

Subject:	A Customer First Digital Strategy for Rossendale		Status:	For Publication	
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny		Date:	7 th June 2021	
Report of:	Adam Allen		Portfolio Holder:	Communities	
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached:	No	
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached:	No	
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	That Overview and Scrutiny consider the attached draft Digital Strategy prior to it being presented to Council on 7 th July 2021.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To present the draft Digital Strategy to Overview and Scrutiny in order to receive comments and consider any necessary amendments prior to formal approval at Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In the past 12 months, we have achieved significant success in improving Council IT systems. This includes the implementation of home working for all staff in response to Covid and upgrading our back office systems.
- 3.2 These changes have been largely internally focused and there is a need to set a longer-term vision for digital services that supports the new corporate plan and one which puts the customer at the heart of what we do. Putting the customer at the centre of our digital transformation is a key theme of the strategy and includes a commitment to tackle digital exclusion. In practice this will include continuing to provide face to face contact and telephone for those that favour this form of contact. The strategy also proposes a digital citizen programme which will work with community groups to upskill residents to improve their digital skills.
- 3.3 A Customer Service Excellence Programme is being implemented within the Council to compliment this strategy. This programme will provide training to all staff on customer service excellence along with many improvements to the customer journey.
- 3.3 Improving our digital delivery provides a number of benefits. It allows access to information and services 24/7 and in many cases allows much simpler and faster transactions. Refreshing the website and other customer facing channels will be one of the earlier projects to be delivered.
- 3.4 The digital strategy is attached as appendix 1 and it includes five key objectives delivered through four key themes in the action plan. These are Digital Customer, Digital Workforce, Digital infrastructure and Digital Security. Appendix 2 is our digital roadmap which illustrates the many projects that will deliver the strategy.
- 3.6 The digital strategy has been developed to set an over-arching vision for our digital services, however it should be noted that the digital roadmap requires more detailed

costing for each individual project. An equality Impact Assessment will also be completed for each of the larger projects which impact on the customer.

4. RISK

4.1 Investment in digital technology is one of the highest areas of spend for the Council and it is essential that we have a clear rationale for future investment. This strategy provides that rationale; however further authorization for the major projects will be required by Cabinet.

5. FINANCE

5.1 There are no financial implications at this point, however the individual projects arising from the digital strategy will be assessed on a case by case basis, with a fully costed business case being prepared for each project, which will then be presented to Members for approval.

6. LEGAL

6.1 There are no legal implications arising out of the report at this time but further consideration will need to be given as the individual projects are commenced to ensure compliance with the Council's Constitution, legislation and regulations.

7. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the programme and this will be updated as schemes develop.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 An agreed customer & digital strategy is an integral part of transforming the way in which the council delivers its services and how the Council is perceived by residents. This strategy provides an ambitious vision and work programme which will help transform our approach to delivering services to the residents of Rossendale.

Following consideration of the strategy at O and S, the document will go through final design and formatting and be presented to Council on 7th July 2021.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Draft Digital Strategy	Attached as Appendix 1
Digital Roadmap	Attached as Appendix 2

A “Customer First” Digital Strategy for Rossendale (2021 – 2025)

Our Vision

“Rossendale Borough Council will put the customer at the heart of its services and utilise technology to improve the lives of residents and the efficiency and effectiveness of all Council Services.”

Introduction

How we engage with our customers is fundamental to how the Council is perceived and to how effective our services are. We want services to be designed around what the customer wants and also to deliver those services in the most effective way. The council has a commitment to a **“customer first”** approach.

Delivering a “Customer First” approach increasingly relies on a strong digital offer which provides 24/7 access to services and up to date, accurate information.

Our Place, Our Plan, the Council’s Corporate Plan sets out an ambitious four year strategy for our valley based on four strategic priorities, these are a:

- Thriving local economy
- High quality environment
- Healthy and proud communities
- Effective and efficient council

Digitally transforming our services and our approach to Customer Excellence underpins the delivery of our Corporate Plan and this strategy sets out our priorities and a roadmap establishing a “digital first” approach. The strategy sets out over-arching strategic objectives which will be delivered across four themes.

The over-arching objectives of our Digital Strategy are:

- To provide the best possible experience of interacting with the Council and ensuring we get things right first time.
- To provide the preferred method of contact for the customer whilst encouraging residents to go digital and supporting digitally excluded residents to become digitally included.
- To Use data and customer engagement to understand our customers better and to continually improve the services that we provide.

These objectives will be delivered through our **Digital Customer** Theme

- To embed a culture within the council where technology is embraced by all staff to improve our services to the customer.

This objective will be delivered through our **Digital Workforce** Theme

- To ensure that all data and systems operated by the Council are efficient, effective, secure and safe.

This objective is delivered through our **Digital Infrastructure** and **Digital Security** themes.

This strategy builds on significant achievement such as all staff being equipped for agile working and a reduction in calls to the council of 80% as residents embrace our digital services.

This strategy document establishes the Council's approach to its digital transformation and outlines a high level action plan and the desired outcomes. The strategy also includes a digital roadmap that summarises the practical steps that are required in achieving our vision.

Putting the “Customer First”

“Putting customers at the heart of everything we do, designing easily accessible services for all, that respond to our customer’s current and future needs.”

Our customer first approach will ensure that our digital transformation is rooted in what the customer wants. This will involve a commitment to engaging and understanding our residents needs in future service transformation and ensuring that no resident is excluded from council services as technology advances. A Customer First approach goes beyond access to technology and services, it requires the highest level of customer care across the organisation and should be reflected in all our customer interactions. A customer service excellence programme is underway which will complement our ambitious plan for digital transformation. This programme will embed our customer standards across the organisation, ensure staff are regularly trained in excellent customer service and ensure that service delivery is based on true and honest engagement with customers.

Creating a Digital Rossendale

Our Customer First digital approach is not about replacing our services with digital only options, it is about encouraging and enabling those who can use digital and go on-line, to do so. To achieve this we will continually aim to provide simple and easy to use digital services that overtime become the go to choice for customers. We will also provide support to those that struggle to use digital services. Through a digital citizen programme we will encourage and support customers to interact with the council digitally. Digital provides many benefits for the customer including:

- Saving customers time and effort by making services available at a time most suitable to them with many services being available 24/7.
- Digital interaction can be much more cost effective to the Council. Face to Face contact can cost up to £8.62 per interaction compared with a 15 pence for a website transaction. These savings will be re-invested in improving services.
- Creating new digital channels allows us to review how our services are delivered, becoming an important element in transforming services and ultimately in transforming the Council.
- Redesigning our digital interface with the customer requires us to create a digital workforce which will result in internal processes becoming more efficient and it will allow us to better monitor customer standards. For example our digital strategy is essential in delivering our flexible working policy.

- A digital Rossendale will seek to include all customers of the Council on our digital journey. This will mean working with local businesses on the future digital infrastructure and working with partner organisations to connect us all together better.

Delivering the Strategy

Creating a Digital Rossendale is about more than just technology. Its success will depend on the successful engagement of our customers, staff and partners. It challenges us all to think differently and to rethink how we deliver services. Our Customer & Digital Action Plan is in 4 sections to ensure that we deliver digital services focused on the Customer, whilst building a digital workforce and providing the right infrastructure not just for the council but also to seek opportunities within the community and with businesses. The fourth section aims to ensure that our systems are safe and secure, protecting our customers information and Council systems.

The action plan below is in four sections and each section describes the actions to be taken and the outcomes that are desired from completing each action, the sections are:

- 1) Digital Customer
- 2) Digital Workforce
- 3) Digital infrastructure
- 4) Digital Security

1. Digital Customer

Our digital customer ambitions will be underpinned by our Customer First approach and in conjunction with our customer service improvement programme.

People expect services to be online and available on any device. Accessing simple council services online should be as easy as ordering from Amazon.

They should experience seamless services from us, with the opportunity to give feedback using the channels of their choice. This will reduce failure demand on our customer service teams and business areas, and improve our resident, visitor and business experience of us.

The Council will provide services and information online to customers, members, partners and businesses through a number of key mediums, including the web, online accounts, forms, applications and social media.

Customers and businesses will be able to access our services 24 hours a day, from any location from any device. These online services will be designed to ensure that they are accessible, user-friendly and responsive to customer needs and make the best use of technologies available. The information and data will be more accessible through online Council channels, increasing accessibility and transparency.

In practice, enabling the digital customer will include practical support such as:

- The provision of clear, concise and up to date information on all services provided by the Council
- The provision of online forms for all service requests or applications
- The provision of assistance and support for all customers requiring support with Digital channels

Our approach is not to reduce choice in how customers interact with the Council, but to make digital the first choice for customers. This approach will drive the customer contact from traditional channels such as face to face, postal and telephony to online delivery.

We recognise that not all users of Council services may be able to use digital services independently. To accommodate these customers, the Council will adopt an approach of Assisted Digital and we will retain face to face appointments. This will ensure that everybody has access to the service or information they need regardless of individual circumstances.

A key customer of the Council is our local business community and we aim to work with local businesses to seize the opportunities that technology provides in being innovative and competitive. This will require the Council to work with businesses in leveraging in external funding.

Outcomes

By 2025 we will have delivered on the following key outcomes:

- To have significantly improved customer satisfaction with the Council, to reduce complaints and to ensure that services are delivered in a way that the customer desires and that we always aim to get it right first time
- To have a significantly improved online customer journey that provides customers with real time information and access to most council services when they need it
- To have residents and businesses which are confident in using digital services

Strategic Priorities

To achieve these outcomes we will focus on the following strategic aims:

- To implement a corporate “Customer First” programme to improve customer service in all areas through an all staff training programme and the embedding of customer standards
- Undertake genuine customer engagement and research to ensure that future services reflect customer/communities wants and needs
- Consolidate and redesign all our websites to make them clearer and easier to navigate on all devices, including all digital forms
- Implement a new telephony and contact system that will streamline all contact with the council and will allow corporate contact monitoring and improvement
- To develop a “Digital Citizen” programme which supports our most vulnerable communities to engage and use the digital approach
- To work with local businesses to seek external funding to improve their digital capability

2. Digital Workforce

An essential component in achieving a Digital Customer approach is ensuring that our workforce has access to the right technology and the skills to ensure that it is fully utilised.

We want to develop a culture in which new technology is embraced by all staff to provide the best possible service to the customer.

Our internal systems will be designed around what is best for the customer with services taking ownership of their web content to ensure it provides the best possible interaction with their service.

All staff currently have access to technology to enable home working and we will develop this to ensure staff can be truly agile, accessing systems from a place that is most convenient to the needs of the work.

Current council systems provide wide-ranging functionality that is currently untapped and an aim of this strategy is to ensure that we support staff in maximising the value of our technology investment.

Outcomes

By 2025 we will have delivered on the following key outcomes:

- All staff being able to work effectively in the most convenient location and at the most convenient time to optimise productivity and reduce travel
- Staff who fully utilise the potential of council IT systems and who think of the customer first when developing front facing customer websites
- Much improved communication internally within the Council and externally with customers

Strategic Priorities

To achieve these outcomes we will focus on the following strategic aims:

- To provide the necessary devices and infrastructure to allow staff to access systems from any location to allow true agile working.
- Enable video conferencing across the council estate and to embed videoconferencing as our preferred method of meeting where this is more effective and productive.
- Implementing a unified communications system through telephony and the use of Microsoft Teams.
- To conduct an annual needs assessment with service managers to ensure that the most appropriate technological solutions are being implemented and that they are based on customer need.
- To launch a digital champions programme which upskills key staff across all services to support staff in their area and develop the digital offer

Digital Infrastructure

To provide a customer first approach and to develop a digital workforce it is critical that the council's digital infrastructure is fit for purpose.

This means systems that talk to each other on stable hosting platforms and utilising the best technology and modern architecture.

Our digital journey provides many associated improvements. Improved customer care and service efficiency and also an opportunity to minimise the carbon emissions associated with our digital systems. This will contribute to the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy.

We will take a "Whole Council" approach when implementing our digital infrastructure which will include core 'enterprise' components such as; information, email, voice and data networks, hosting and client devices.

The following key approaches will be adopted:

- **Consolidation and Rationalisation**

A reduction in the number of solutions and more joined up data, enabling services to share information resources and costs and co-ordinate actions more effectively. We will take a pragmatic approach to service provision, balancing the needs of agility, risk, value for money and user expectations.

- **Value for Money**

Leveraging 'Enterprise Agreement' licensing opportunities and the scale of the Council to drive competitive pricing and support from key vendors. We will look to reduce both capital and revenue investments.

- **Service Agility**

Users profiled into modern work styles, to ensure we provide them with the most appropriate devices and solutions needed - with secure access to corporate data and applications from a non-traditional office setting. Examples Include; Office 365, Collaboration, Voice, Video conferencing and screen sharing capabilities, accessible from any location etc. Service Agility will facilitate the drive towards a 'Paperless Office'.

- **Service Integration**

Use of standard integration patterns and specification, to provide system integration and information exchange with new service delivery bodies, partners and suppliers. Where interfacing / integration is required between any elements of the architecture, the Council will require the solution provider to support a Service Orientated Architecture / Application Programming Interface design pattern approach, therefore minimising the Council's Total Cost Ownership.

- **Standards and Specifications**

Adopted, implemented and governed use of best practice and industry proven standards and specifications. Examples include; Public Services Network, Government Digital Service - standards and specifications.

Outcomes

By 2025 we will have delivered on the following key outcomes:

- That all staff, Members and visitors have fast and reliable wireless access at all Council sites and to have exploited externally funded opportunities to improve connectivity within town centres and in poorly connected communities.
- A fully delivered digital roadmap that ensures that costs are minimised and all investment is in line with this strategy.
- To have a single safe and robust depository for all council data.
- To have continual independent reassurance that Council systems are safe and robust.

Strategic Priorities

To achieve these outcomes we will focus on the following strategic aims:

- Carry out a programme of connectivity improvements, increasing broadband width across all our sites and actively consider wider community and business Wi-Fi schemes in partnership.
- The development of a clear architectural vision for all council technology systems, minimising the need for specialist systems and maximising utilisation.
- To regularly audit our carbon footprint associated with our technology estate and embark on a greening programme in line with the Councils commitment to reducing carbon emissions.
- Continually review and refresh all existing and new technology policies and procurement.
- To achieve Tier 3, ISO 27001:2013 accreditation for all data centres.

Digital Security

There are significant risks involved when digital systems are expanded to hold more information and connectivity is improved to increase productivity. Data protection legislation is an ever-growing demand and the sophistication of cyber threats are continually increasing.

The significance of information and related technologies is increasing in most aspects of business and public life, with the associated information security and cyber threats also increasing.

We therefore have a greater need to mitigate information risk and protect our information and related ICT assets from ever changing threats. Security is an essential part of managing information and it is critical that we embed digital security alongside our improved customer experience.

We will operate with data security as a priority, ensuring that every interaction will maintain the integrity, confidentiality and security of customer information, complying with legislative and security requirements. This will ensure every interaction is safe, secure and appropriate.

The Council will maintain and build on the work already achieved in information security. The Council complies with security and quality standards including the Public Services Network, Payment Card Industry security standards and the International Standards Organisation information security management system (ISO 27001:2013). It is committed to upholding the principles of the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation which protects data personal to individuals from being misused.

We will ensure that appropriate security is built in to the architecture and is designed to provide defence in depth. Technologies which protect the Council from the effects of cyber-attack and help to prevent data loss are deployed and these are coupled with policy and user education.

Outcomes

By 2025 we will have delivered on the following key outcomes:

- Ensured that the retention and use of all customer information is to the highest possible standards
- To have minimised the risk of human error and data breaches when using council data systems
- Minimised the risk of cyber-attack

Strategic Priorities

To achieve these outcomes we will focus on the following strategic aims:

- Development of a highly secure email facility that protects residents, Council and partner information. This will ensure every interaction is safe, secure and appropriate.
- To implement regular training with all relevant staff to ensure they are aware of the risks associated with personal data and our specific systems.
- Deliver a security infrastructure roadmap.

Our Digital Action Plan and Roadmap

Achieving our ambitions will require significant investment in new technological solutions over the next four years. The attached action plan illustrates in more detail how the strategic aims will be achieved and the attached digital roadmap illustrates the technological projects that will be necessary to successfully implement the strategy.

The implementation of each of these steps will be closely monitored through the councils' governance processes.

ROSSENDALE CUSTOMER DIGITAL PLAN

2021/22

2022/23

2023/24

Digital Workforce

- Video Conferencing for all RBC users Microsoft Teams
- Agile Working Microsoft 365 for all RBC users
- Microsoft 365 upgrades
- Microsoft 365 upgrades
- Agile Working soft Phones and voice messaging for all RBC laptops
- Refresh RBC WIFI Devices
- Refresh RBC WIFI Devices
- Agile Working Virtual Customer Contact Centre
- Agile working Digital HR forms sickness, holidays for all RBC users
- Customer Service Training
- Agile working Hybrid worker Time & Attendance application
- Digital Interactive Telephone Customer Messaging
- Digital Training

Digital Customer

- Customer Portal online integrated Housing application
- Customer Portal online integrated CTAX application
- CTAX Electronic Billing
- Customer Portal online integrated Benefits application
- Digital Interactive Customer Telephone Messaging
- Customer Portal online integrated NNDR application
- NNDR Electronic Billing
- Customer Portal online integrated DHP application
- Digital GIS Solution for DC, BC, FP, ED, Property & Corporate Support
- DWP direct integration with RBC revenues & Benefits application
- DWP direct integration with RBC revenues & Benefits application
- Website CMS upgrade
- Digital Customer Direct Debits facility
- DWP Digital Services
- Website Electronic forms upgrade
- New Council Website Rebranded

Digital Infrastructure

- Agile Working New Voice Network for contact centre and soft phones
- Finance System Upgrade
- SAP Upgrade
- Finance System Upgrade
- SAP Upgrade
- Agile Working Exchange on line integration for Office 365
- Agile working Digital Secure Email
- New Revs & Bens Document Management system
- Revs & Bens Document Management system Upgrade
- Disaster Recovery Tender
- New Data Centre Disaster Recovery As A Service DaaS
- Wide Area Network & Internet Upgrades

Data Security

- Website Firewall Upgrade
- Audits
- Security Testing
- Audits
- Security Testing
- Audits
- Security Testing
- New Civica Website E-pay Online Payments facility
- New Civica Customer Present E-pay Payments facility
- Disaster Recovery Tender
- Digital Apple & Android Pay Options
- Cyber Security SIEM
- Agile Working Security VPN Upgrade
- Agile Working Security VPN Upgrade for all RBC users
- Website CMS Upgrade
- Agile Working Security VPN Upgrade for all RBC users
- Agile Working Security VPN Upgrade for all RBC users