

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE IT STRATEGY 2021-2025
DATE: 16 DECEMBER 2021
RECIPIENT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

1. The IT Strategy 2021-2025 has been created following the agreement of the IT Investment plan in November 2020. It will replace the current Digital Strategy and links close with the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025 which is also being presented to Cabinet in December 2021. It outlines the council's strategic vision for Technology and Digital enabled services as well as the technology aspirations for the city in the future. It will contribute towards achieving the outcomes detailed in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

2. The IT Strategy 2021-2025 sets out how we will continue on our journey of improvement of IT Services, to implement a modern IT Infrastructure and IT enable services as well as ensuring we have the right skills and knowledge in place across staff, councillors and users.
3. There was an urgent need to address certain IT issues which meant the IT Investment plan for 2021-2025 was created and agreed in November 2020 to assist with this and the financial planning of the authority. It was always intended that the IT Strategy would follow to ensure there was a vision and structure in place to deliver the outcomes enabled by the financial investments.
4. The deliverables for the strategy have been grouped into themes around Infrastructure, Tools, Skills, Future technology and Partnerships. Underpinning the strategy and all the deliverable themes are key principles:
 - That the services provided by IT will support a digital first culture and acting as an enabler so that services can confidently build digital capability into their service plans.
 - To adopt an agile mindset and agile practices to ensure rapid continual development. To continue to move away from legacy IT systems and projects approaches.
 - To continue to move towards a modern IT Infrastructure that supports customer focussed digital services. The most appropriate technologies will be adopted to meet business need with an increasing use of cloud and software as a service (SaaS) products.
 - To be forward thinking and sector leading as an authority the creation of digital services and use of IT and technology for delivering innovative and ground-breaking services.

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5. For each of the themes of work identified a set of deliverables have been identified, timescales added where known and some recommended KPI's for each theme identified.

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

6. The work to deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy are principally covered in the IT Strategy and departmental plans will be aligned to this. The financial investment required for identified projects was detailed in the IT Investment plan 2021-2025 agreed at full council in November 2020.

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:

7. To approve and implement the strategy which will set out the vision and direction of travel for customer focused changes through to 2025.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

8. None

Appendices/Supporting Information:

1. Annex 1 - Draft IT Strategy 2021-2025

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Draft IT Strategy 2021-2025

Foreword

Councillor Rob Harwood

Southampton is a leading city for innovation and is home to businesses and universities which have contributed immensely to the technology we use every day. This is a core part of who we are as a city and we are proud of the way in which we are improving family, professional and personal life through development and effective use of technology.

Our residents in Southampton rightly expect Council services to offer the same digital experience as they are used to elsewhere. We see it as our mission to deliver the kind of digital-first services that will enable local residents to enjoy all the benefits which technology has to offer and to reduce the cost of those services to the taxpayer.

We want to offer online services which enable customers to interact with the Council quickly and easily at their own convenience, as well as equip our own staff with the tools they need to work more efficiently, more flexibly and more creatively. This will also free up staff to be able to take more time to talk in-person to residents who can't access services online, to encourage inclusion, independence, and enablement for all our customers.

The IT Strategy 2021-2025 describes the planned approach and activities that the IT Service will develop and deliver in support the meeting the ambitions and objectives set out for Southampton City Council in the 2020-2025 Corporate Plan.

The last 18 months have been unprecedented times across all aspects of live resulting in a significant impact to planned projects and to the resources available to do deliver our work. From a digital and IT perspective it has equally been an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to work in a flexible and hybrid way and for teams to reimagine how they deliver their services to our City.

Whilst there is a focus on deliver on the corporate plan the strategy also seeks to embed any learning and ways of working established since March 2020.

The deliverables for the strategy have been grouped into themes around Infrastructure, Tools, Skills, Future technology and Partnerships. Underpinning the strategy and all the deliverable themes are key principles:

- That the services provided by IT will support a digital first culture and acting as an enabler so that services can confidently build digital capability into their service plans.
- To adopt an agile mindset and agile practices to ensure rapid continual development. To continue to move away from legacy IT systems and projects approaches.
- To continue to move towards a modern IT Infrastructure that supports customer focussed digital services. The most appropriate technologies will be adopted to meet business need with an increasing use of cloud and software as a service (SaaS) products.
- To be forward thinking and sector leading as an authority the creation of digital services and use of IT and technology for delivering innovative and ground-breaking services.

The next five years offer an exciting opportunity to create the digital environment that will enable Southampton residents to thrive for generations to come.

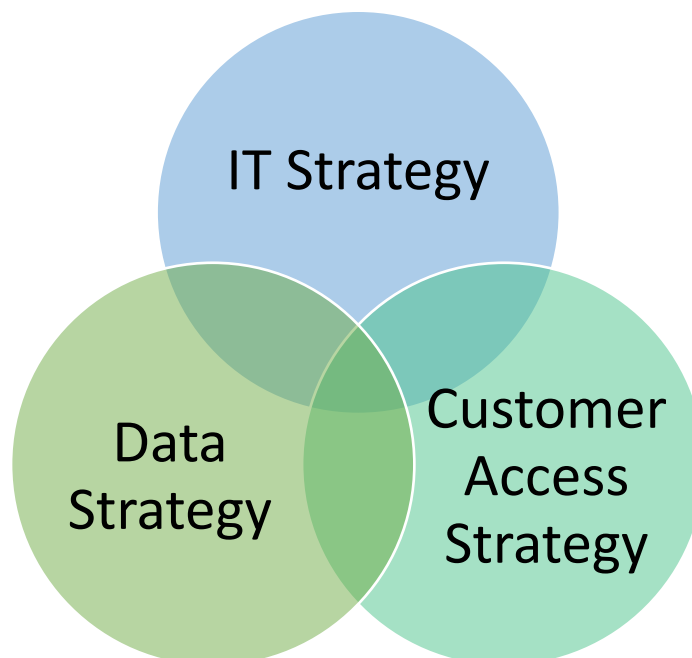
Core Themes

Whilst a number of technologies and approaches are covered in the IT Strategy it is not the intended to describe all digital solutions that will be employed across the council. Through the principles described above, and the deliverables set-out below the IT Strategy will deliver a set of tools, skills and abilities that will support all council services to deliver innovative and high quality digital services.

The deliverables of the IT Strategy consist of five themes:

- i) **IT Capability and Infrastructure.** Continuing to build strong foundations for our IT-enabled services and ensuring the move to a modern, cloud infrastructure continues.
- ii) **IT Tools and services.** Ensuring that staff and councillors have the right tools for the job.
- iii) **Smarter working.** Helping the workforce have the right skills to make the most of the technology available.
- iv) **A Culture of Innovation.** Investigating and embracing new technologies and how these can be used to meet the aims of the council whilst driving innovation and creativity in designing new digital services.
- v) **Catalyst for city-wide growth.** Ensuring that partnerships are explored and expanded and identifying any potential commercial opportunities.

The IT Strategy is only one part of a wider approach required to ensure that the council is at the leading edge of digital and technology enabled and enhanced services. There is strong alignment with the Customer Access Strategy and Data Strategy, both of which will make use of the technology and approaches set out in the IT Strategy.



The strategies noted will all support and enable the delivery of a wide range of programmes of work including The Way We Work, Customer Experience, Future Public Services and the Innovation and Efficiencies programmes.

Alongside the activities set out on the IT Strategy there are a wide programme of work supporting service led programmes across the authority as set-out in individual business plans. Programmes of work include replacement of the social care case management system, implementation of cloud-based Housing operations systems and on-going development and improvement of the corporate Finance, HR and Payroll system. It is important these programmes are service led with IT acting as the enabler to new ways of working and digitally enabled, improved or more efficient business processes.

When delivered the IT Strategy will support the core objectives of the council as described in the Corporate Plan whilst making sure the authority is a leading example in the use of IT and Technology to deliver services to the residents, businesses and visitors of the city. The IT Strategy is supported by a significant investment programme agreed at the Full council meeting in November 2020. The investment in IT will enable efficiencies and savings across the wider authority through the use of the technology as set out.

Facts and Figures



3,600 Users of IT



3,200 Smartphones and 250 Smart Tablets in use.



3,500 Laptops issued



40+ Buildings connected to the corporate network



12 Petabytes of data



1.7m e-mails received in a typical month.



15,000 meetings on teams monthly



18,000 messages sent a month on Teams

Theme 1 - IT Capability and Infrastructure - Strong Foundations

With the delivery of services ever more reliant on IT Systems, connectivity and services to function it is essential that the IT environment is built on strong foundations. The IT environment needs to have flexibility and be agile to changing user requirements, technology advancements and changing cyber security threats. At the same time the IT environment needs to be resilient and secure to ensure it is available whenever and wherever users need access.

What are we doing?	Why this?	When?
Updated end user IT equipment	Effective IT equipment to support secure and reliable working from any location.	Initial updates complete by December 2021 and on-going refresh programme established from April 2022
Updated office equipment	To enable flexible use of office space and to maximise the property estate.	IT Equipment in office spaces updated by March 2022.
Upgrade corporate Wi-Fi	To provide greater coverage, greater security and increased range of access across corporate sites.	Current sites complete by March 2022. On-going work to enable new sites.
Improve connectivity of council buildings	Improved speed and security of access supporting more efficient working and greater flexibility of access.	Current sites upgraded by December 2021.
Expand the number of council buildings fully connected	To ensure consistent and improved access across sites that currently run on a mix of broadband circuits.	On-going work.
Upgrade server estate	Ensuring that core platforms remain secure and are supported by suppliers.	On-going work.
Cloud services implemented where appropriate	Continued increase of cloud platforms to ensure the latest technology remains available, to reduce future spend on hardware and to provide the best service for IT users. Cloud services will be evaluated to ensure that they offer value for money, end user functionality and improved user experience over on-premise solutions.	On-going work, applications reviewed as part of contract renegotiation or through procurement activities.
Core network infrastructure replaced	The core network remains a key foundation to office working and the equipment needs upgrading as previous equipment becomes end of life.	Start April 2022, complete Mar 2023
Robust security systems	Cyber threats are ever changing and ever growing. To ensure the	On-going work

	risks of such issues are minimised there will be on-going investment and refresh of IT Security software and hardware.	
Modern telephony systems implemented	To provide omni channel communication, to give greater flexibility for users and to remove older technologies.	Contact centre telephony replaced by August 2021. Core, back office telephony replaced by March 2022
Support the development and delivery of the Data Strategy programme	More effective use of data will be a key stream of work for the organisation. Providing the right technologies to support storage, access and visualisation of data whilst remaining compliant to the relevant regulations.	

How will we measure success?

- Availability of services to end users
- % of staff that can work flexibly
- Increased user satisfaction
- Confirmed decommissioning of older systems
- Increased connectivity speeds and utilisation across sites
- Reduction in number of IT incidents per user
- Increase in use of self-service IT tools

Theme 2 – IT Tools and services - The Right Tools

Ensuring staff and councillors have the right tools for the job through a combination of equipment, software and access will be key to unlocking the potential of IT services delivered as part of the IT Strategy. Providing the right tools or staff to suit their working environment, ensuring the right access to software and systems whilst maintaining security are important for delivering the best value from the investment in IT.

What are we doing?	Why this?	When?
Implement the full suite of tools available through M365	SCC has invested in the M365 suite of tools and they have been invaluable in supporting flexible and remote working. As well as the core office products there are many tools available including PowerBI, PowerApps, InTune, Defender and many others. Ensuring the full suite is implemented will maximise the functionality available, and gain the	On-going work as new tools are enabled. Specific items: - Teams Telephony by September 2021 - InTune for MDM by July 2021 - MS Defender deployment by March 2022

	greatest value from the investments made.	
Provision of updated IT equipment for all staff	Effective IT equipment to support secure and reliable working from any location.	Initial updates complete by December 2021 and on-going refresh programme established from April 2022
Provide IT access for frontline workers	Previously a number of staff within SCC have not had any access to IT, or an IT login. Providing this for all staff will help ensure consistency of access, allow efficiencies and savings from electronic processes and ensure equitable access across the board.	Pilot groups provided with logins and access by September 2021. All users licensed by Dec 2021. On-going activity to ensure access is used and maximised.
Provide secure access to all applications from any location	Great advances were made in response to the COVID Pandemic to provide flexible access to software packages and tools. This work needs to continue so all systems and tools, including printing and scanning, can be accessible from any location.	On-going activity but with some specific items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FollowMe (anywhere) printing by July 2022 - AOVPN for all applications by September 2022
Develop business partnering relationships with all SCC Directorates	To reduce risk of silo working and to ensure that IT deliverables are driven by business requirements.	Established by Dec 2021, developed on-going through appropriate governance processes.
Centralisation of IT Services	Whilst the majority of services are provided by the central IT service there are some areas where local systems and support is in place. To ensure there is consistent and full support across all IT Services it is proposed that all IT support and systems be centralised into the core team.	Not before March 2022 and following review of service delivery.
Work with service areas to develop and implement 3-5 year roadmaps for all line of business applications	Historically a large number of line of business applications have not been developed or kept up to date. Development of a clear roadmap for each application will identify potential improvements for the users, opportunities for business improvement and supporting the rationalisation of systems where appropriate to deliver savings	On-going programme through life of strategy and beyond.

Develop and implement a greater level of standardisation for equipment, access and support	To support consistent access, to ensure the best value can be achieved when purchasing equipment to allow for effective support processes a greater standardisation of equipment will be deployed	Standards agreed by September 2021. Reviewed on an on-going basis to reflect technology changes.
Rationalisation of software applications	Through the development of the application roadmaps where there is opportunity to combine or replace applications that offer the same business functionality and value they will be taken. This will reduce the support overhead and can reduce on-going costs.	On-going programme through life of strategy and beyond as technology and solutions develop.
Provide AV equipment for supporting Hybrid meetings	A full return to face to face meetings will be unlikely and it is therefore essential to provide the tools for effective virtual and hybrid meetings.	Core rooms on all sites complete by September 2021. On-going review as technology and working practices change.
Review IT Operational processes and practices in line with best practice	There will a continual improvement process established for IT services ensuring that our processes are designed to support our customers. This will include a review of operational practices and hours of service as the nature of the way we work evolves.	Underway, and to establish as an on-going programme of improvements.

How will we measure success?

- Increase in % of overall workforce with access to IT
- Increase in number of applications available in any location
- Decrease in % of users on non-standard equipment
- Reduce the overall number of line of business applications
- Reduction in licence costs for third party applications

Theme 3 - Smarter working - Skilled workforce

IT hardware, software and cyber threats are ever changing. It is important that our users have the right knowledge, training and services to support a skilled workforce that can make the most of our technology investments when combined with the appropriate support for business and behavioural change.

What are we doing?	Why this?	When?
Standardisation across IT services and Equipment	To aid clearer training, support and the use of in-service champions there will be more standardisation of equipment, dependent on the scenario, software and routes of access. Not only does this help support and training it will also improve consistency and security.	On-going
IT & Technology training	Working with colleagues in the Corporate Learning and Development services to ensure the right range and level of training is available to all users. Establish a mix of training approaches to support different learning needs and to ensure there is good uptake of the online and available training from Microsoft and Partners.	On-going
Continued use of Champions Network	The approach of using Champions in service areas has proven a successful and valuable route for support for users and services in both technology and business change. This approach will continue and be used as a standard mechanism of support on large projects.	On-going and for large projects to be established as part of the project processes and in-place before services move to Business as Usual support.
Training of IT staff	The technology landscape is changing rapidly and the IT service need to be fully skilled to be able to support, configure and secure the applications provided. The service will make a use of a mix of formal training, external support and consultancy and on-line training from Microsoft.	On-going with an formal requirements identified through Annual Appraisal process.
Review and develop models of support	The current IT support service uses standard approaches of the Service Desk as a first	Continual service improvement approaches already in place. More formal

	point of contact and resolution where possible. As technology and user habits change the service will be reviewed to explore other avenues of support such as WebChat, drop-in sessions, out of hours support and wider self-service options.	review to be completed in Q4 2021/22.
Engage with industry bodies for benchmarking and support	To make use of a range of best practice services and tools to measure the effectiveness and maturity of the IT service against similar and leading organisations.	Engage with SOCITM July 2021 Join benchmarking exercises for in the 2022/23 financial year.
Enhanced Cyber Security Training	Working with colleagues in the Learning and Development team a range of training will be provided on specific Cyber security topics. The programme will be expanded and run to support changes in threats / technology.	Programme of training to be begin in October 2021

How will we measure success?

- On-going use of Champions network
- Increase in uptake of available IT training
- Reduction in support calls for areas that can be solved by training
- Benchmarking scores against similar organisations

Theme 4 - A Culture of Innovation - Future technologies

Whilst ensuring that as the strong foundations and right tools are embedded is important so is the ability for the council to be a leader in, and at the forefront in the use of new technology including AI, Robotics, Internet of Things. This will ensure the authority is able to meet future challenges and support initiatives such as Smart Cities.

What are we doing?	Why this?	When?
Explore the use of AI (Artificial Intelligence)	The use of AI is a much talked about topic. SCC has had some early successes with the user of SOBOT for online self-service queries and there could be potential other uses to assist with service delivery & planning as well as a further	From Jan 2022

	improved customer experience.	
Explore and implement automation	The scope for efficiencies and savings through automation of manual and repetitive processes is large and could be a key tool for closing the budget gap faced by the organisation.	Increase use of MS PowerPlatform as of June 2021 Consider automation on all technology projects – On-going
Explore potential benefits of IoT (Internet of Things)	As with AI the potential for IoT often talked about but as yet not significantly implemented in local authorities. For a 'smart', connected city, investigation in the potential for IoT will be essential.	Investigation into potential projects by Mar 2022. Further projects may follow.
Engage with peers, partners and national organisations to be at forefront of new technologies	An aspiration of SCC is to be a leader in technology enabled services and as part of this it is important to engage with peers, partner organisations and national projects to ensure we can take learning where available or promote the work of SCC where we are leading	Engage SOCITM July 2021 Engage with peers / partners – from Jun 2021

How will we measure success?

- Increase in number of automated / scripted processes that replace manual steps
- Increase in the level of savings / efficiencies released as a result of technology implementation
- Improved customer services and satisfaction rates with IT service
- Reduced risk of reliance on legacy technology on the SCC estate

Theme 5 - Catalyst for city-wide growth - Partnerships and commercialism

The public sector as a whole is facing the same challenges and opportunities from and technology perspective. Expanding existing and establishing new partnerships to explore opportunities for shared working and services to meet these challenges jointly will be an important element in delivering the IT Strategy. Equally there is some excellent work completed and being developed by SCC which may open opportunities to generate further income and develop more commercial opportunities as an authority.

What are we doing?	Why this?	When?
Engagement in local user groups and projects	Across the sector there are a lot of partnership projects and SCC and where there is mutual benefit. Examples include the Social Data Foundation, joint NHS projects and engaging on partner projects with Microsoft	On-going and when appropriate
Establish partnerships with local public-sector partners	The public sector has gone through an unprecedented set of challenges over the last 2 years which follows from a number of years of budget pressures. There is convergence on a lot of technology approaches with greater use of cloud services, greater implementation of remote and flexible working and a large use of Microsoft 365. We will work with partners to established shared services and practices that benefit all organisations and delivers efficiencies and savings.	TBC
Review of chargeable services provided	The current services that generate income have been in place for some time. A review is required to ensure there is a clear understanding of the full cost of service, and a full understanding the benefits delivered whether this is financial, data quality or efficiency	Services to be reviewed before the start of 2022/23 financial year.
Exploration of new areas for new partnerships or markets for service	SCC deliver a range of high-quality services and there is potential for these to be offered to a wider user base, with greater income and efficiencies as a result.	On-going, to start after review of costs/benefits is completed

How will we measure success?

- Increase in income or clear value from traded services
- Increase in engagement with location projects
- Formal partnerships agreed with public sector organisations

- Improved satisfaction with services that are delivered in partnership with Health and Social Care organisations
- Increase in IT solutions that are developed through strategic partnerships