesses and residents, across the whole Council area.
2. **Promoting skills, access and inclusion** – making sure that no-one in Gloucester is discriminated against, nor gets left behind the digital revolution, including all residents and SMEs.
3. **Supporting business and economic growth** – making Gloucester a great place to start and grow a digital business.
4. **Transforming Council service delivery** – becoming a leading modern digital council.
5. **Maximising opportunities for open data** – ensuring that council information and data is freely accessible and used to best effect for the benefit of our residents and businesses, whilst providing absolute protection of individual private data.

3.3   Officers have since worked with a range of partners from the public and private sector to flesh out these priorities into a draft Digital Strategy, attached at appendix 1. Subject to views from Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny, it is proposed to put this draft out for public consultation. As part of this wider engagement, expressions of interest from partners and organisations interested in working with the City Council to deliver elements of this strategy will be invited.

3.4   The Local Digital Declaration set out in appendix 2 is a shared ambition for the future of local public services written in 2018 by a collective of 45 local authorities, sector bodies and government departments. It outlines a number of goals and commitments, and it invites all public sector and non-profit organisations working to improve local services to join the movement by signing the Declaration. Over 220 councils and related agencies have now signed the declaration.

4.0   Social Value Considerations

4.1   The draft strategy contains a number of actions which should help deliver social value for residents of Gloucester. For example, the report recommends that as part of a standardised wayleave for 5G masts, the Council should develop and promote a Social Value Promise document that will accompany the wayleave. Although not legally binding, the Promise document would capture the commitment of mobile network and infrastructure providers to deliver social value when rolling out their full fibre programme across the City. This will range from apprenticeships and jobs to free Wi-Fi provision to digital inclusion and digital skills initiatives as well as environmental commitments.

5.0   Environmental Implications

5.1   The Council will look at all times to embed sustainability in the delivery of the actions referenced in this strategy. The draft strategy sets out a view that digital is an enabler of sustainability, for instance by delivering connectivity opportunities that reduce the amount of travel needed by businesses and other organisations.

5.2   Having said that, digital is not always environmentally friendly: data centres are notoriously significant consumers of energy for instance. So support for the growth

of digital businesses in the City will need to be balanced with the objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

6.0   Alternative Options Considered

6.1   To not adopt a Digital Strategy. This is not recommended.

7.0   Reasons for Recommendations

7.1   To develop and deliver a digital strategy for Gloucester will help the Council achieve its overarching aspiration of 'A City that works for everyone'. The Strategy will support the Council's ambitions to make the City vibrant and prosperous, safe and attractive, inclusive and resilient and will help the Council deliver great services to its customers.

8.0   Future Work and Conclusions

8.1   The strategy is subtitled 'version 1.0' in the expectation that it is a 'beta' prototype that will be continuously evolved and improved based on customer feedback.

8.2   Once adopted, it will be put out for public consultation, and external partners and organisations will be encouraged to feedback on its contents, and to engage with the council should they wish to help deliver any aspects of the strategy.

9.0   Financial Implications

9.1   The draft strategy is overtly aspirational and there is no expectation at the present time that it can all be delivered within existing resources. The new Government has announced its ambition in the Queen's Speech to make Britain one of the most digitally connected countries in the world, and there is some expectation that it will need to provide some resources in order to enable this ambition to be delivered. It is also not yet quantified how much resource the private sector will contribute to enable the UK's digital infrastructure and technological development.

9.2   Consequently, the strategy will need to be delivered from within existing resources wherever possible, and funds and grants will be sought to assist in this, and collaborations will be actively sought out. Additionally, the public engagement exercise around the strategy will seek ideas and proposals from external agencies interested in working with the council to deliver aspects of the strategy: these will need to be considered on a case by case basis and, where they have funding implications, financial approval will be sought.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0   Legal Implications

10.1   Appropriate procurement rules and compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations will need to be followed when working with external agencies to deliver aspects of this draft strategy. That Council will also need to be mindful of its obligations under Data Protection and related legislation.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 N/A

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 A number of councils around the country have delivered digital initiatives which have enhanced community safety. For example, Gloucester has for a number of years delivered a combined 4G-Free wifi connectivity using the City's CCTV masts in the Gate Streets.

13.2 However, there are community safety risks and implications arising from greater use of digital technology. Cyber Crime is well documented as an increasing threat nationally and globally. Data breaches are an ever-present threat. And technology can put children and vulnerable people at risk from cyber bullying and other pressures from social media.

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 There are currently no dedicated resources within the Council to take forward actions arising from this strategy. Any actions will therefore have to be taken by officers as part of their other duties, or by partners, or commissioned from external resources.

Background Documents: [February 2019 Cabinet Report](#)