HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 7 JUNE 2021

PUBLIC REPORT: Yes

EXEMPT REPORT: No

Report Title	ICT Strategy
KEY DECISION	Yes
Report Author	Clive Mason, Director; Finance & Fixed Assets
Purpose of Report	For Cabinet to consider and recommend the ICT Strategy.
Reason for Decision	The Council relies on ICT to deliver its services. It is imperative that the Council has an appropriately agile approach to delivering its services and the provision if ICT is core to that delivery, and the ICT Strategy provides the framework within which ICT will be provided to deliver services.
Portfolio (holder)	Councillor James Hallam; Finance
Corporate Priorities	YOUR COUNCIL: creative, proactive, and efficient CO 08 Deliver financial sustainability for the future
Financial Implications	This report presents the strategic ICT framework through which ICT will support the delivery of its services over the medium-term. ICT will also underpin many of the initiatives that have been identified via the Budget Challenge 25 programme; and thus will support service efficiency and improvements in service effectiveness and the transformation programme that will follow Budget Challenge 25. The cost of the strategy has been met from 2020/21 Corporate budgets. Subsequent ICT transformation work will be funded from the Transformation Earmarked Reserve as the immediate and long-term benefits will be accrued corporately.
Risk Management Implications	The ICT Strategy will help in mitigating future service interruption etc. One of the aims of the strategy is to simplify current provision so ICT has increasingly flexible but also secure.
Environmental Implications	None
Legal Implications	None.
Equality Implications	None
Data Protection Implications	None
Consultation	The ICT Strategy will be considered by Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council. In the development of the strategy, members of staff at all levels and across all services have been consulted.
Background Papers	None

Appendices	**Appendix 1:** The ICT Strategy
Recommendation	**That Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of the ICT Strategy attached at Appendix 1.**

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   The Council maintains several corporate strategies, of which the ICT Strategy is one, who's primary purpose is to support the delivery of the Councils Corporate Vision, and consequently the delivery of all Council services. The Councils previous ICT Strategy expired on at the end of 2017 and it is now necessary to approve a new strategy for the next medium-term period.

1.2   As a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Council has seen a fundamental change in how its customers use its services and how services have been delivered. Where before, although important, ICT was seen as one tool in the Councils armoury to deliver services; but now it is clearly evidence that, along with our staff, it is now one of our primary delivery tools. By way of example, over the last year all business grants administered were delivered electronically, face-to-face customer contact now does not occur, staff are almost entirely working from home and even member meetings have been held virtually.

1.3   Further, with the Council adopting Netcall, this is a fundamental evolution in the use of ICT that will enable significant change in our relationship with both internal and external customers. Consequently, with the increase in remote working and ICT centric service delivery, it is necessary that the Council adopts a new ICT Strategy and one that is progressive and makes every effort to future proof service delivery within a digital operating environment.

2.   **BACKGROUD TO DEVELOPING THE ICT STRATEGY**

2.1   The proposed ICT Strategy is shown at **Appendix 1**. However, in its development it was necessary to consider several key factors that would directly impact on the type of ICT that the Council needs for the future; these are summarised below:

Purpose and Key Foundations

2.2   The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Understand business drivers and service needs, working closely with service areas, suppliers, and partners.
- Enabling the Council to deliver efficient, effective, and evolving services through the provision of effective ICT.
- Achieving value for money through the delivery of continuous improvement.
- Tailoring digital technology and ICT to support excellent customer services in line with safety, security, and sound polices/procedures.

- Recognising that the IT Service should proactively support the Councils responsibilities regarding the environment and climate change

2.3 Considering the above, the strategy will be based on two primary foundations; namely:

i. **Firm Foundations**, this will include:
- Secure, resilient, and simple infrastructure.
- Agile, lightweight best practice and processes.
- An ICT service that enables business needs in a cloud environment.
- Up to date and relevant application portfolio designed to operate in the cloud.
- An approach that allows future flexibility and adaptability.

ii. **Transformation**, this will include:
- Service designed around the customer, staff, and partner needs.
- Continuous improvement processes working alongside customers, staff, members and partners and solution provider to continually improve business solutions.
- A model that improves support and enablement of cloud provision for infrastructure and applications.
- Application of industry experience, innovation, and the ability to adapt and respond quickly
- Focus on service delivery to enable sustained improvement.

Service Area Drivers

2.4 In the development of the Strategy, national and local considerations have been considered, as well as current perceptions of the ICT service. What has been determined are the following key service area drivers:

i. **Seamless user experience regardless of location**
- ICT must work effectively and remotely.
- Users receive effective support.
- Users can answer call from different mediums but through one solution, irrespective of location.
- Users can seamlessly access all type of date effectively.

ii. **Enablement of collaborative working**
- Seamless, secure, and responsive access to 3rd party/partner services or applications.

- To share data in compliance with GDPR effectively across the organisation and its partners.

3. THE STRATEGY

3.1 The Councils ambition is to use ICT to deliver services efficiently and effectively; this will entail the Council adopting new forms of ICT including cloud, mobile, 5G networks, internet of things, artificial intelligence, automation, and zero-trust networking. To achieve this the ICT Strategy is centred around four guiding principles; namely:

- **Modern Desktop**; this will enable users to work anywhere, remain secure, with technology deployed commonly and using latest productivity tools.
- **Cloud First**; to use business practices that utilise cloud services as much as possible. Along with cloud computing solutions.
- **Zero Trust**; adopting a security concept that requires all users to be appropriately authenticated, authorised and in a system that continuously validates security.
- **Leveraging Existing Technology**; continue to use existing solutions where they remain fit for purpose, meet business requirements, and will only be replaced at the point of natural refresh.

3.2 With adhering to the above principles the ICT Strategy will deliver good ICT to the Council; it will touch every service and the Councils customers and partners should see significant improvements in the services that they receive. In summary, the key deliverables within the ICT strategy include:

Enterprise Architecture

3.3 This will entail the Council fundamentally reviewing its current service and storage infrastructure, its network and telephony infrastructure, its computing and office environment and ICT security.

3.4 This transformation will be closely managed via an Infrastructure roadmap which is expected to take nearly two-years to complete (i.e. to the end of 2022/23).

Data and Information Management

3.5 A review of all business data will be carried out by the business, with support from ICT. The business will need to determine the type and usage of data, with respective revisions to policies and procedures. Further, the data review will also have to consider the implications of Data Protection and GDPR especially considering the move to remote and agile working.

Service Delivery

3.6   How services are supported will also be reviewed. This will be to ensure that users have the right technology (kit), are supported in a way that meets their need and is secure. Services should also be able to self-support in many instances and to a greater degree than they can now. The Council will seek to adopt ITIL 4 processes to refine the service delivery and support the guiding principles in 3.1.

3.7   However, the adoption of a more agile ICT platform will bring with it some significant challenges. The Council heavily relies on the following key systems:

- Idox (Uniform): data management
- One Advanced (eFinanicals): financial management

Migration from the system infrastructures that support these two applications will be a challenge, but if the Council is to achieve the maximum benefit, then these two systems will have to adapt or be replaced.

ICT Service Transformation

3.8   The Strategy will require a transformation within the ICT service itself. In many ways the transformation required of the ICT service will mirror the transformation that will be undertaken within services. As well as new forms of ICT provision, the extensive use of digital technology will require new skills to be acquired by the ICT team.

4.   BENEFITS OF THE NEW ICT STRATEGY

4.1   As mentioned in the introduction, the past year has seen significant change in how the Council has delivered its services, and the Council has done this very well. In addition to the changes that have occurred because of the pandemic, the service led change that the BC25 programme will introduce will also be significant to the ICT change programme. Further, with the Council moving to a continuous improvement culture; this will again bring further ICT change and improvements to services that will benefit customers, partners, staff, and members. Such change will contribute to the Council achieving its ambition of being financially sustainable, and delivering affordable services in the medium-term.