SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY 2024-30

VISION

Our digital vision is to empower our communities to access digitally inclusive services, designed around their needs which support the delivery of our Corporate objectives.

Our people will be given the skills, data and technology needed to deliver the best possible services for our communities and organisation.

We will ensure that every local person, employee, partner organisation, visitor and stakeholder benefit from the opportunities presented by the digital era, to lead Southampton as a digitally enabled city.

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Executive Summary

This digital strategy aims to outline our digital aspiration over the next 6 years as a Council. Digital is a vital part of all services we provide for local people, employees, businesses, partner organisations and stakeholders. This strategy will outline our vision, our drivers for change, our digital principles, our key priorities and how we aim to deliver digital change and improvements.

This strategy is only one part of a wider approach required to ensure that the council delivers digitally enabled and enhanced services. The digital strategy will also be enabled by, and support the delivery of, the data and customer access strategies. Data underpins the design and understanding of flow, customer access helps to understand the needs of the users, both of which will tie in with the digital vision priorities. The customer strategy ensures the focus of the authority on delivering the best services for our customers. Both have been developed alongside the Digital Strategy to ensure they are complementary in supporting the delivery of the corporate objectives and that priorities are aligned.

The current challenges for council budgets resulting from decreased central government funding, increasing demand for services and the cost of living crisis, means the role of digital to reduce costs while maintaining services is crucial. This strategy and associated operating model, will provide a roadmap that will enable the council to do more with less.

Figure 1: Interdependencies of Digital, Data and Customer Access strategies

Facts and Figures

3,600 Users of IT

2,200 Smartphones and 250 Smart Tablets in use.

3,500 Laptops issued

40+ Buildings connected to the corporate network

12 Petabytes of data

1.8m e-mails received in a typical month.

15,000 meetings on teams monthly

18,000 messages sent a month on Teams

Setting the scene

This strategy has been informed by the large amount of digital work currently in progress and the work that has been completed as part of the previous digital strategy. That work focused on building our digital platforms and infrastructure, developing the offer around digital skills for local people and employees, and supporting the digital economy. This has allowed the organisation to move from a traditional desk based fixed workforce to a modern organisation with access to systems and tools from anywhere supporting greater flexibility for the workforce and enabling service changes supporting better services for our residents and businesses.

To build on this strong foundation, we will learn from our previous digital initiatives and assess areas to celebrate and opportunities for improvement. This learning will continue throughout this strategy in line with our digital principles.

Some key achievements from last strategy:

- Implementation of the M365 suite of modern working tools.

- Staff equipped to work flexibly and remotely moving from a traditional desktop based organisation.

- Replacement of legacy telephony and WiFi platforms.

- Improved connectivity to all sites through the implementation of SD-WAN technology.

- Implementation or migration of key systems to modern, cloud-based architectures.

- Significant cost reductions in systems and contracts.

- Development of power platform supporting greater automation and streamlining

Digital technology is an essential part of everyday life for all of us and we live in a rapidly changing world that is more interconnected than ever. Our communities expect our digital offer to meet their needs whether they live, work in or visit Southampton. To meet these expectations we need to empower and connect our communities, create more efficient processes, and improve services.

In setting the scene we must also consider the future use of AI within the digital realm at Southampton City Council. It is our intention to review and revisit this strategy at regular points and we will then consider the wider picture of AI use within Councils. The innovation and advancement of AI will drive its usability within services. But before allowing the use of AI we would need to be very careful and considerate around how we apply it, introducing a strict use policy and security measures. We would expect to have champions and experts in place amongst all areas of the Council before any programme to use AI was introduced.

We have worked with partner organisations to undertake discovery work within Southampton City Council to understand the current pain points, what works well, ideas for improvement and focus areas for our strategy over the next 6 years (with a halfway point review and refresh). The strategy is based around three key themes which tie together our goals and expected outcomes into tangible deliverables to improve digital services within Southampton City Council and for all who interact with us.

The following sections will explain in more detail the four pillars within the diagram below:

*Figure 2: Explaining some of the key elements within our strategy*
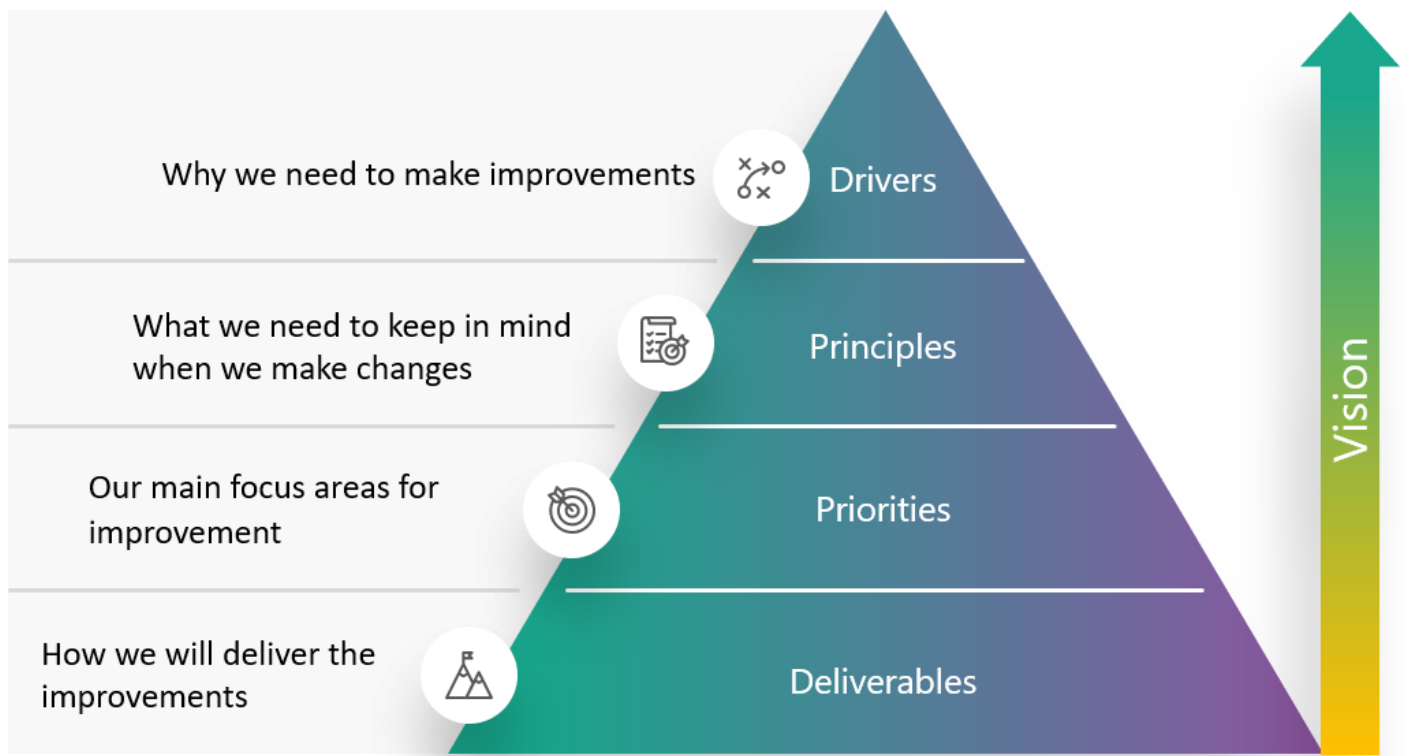
Themes

Our themes have been developed from the detailed work we undertook with a partner organisation through late 2023 into early 2024. Research was undertaken with staff from multiple directorates to understand our current digital maturity and capabilities. From the research findings, three clear themes emerged for areas in which we can focus our efforts over the next 6 years to make improvements, as seen at the bottom of the diagram, technology and architecture will be an enabling theme for all others.

These themes will help us to categorise and understand our priorities and the activity we need to undertake to achieve the goals within our priorities.
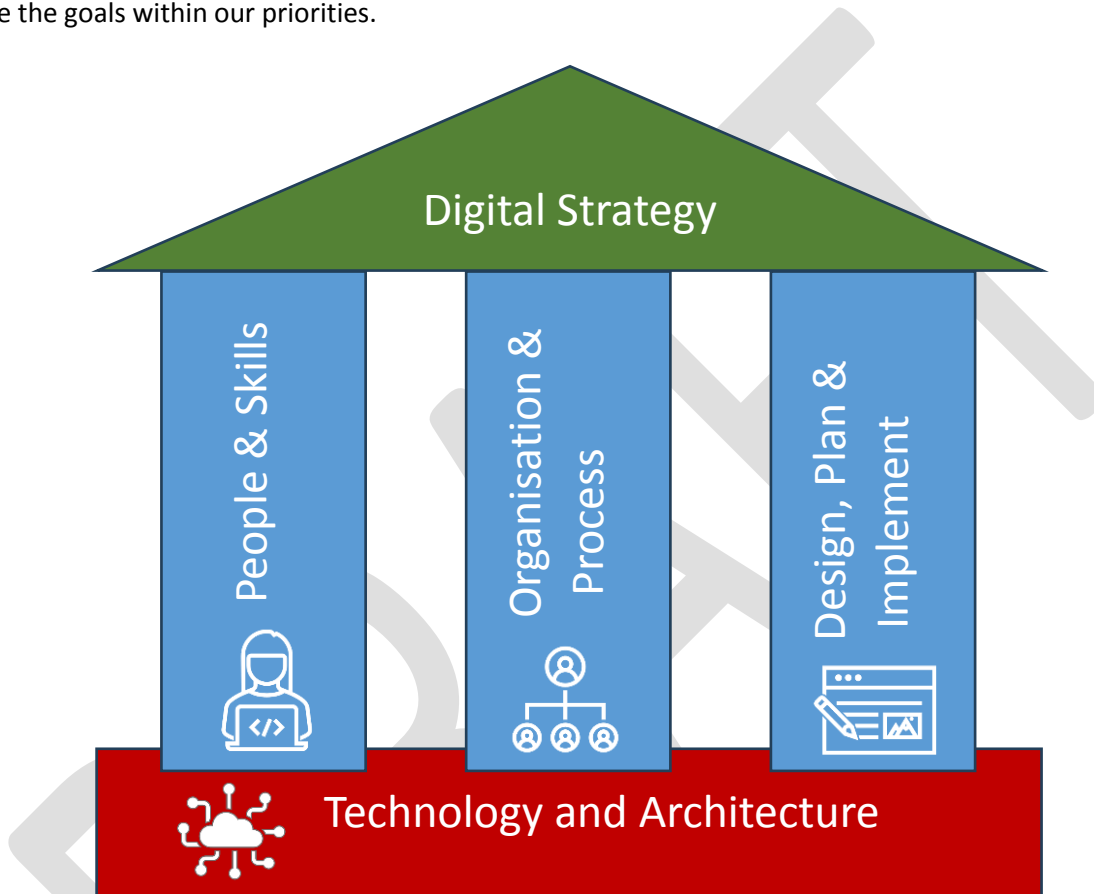
People and skills - Equipping our people with the digital skills and technology required to deliver services effectively and efficiently, ensuring there is a culture of digital innovation and improvement throughout the council, at all levels.

Organisation and process – Ensuring processes are as efficient as possible with the appropriate amount of governance in place to create streamlined and consistently applied principles.

Design, plan and implement – Getting the basics right to engage users and gather requirements to deploy holistic end to end service design, planning and implementation, which ultimately meets users' needs whilst being as inclusive as possible.

Technology and architecture – Building a technical architecture and roadmap that enables delivery of the key themes and associated benefits, while rationalising the systems landscape, maximising the return on investment and shifting the balance to transformation from BAU.

Strategic drivers

Our strategic drivers underpin and explain not only why digital is so important but also why we need to make improvements now. These key drivers summarise feedback developed with stakeholders from across the whole organisation. They underpin the requirement for a forward looking, holistic and collaborative strategy for digital services at Southampton City Council.

The digital strategy looks to plan improvements which consider our strategic drivers and the use of digital technology to enhance services, streamline operations, and improve overall efficiency. The key drivers we have identified are outlined below. A full description of each driver is available in appendix 1
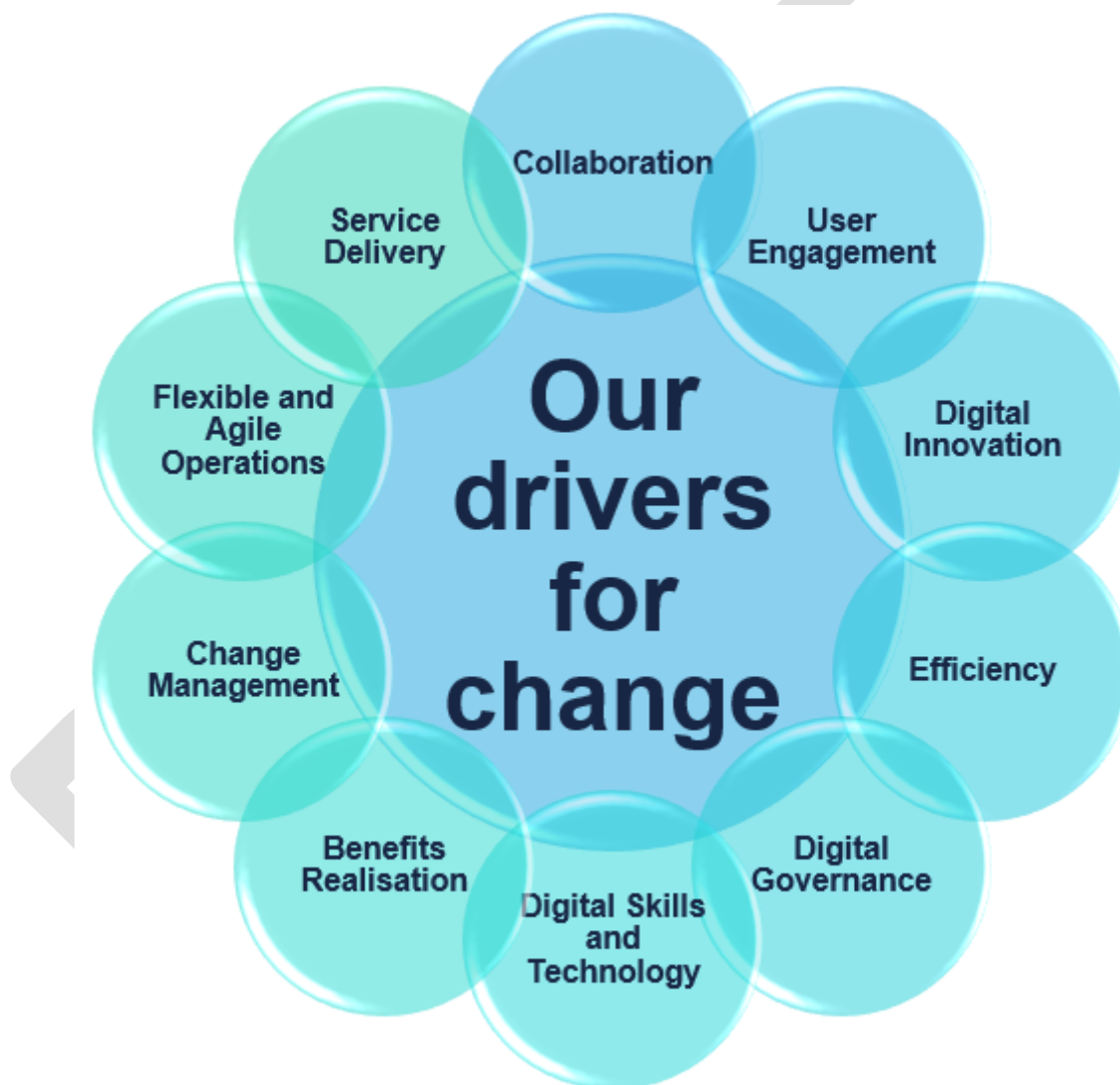
Strategic Principles

Our principles will help enable and align activity against the vision and priorities of Southampton's digital strategy. Delivering our digital vision requires a shift, in both cultural and digital practices, therefore we have established overarching digital principles that will help us to keep in mind what our key principles are before implementing any digital change.

All digital innovation and change will align to our digital vision for 2024 - 2030		
People & Skills	**Process and organisation**	**Design, plan and implement**
User needs and use of digital will be at the heart of our transformation	Digital will be used to simplify and automate processes	Consider end to end service design before implementing digital solutions
Support and empower our people to improve their digital skills	Minimise non-value add activity within digital processes	Ensure collaboration between IT & service areas in service design & planning
Digital services & solutions will be inclusive, usable and accessible	Governance will be appropriate, consistent and communicated	Conduct ongoing evaluation to ensure continuous improvement

Technology and architecture as an enabler		
The architecture will be based on the ability to integrate solutions in a secure manner and enable the reuse of master data	A technology roadmap will be used to guide the procurement and development of new solutions	Architecture principles and standardised non-functional requirements will be used for assurance

Priorities

We have outlined our vision, our drivers for change, our key themes and our digital principles. So how will we actually achieve our vision? What are our main areas of focus for improvement activities over the next 6 years?

Below we have outlined our main priorities per theme. These priorities will enable us to achieve our vision and improve the areas which we know will catapult Southampton City Council even further into being a leading digitally enabled Council for the future.

The list below is not exhaustive but outlines our key high level priorities, actions and benefits. A more detailed list of activity can be found within the transformation roadmap in appendix 2

Theme - People and skills

Priority	We will…(deliverable)	So that… (the benefit)
Priority 1: Ensure all staff have the right digital skills so that they can perform their work effectively and improve the maturity of key capabilities	**Conduct a learning needs analysis to baseline digital skills and gaps within the organisation**	We understand the skills gaps that our people have and can implement changes required that are needed to enable them to do their jobs effectively
	Make use of and incentivise cross-functional communities of practice, such as digital champions	We can share best practice knowledge to enhance digital skills and technology utilisation across the organisation and build a more collaborative culture
	Work with HR to integrate a digital skills competency framework into the recruitment process, ensuring it is considered as part of recruitment & staff development	All staff, including new recruits, have the minimum digital skills to do their job effectively and identify new areas for development
Priority 2: Engage internal and external users to understand their digital needs in order to develop user centric digital services	**Prioritise user research and ongoing testing, creating a framework to ensure it is applied consistently on all digital projects and seen through to project implementation**	Digital change is user centric and our people end up with intuitive and user friendly systems, making them more productive. Local people's needs are understood, ensuring that digital is accessible and user friendly
	Understand user requirements at the outset of any digital change project	IT can collaborate on best possible digital outcomes for users, meaning changes are both best in class & future proofed to maximise investment, efficiencies & increase channel migration
Priority 3: Ensure that all digital changes and skills improvement programmes are sponsored by leadership within service areas	**Embed senior sponsorship into digital change initiatives**	A digital culture is driven from the top down, to ensure digital is seen as a priority, which removes siloes and maximises benefits through consistency
	Introduce a senior leader digital skills training initiative with representatives from across the organisation	To ensure 'buy in' which is then promoted to services, knowledge sharing from the top down will enable widespread skills improvement that ultimately improves services

Priority	We will…(deliverable)	So that… (the benefit)
	Promote the digital vision and wider strategy amongst leaders for dissemination to teams	We can remove the impression that a vision is tick box exercise, to promote what it is we are actually trying to achieve so we align our activities with purpose to improve digital services as a whole for our people and local people

Theme - Process and organisation

Priority	We will…(deliverable)	So that… (the benefit)
Priority 4: Improve digital governance processes to ensure there is a clear and consistent approach	**Create a new digital governance board structure to enable the monitoring and assurance against the strategy**	The strategy is regularly viewed and the priorities are met which ensures current pain points are improved, providing a better service for all
	Promote the digital governance structure to the wider organisation	Users are aware of the process and can easily follow it to achieve their service goals with a consistently applied governance process which removes time waste on incorrect governance routes. Users understand the rationale behind the process and the benefits.
	Establish a set of digital governance principles via a transparent prioritisation matrix	We can easily prioritise projects which will add the most value and are not just for those 'for shout the loudest' enabling us to stop work which does not deliver value and benefits and that work is aligned to strategic objectives
Priority 5: Ensure that processes are as efficient as possible, remove any non-value add activity and create automation where possible	**Help services to undertake a process mapping exercise to understand where digital can assist with self-service and automation of processes**	Self-service and automation can remove non-value add activity to streamline processes within service areas making processes simpler and more efficient
	Embed a process automation and self-service first principle which is considered when procuring new systems or making digital changes	We can procure the solution which enables the goal of self-service and automation to ensure we are focussed on our priority digital vision for the future
	Ensure we have strong links with the data team & strategy to guide the simplification of processes to make them uniform, to drive consistent data input and that Data is considered in any digital project or procurement	Consistent and simplified processes drives better data quality which ultimately improves decision making across the Council. It also removes singles points of failure which exist when processes have been created and tailored by individuals
Priority 6: Create a combined project and change management process which brings together IT, PMO, Transformation and service areas to ensure that projects are aligned and holistic	**Create an organisation wide change process that is well communicated and understood, with clear governance and design principles, that engages IT and other cross functional teams to design and manage change effectively**	All projects are considered with a digital lens to ensure that cross functional expertise is applied consistently to all change projects, maximising the benefits of digital

|	Create a joined up process whereby IT are always engaged early in procurement to help understand the requirement and alignment to the roadmap	Digital solutions fit the IT architecture and user needs and provide more opportunities for interoperability, ultimately enabling a single source of truth and better user experience
	Improve understanding of Agile as a concept in SCC and ensure capability is there to use Agile as appropriate and embedded in the Digital service as the default approach for new digital projects	Agile methodology when used appropriately can achieve quick results with reduced bureaucracy which can hinder quick and efficient outcomes

Theme - Design, plan and implement

Priority	We will…(deliverable)	So that… (the benefit)
Priority 7: Ensure we have a robust and holistic service design process for digital	**Define service design principles and agree the 'SCC way' that is cross-functional and end-to-end. Introducing IT business partnering as standard to key service areas**	We have a collaborative approach that ensures departments are aware of each other's priorities, therefore designing solutions and services which provide the best possible solution for users
	Develop a core service design capability that can be used across the organisation, incorporating it into the wider change and project management processes	A specialised service design skill set exists which can maximise efficiencies by leading on and consistently applying service design principles
	Agree a selection of service design tools and use them consistently (user journey mapping, user stories, feedback methods, collaboration tools, prototyping)	Consistent tools will mean consistent outcomes, ensuring users are understood and pain points are addressed
Priority 8: Remove silos and develop cross functional service design and planning	**Work with services to ensure that digital is embedded into all service plans**	Digital is not an afterthought and will be an enabling tool for services when making their service plans
	Work with service areas on digital elements of service plans to understand the art of the possible, what is available corporately and help quantify potential savings	We can identify the best possible opportunity to help services achieve their service plans, which drives things like automation, productivity and savings
	Incorporate service design elements to understand needs of users when making service plans	User needs are an essential consideration when designing end to end services to ensure that we are not writing service plans without considering what we actually need to achieve for our users in the short and long term
Priority 9: Ensure that project implementation and ongoing improvements are aligned to findings from user research both internal and external	**Embed user engagement and research as core to service design and capture the qualitative data**	We create an evidence base of why change is needed and the expected benefits
	Ensure that users are continually engaged throughout a digital change	Users feel engaged and can regularly feedback their views to ensure they

	project, create a robust engagement model using change management principles	get a user centred outcome which works well for them, driving positive user experience for our people and local people

Delivering our strategy

To ensure the successful implementation of our Digital Strategy, there must be clear and effective digital governance. To achieve this, we will establish a Digital, Data and Customer Board who will be responsible for regularly reviewing the strategy and roadmap to ensure the digital priorities and actions are being implemented. They will be responsible for prioritisation and disseminating actions to the ICT Improvement Group (existing) for user feedback and the Technical Review Board (new) to discuss the technical requirements and wider IT architecture. Requests will then be submitted to the relevant change request or project process.
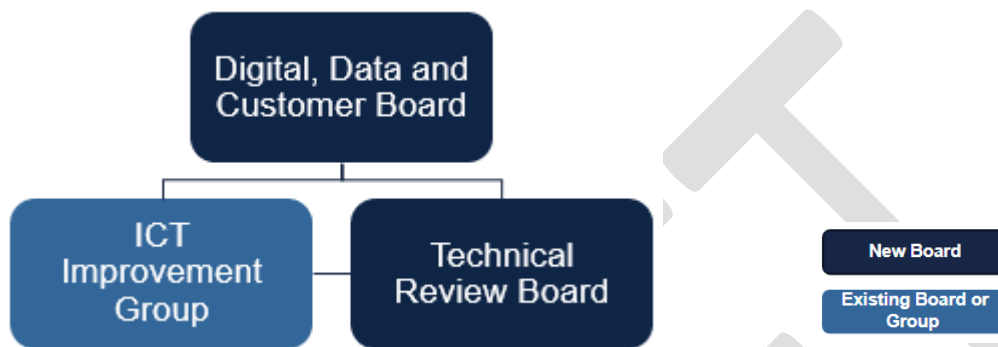
A digital transformation roadmap (appendix 2) has been developed to provide detailed actions to deliver the priorities within this strategy. This roadmap is split into three timeframes (now, next and later) to help with prioritisation over the lifetime of the strategy, this will also be influenced by the availability of funding, resources and any new council priorities.

The initial actions in the 'now' category will focus on the high priority activities that will have a big impact on delivering the digital vision described in this strategy. Implementing these actions will enable and support the 'next' and 'later' actions, establishing the digital foundations.

The roadmap will be reviewed quarterly by the Digital, Data and Customer Board to oversee the implementation of these actions.

Target Operating Model

The accompanying Target Operating Model will outline the governance, processes and organisational structures needed to deliver the strategy. It will outline the key capabilities that need development to support the strategy and maximise the benefits.

The prioritised list of activities and roadmap will include activities for implementing the Target Operating Model, developing the required capabilities and identify any additional opportunities for delivering benefits.

Challenges

All strategies should be achievable and outline our plan to achieve the aspirations within. However, in the backdrop of modern Council set ups and financial pressures, it should be noted that challenges to deliver will exist and must be mitigated to ensure that the strategy can be achieved.

Challenge	High level mitigation
• Budget constraints	✓ An invest to save mentality is needed to drive changes that will ultimately drive savings
• Changing embedded culture	✓ Change programmes must outline benefits and engage staff in a positive way to encourage change
• Lack of leadership	✓ The strategy must be promoted and driven from the top down to break down silos and create staff 'buy in'
• Poor data quality	✓ Processes must be aligned and systems integrated to ensure we have a single source of truth and progress the data strategy
• Legacy technology	✓ Old systems within Councils can hinder progress and innovation (linked to budget restraints and culture too), new system must be considered that will ultimately drive a modern, automated and more efficient Council
• Resource constraints	✓ Effective prioritisation of work and ensuring that resource requirements for projects are well defined will help ensure the available resource used to effectively
• Skills gaps	✓ Staff and users will need to be able to continually improve their digital skills to ensure the best services delivered and full benefits can be realised

Appendix 1 – Strategic drivers explained

1. **Collaboration:** Southampton wants to access the right skills and knowledge across different service areas when working on digital projects. This is achieved by implementing processes and developing a culture that encourage collaboration between IT, Digital, PMO, Service Design and Transformation teams to utilise skills and expertise to deliver the best digital outcomes. Where required this extends to collaboration with partners and suppliers.

2. **User Engagement:** Being able to properly understand user needs by engaging and incorporating their feedback when designing and developing digital projects, will improve the user experience of the end service. Digital services can provide more channels for services and engaging local people and businesses. Online platforms, social media, and mobile apps can facilitate engagement, feedback, and participation in decision-making processes.

3. **Digital Innovation:** Southampton would like to develop the skills and capacity to identifying innovative digital solutions in a more proactive way, investing in horizon scanning, instead of being reactive to changing markets. Understanding the art of the possible is, potential benefits and having the ability to run proof of concepts can support a roadmap that takes the benefits of new opportunities and meets users expectations, while better managing risk.

4. **Efficiency:** Councils are currently under pressure to reduce costs against a background of increasing demand, 'deliver more with less'. Making use of digital tools and approaches can lead to cost savings throu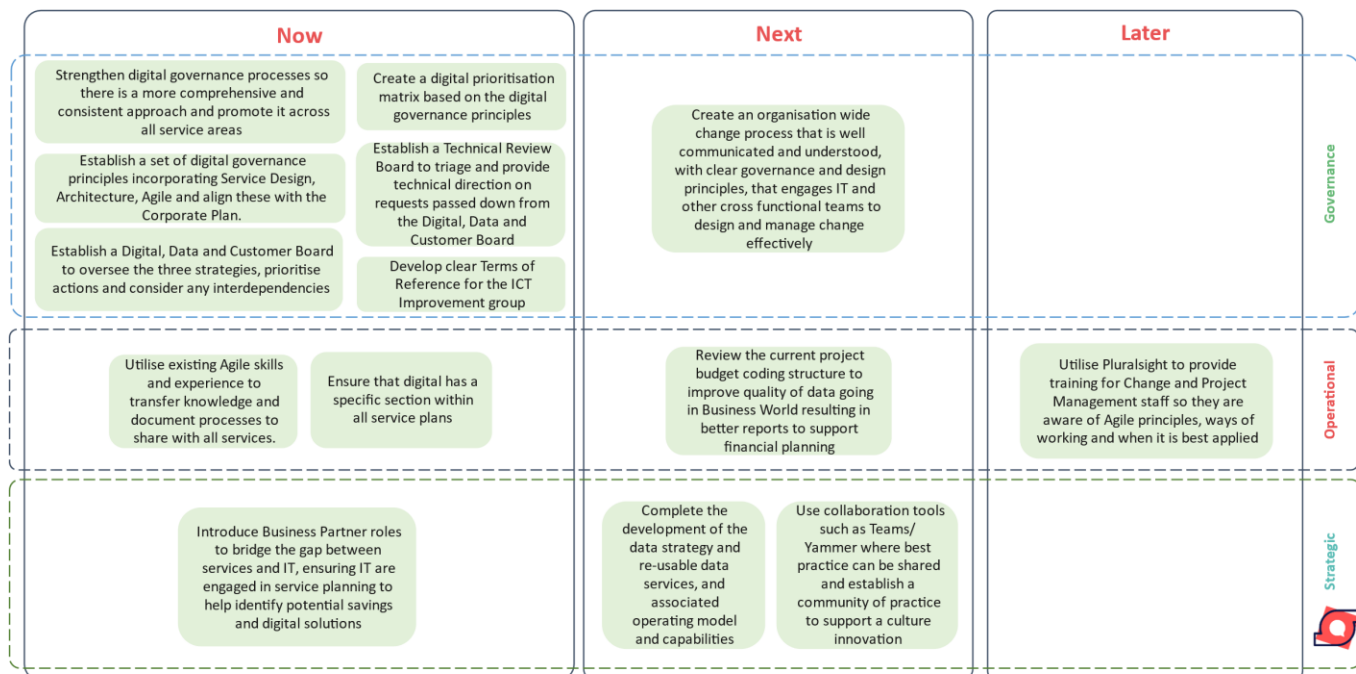gh automation, process efficiencies, and reduced reliance on manual intervention. There is a challenge of needing to invest to save, particularly in the technology roadmap, but there are opportunities to do this incrementally, as opportunities arise.

5. **Digital Governance:** There is a need to standardise the approach to all digital projects and requests, with a clear set of digital principles that will inform prioritisation and provide a consistent approach and assess alignment to the agreed digital strategy and technology roadmap.

6. **Digital Skills and Technology:** Investing in equipping all colleagues with the digital tools and skills they need to effectively deliver services and improve processes, providing the best service to our people. Implementing a competency framework as part of staff development and recruitment will help ensure appropriate skills are developed and maintained within the council, that meet the needs of individual service areas.

7. **Benefit Realisation:** Southampton are keen to focus on the benefits and positive impact of digital solutions instead of primarily focusing on cost when procuring new digital tools. This will require collection of data as part of the design process to properly understand current costs, and build in end to end monitoring and measurements from the start, to assess actual benefits and drive continual improvements.

8. **Change Management:** Having a single and well communicated change process, that embeds a range of proven change management methodologies will enable Southampton to effectively implement and maintain change across digital projects. It will support a holistic view of change activities, their priority and how they align to the councils strategic objectives as a result of the digital strategy.

9. **Flexible and Agile Operations:** Digital methods and modern solutions can enable the council to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and evolving needs. Integrated cloud-based solutions, for example, provide more flexibility and scalability and the ability to respond to an ever changing environment.

10. **Service Delivery:** Digital services can improve service delivery by providing more accessible, efficient, and responsive services to local people. Online platforms and digital communication tools can enhance the overall experience for all users and through integration and automation, make them more efficient, reducing failure demand. By strengthening service design to create services that are efficient and user centred, service delivery will be improved.

Appendix 2 – The transformation roadmap

People and Skills

	Now	Next	Later
Operational	Agree priority capabilities for delivery of your digital strategy and develop action plan for improvement / IT to communicate key information like KPIs, turnaround times, IT service catalogue and service status monitoring to all users / Digital Team to work with HR to embed a digital skills competency framework into the recruitment process and competency reviews	IT and Learning and Development Teams to work in partnership to develop a digital skills training programme covering basic to advanced skills, new systems and utilising digital technology. Then promote this to the whole organisation	Conduct a review of all website and intranet pages to ensure there is consistency across all service areas and ensure digital channels are being utilised effectively / Implement digital skills training programme based on findings from the LNA
Strategic	Embed senior sponsorship into digital change initiatives / Establish an active digital champion network or community of practice to transfer knowledge, share expertise and document processes / Promote the digital vision and wider strategy amongst leaders for dissemination to teams / Conduct a learning needs analysis to baseline digital skills and gaps within the organisation	Central projects and change team to ensure user engagement techniques are shared and aligned with IT projects / Ensure change and project management methodologies of ongoing user research (with diverse groups), engagement, testing and communications are applied to all digital change projects / Ensure senior leadership have easy access to data allowing regular insights and for them to stay on top of the current state of digital. Central data team to co-ordinate a programme of providing consistent reports to senior leaders / Design user journey templates and use them for all large pieces of work / Develop a Communication Strategy to engage the organisation with digital / Introduce a senior leader digital skills training initiative with representatives from across the organisation	Engage with communities, staff and partners to understand their engagement preferences for digital channels, such as social media, chat bots, surveys, forums etc., alongside traditional methods.

Process and Organisation

	Now	Next	Later
Governance	Strengthen digital governance processes so there is a more comprehensive and consistent approach and promote it across all service areas / Establish a set of digital governance principles incorporating Service Design, Architecture, Agile and align these with the Corporate Plan. / Establish a Digital, Data and Customer Board to oversee the three strategies, prioritise actions and consider any interdependencies / Create a digital prioritisation matrix based on the digital governance principles / Establish a Technical Review Board to triage and provide technical direction on requests passed down from the Digital, Data and Customer Board / Develop clear Terms of Reference for the ICT Improvement group	Create an organisation wide change process that is well communicated and understood, with clear governance and design principles, that engages IT and other cross functional teams to design and manage change effectively	
Operational	Utilise existing Agile skills and experience to transfer knowledge and document processes to share with all services. / Ensure that digital has a specific section within all service plans	Review the current project budget coding structure to improve quality of data going in Business World resulting in better reports to support financial planning	Utilise Pluralsight to provide training for Change and Project Management staff so they are aware of Agile principles, ways of working and when it is best applied
Strategic	Introduce Business Partner roles to bridge the gap between services and IT, ensuring IT are engaged in service planning to help identify potential savings and digital solutions	Complete the development of the data strategy and re-usable data services, and associated operating model and capabilities / Use collaboration tools such as Teams/Yammer where best practice can be shared and establish a community of practice to support a culture innovation	

Technology & Architecture

	Now	Next	Later	
Governance		Define and recruit to an Enterprise Architect role to develop the EA capability for IT and SCC more widely.	Ensure that governance for new technology is strengthened to include an IT review of integration capability/interoperability (part of the procurement governance)	
Operational	Explore the potential benefits of a contract review with Civica and Capita to achieve a more strategic approach Review opportunities to fully exploit the MS365 platform and functionality included with the E5 licensing, look at license profiling to manage costs	Investigate how the CRM can be used to support customer communications and understand their communication preferences alongside recording customer interactions Make better use of the CMDB and the metadata model to understand the application landscape and the relationship with contracts for identification of change opportunities and improved reporting.	Understand and define the As-Is architecture, and applications to identify duplication of functionality (with a view to removing duplications) and a roadmap for reduction the number of legacy systems and technical debt Undertake a systems review including contractual arrangements and opportunities to align with the digital strategy	Conduct a contract review of key suppliers to agree a more strategic approach with more preferential benefit clauses Review the provision of the Total Mobile field worker service, to maximise efficiency and return on investment Look to re-organise the development resource into more solution agnostic, cross service orientated teams, with a focus on end-to-end digital services and integration.	
Strategic	Create an Integration Strategy, with associated capabilities Review TOM recommendations and incorporate actions into IT service plans	Consider a third-party full analysis of the wider software licence and utilisation landscape to identify areas where more robust licence management could reduce costs. Complete the development of the data strategy and resusable data services, and associated operating model and capabilities	Application rationalisation or improved utilisation: - Share Point - Power Platform - Combined use of Academy and Digital360 in Revs and Bens - Asset Management systems - Case Management solutions - Payment solutions	Undertake a report review org wide to understand duplication and inconsistencies across currently siloed areas	

Design, Plan and Implement

	Now	Next	Later	
Governance	Ensure services are aware of the process for procuring new systems and must engage IT who will inform the best possible solution	Create a cross cutting process with IT/Procurement team to ensure IT are consistently engaged at an early stage in all technology/digital procurement, via a set of standard IT and service design principles or active engagement with IT, Transformation and PMO teams			
Operational	Develop a core service design capability that can be used across the organisation, with a clear set of design principles that are cross-functional and end to end	Develop a toolkit to ensure that requirements are gathered before the commencement of any procurement. Ensure principles and priorities are included and that services are aware of the need for robust requirement gathering process	Understand internal users need and corporate requirements around financial planning and forecasting and build appropriate reporting tools	Create a crossfunctional team to work with the business to explain the art of the possible for digital opportunities, understand the businesses challenges and utilise IT's expertise to identify potential digital solutions	
Strategic	Create a Service Design Toolkit with a selection of service design tools (user journey mapping, user stories, feedback methods, collaboration tools, prototyping) and use them consistently across all services	Embed user engagement and research as core part of Southampton's service design approach to capture qualitative data to inform usercentred design		Build in monitoring and reporting of benefits as part of service design process	