DECISION-MAKER:	Cabinet
SUBJECT:	Data Strategy
DATE OF DECISION:	25 June 2024
REPORT OF:	**COUNCILLOR LETTS** **CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES**

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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
NOT APPLICABLE

BRIEF SUMMARY
Data is one of the organisations key assets. To maximise the potential benefit from our information, we need to collect it accurately, manage it effectively, re-use it where we can, share it appropriately and ensure that it is adequately protected. Data and the intelligence derived from it are essential in becoming an evidence-informed council and in delivering the transformation required to become a modern and sustainable organisation. The Data and Intelligence Strategy sets out our vision to achieve this. This paper summarises the need for the strategy, it's vision for our data and intelligence, priority areas for action and the process of developing it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:		
	(i)	To approve and adopt the 2024-2030 Data & Intelligence Strategy, including the priority action areas, principles and outcomes set out in the strategy
	(ii)	To support the alignment of services and projects to the new Data strategy ensuring consistency across the authority and supporting closer working across the wider city and sub-region.

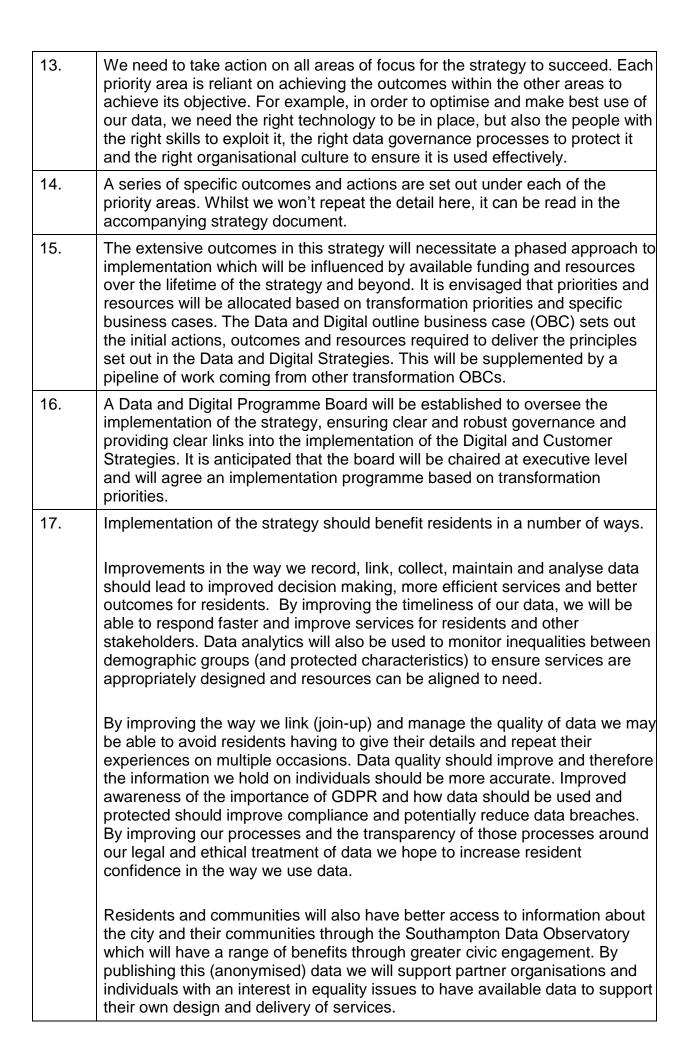| REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1.	Making best use of our data and intelligence assets will be essential in driving organisational transformation and being an evidence informed organisation, sustainable and fit for the future. The Data & Intelligence Strategy sets out the vision to achieve this.
2.	Southampton City Council does not currently have a Data Strategy despite data being one of our key assets and data-led decision making being central to the delivery of our corporate plan.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
3.	Continue as we are; do not have a specific Data Strategy and do not have a strategic direction for how we manage and make best use of our data assets.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
4.	Across Southampton City Council (SCC) we use data in our daily working lives as we work to achieve our objectives. Data comes in many forms and is held in a variety of paper and electronic formats (digital and non-digital). Data is fundamental to drive operational activity, undertake financial transactions, engage with our customers, formulate policy, deliver and manage our services and operate internal functions without which SCC simply could not function. Despite this, data is not always recognised as an asset and SCC has not previously had a defined Data and Intelligence Strategy.
5.	Several assessments of SCC (going back to 2015 KPMG report) have found: • Not always a clear link made between data and strategic objectives. • Inconsistent approach to performance data and performance management. • Data is often held in 'silos' and takes considerable effort to join up • Inefficient manual-based processes • Data use, understanding and skills vary dramatically across SCC • Data infrastructure is not fit for purpose; data stored in numerous systems (approx. 128) – some are poorly understood and support varies - making use of data complicated and time consuming. • Accountable ownership of data and good data management practices are not embedded consistently across the council. This results in poor data quality; decisions being made without supporting evidence and lack of trust in available data. • Lack of some specialist capability and skills
6.	In response to some of these challenges, there has been an ongoing process of successful incremental development undertaken in the Data, Intelligence & Insight service over the last few years. This strategy looks to build upon that work and accelerate the implementation of proven effective working practices alongside the development of new capabilities. Recent improvements include: • Established a centralised Data and Intelligence team with the right people and skillsets, although there is further work to be carried out to develop a true centre of excellence. • Performance, strategic analysis and research & insight functions in one team; providing a critical mass of intelligence professionals better able to cross skill and flex to demand pressures. • Principal Analysts posts created that take a business partnering approach to support services use their data more effectively. They also addressed structural, management and resource issues in key areas. • Improved use of more efficient and automated reporting technologies and increased self-serve (Power BI/Southampton Data Observatory).
7.	To maximise the potential benefit from our information, we need to collect it accurately, manage it effectively, re-use it where we can, share it appropriately and ensure that it is adequately protected.

8.	Furthermore, evidence informed decision making is now a core operating principle (as set out in SCC's [Corporate Plan 2022-2030](#)), and the Data and Intelligence Strategy will help drive the organisation to a position where SCC is using data and analytics as a much more fundamental part of its decision-making process. This will also help increase transparency and justification in decision making, in turn supporting the principles of democratic decision making.
9.	The Data and Intelligence Strategy is part of a wider approach required to ensure that SCC is at the leading edge of digital and technology enabled and enhanced services. There is strong alignment with the Customer Access Strategy and Digital Strategy, both of which will support the objectives and approach of this strategy.
10.	The strategy has been developed over the last 18 months based on a series of extensive research activities. Desk based policy research was conducted to understand what had been done elsewhere, identify common themes and to establish best practice. This was supplemented by fact finding meetings with local authorities identified as exemplars or further along their data maturity journey. We also completed the LGA Data Maturity Self-Assessment to benchmark our data maturity and to better understand our strengths, weaknesses and gaps. Finally, we conducted a series of 'future basing' workshops, which provided further insight on what data professionals and our wider stakeholders felt was important to address in the strategy.
11.	Based on the above activities, the Southampton City Council Data and Intelligence Strategy sets out the following vision: *Data is accurate, understood and valued. The right data, intelligence and insight will be made available to the right people at the right time to drive effective, evidence-informed decision making, performance management and future planning.*
12.	This strategy sets out five priority areas of focus. These are the critical areas of focus that will help us to achieve our vision. They are: **Optimised Use of Data and Intelligence** - Extract maximum value from our data and intelligence by ensuring it is embedded in the decision-making process at strategic and operational levels. **Data and Intelligence-led Culture** - The value of data and intelligence is understood, utilised and embedded at both strategic and operational levels with all staff and elected members routinely using it to help them with their work. **Data Management and Technology** - Data management processes and practices are clearly defined, whilst technology is used to drive efficiencies, improve data access and enable data maturity goals. **People and Skills** - All staff and elected members are supported to be data literate and advanced data science capabilities exist in house through a centre of excellence model. **Data Governance** - Clear data governance is in place, data sharing is easy and compliant, and staff understand their responsibilities, the principles of data security, and the legislation underpinning it.

13.	We need to take action on all areas of focus for the strategy to succeed. Each priority area is reliant on achieving the outcomes within the other areas to achieve its objective. For example, in order to optimise and make best use of our data, we need the right technology to be in place, but also the people with the right skills to exploit it, the right data governance processes to protect it and the right organisational culture to ensure it is used effectively.
14.	A series of specific outcomes and actions are set out under each of the priority areas. Whilst we won't repeat the detail here, it can be read in the accompanying strategy document.
15.	The extensive outcomes in this strategy will necessitate a phased approach to implementation which will be influenced by available funding and resources over the lifetime of the strategy and beyond. It is envisaged that priorities and resources will be allocated based on transformation priorities and specific business cases. The Data and Digital outline business case (OBC) sets out the initial actions, outcomes and resources required to deliver the principles set out in the Data and Digital Strategies. This will be supplemented by a pipeline of work coming from other transformation OBCs.
16.	A Data and Digital Programme Board will be established to oversee the implementation of the strategy, ensuring clear and robust governance and providing clear links into the implementation of the Digital and Customer Strategies. It is anticipated that the board will be chaired at executive level and will agree an implementation programme based on transformation priorities.
17.	Implementation of the strategy should benefit residents in a number of ways. Improvements in the way we record, link, collect, maintain and analyse data should lead to improved decision making, more efficient services and better outcomes for residents. By improving the timeliness of our data, we will be able to respond faster and improve services for residents and other stakeholders. Data analytics will also be used to monitor inequalities between demographic groups (and protected characteristics) to ensure services are appropriately designed and resources can be aligned to need. By improving the way we link (join-up) and manage the quality of data we may be able to avoid residents having to give their details and repeat their experiences on multiple occasions. Data quality should improve and therefore the information we hold on individuals should be more accurate. Improved awareness of the importance of GDPR and how data should be used and protected should improve compliance and potentially reduce data breaches. By improving our processes and the transparency of those processes around our legal and ethical treatment of data we hope to increase resident confidence in the way we use data. Residents and communities will also have better access to information about the city and their communities through the Southampton Data Observatory which will have a range of benefits through greater civic engagement. By publishing this (anonymised) data we will support partner organisations and individuals with an interest in equality issues to have available data to support their own design and delivery of services.

18.	Over the period of this strategy, it is inevitable that technology will change and evolve, shifting the 'art of the possible' and opening-up new opportunities to use our data in new innovative ways. The strategy therefore provides the foundations for understanding and using our data which can be further developed through future iterations.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

19.	There are no specific capital/revenue budget requirements set out within the Data & Intelligence Strategy. However, it is recognised that additional resources may be required to accelerate implementation. Alongside this, there will be a number of transformation projects/programmes that will require data support. Whilst these will align with the principles set out in the strategy, the specific resourcing required to deliver them will be set out in separate business cases through the Adapt, Grow, Thrive Programme.
20.	The benefits of improved access to data and intelligence to drive more effective evidence-based decision making, alongside new technologies to drive automation and self-serve and improved skills and practices set out in the strategy are likely to lead to efficiencies across the council and improved outcomes for residents.

Property/Other

21.	N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

22.	Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 and Section 1 Localism Act 2011

Other Legal Implications:

23.	Any purchasing that is required will be completed via the appropriate procurement route.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

24.	Individual projects to deliver the strategy would be subject to their own risk management processes as part of the appropriate project delivery or procurement approach.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

25.	The Data and Intelligence Strategy, alongside the Digital and Customer Strategies will be key strategies for delivering the corporate objectives from 2024-2030

KEY DECISION?	**Yes**	
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:		none
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION		

Appendices

1.	Data and Intelligence Strategy 2024-2030

2.	ESIA

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None

Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	**Yes**

Data Protection Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	**No**

Other Background Documents
Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	**Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)**
1.	
2.	