

Item No. 15.	Classification: Open	Date: 18 January 2022	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Technology and Digital Service Digital Inclusion Report 2022-2025	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Rebecca Lury, Finance, Performance and Democracy	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR REBECCA LURY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND DEMOCRACY

The Technology and Digital Strategy's ambition is to ensure that Southwark is recognised as one of the leading digital boroughs in London. A borough that delivers a digitally inclusive society by developing the digital infrastructure and services that enable its citizens, communities and businesses to thrive.

The rapid digital acceleration created by the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the inequalities in our Borough and this strategy will aim to support around connectivity, skills and devices and creating the right environment for a future workforce.

Key to becoming a truly inclusive digital borough, is a strong partnership and collaboration between the council local businesses, technology providers and organisations from the public, private, community and academic sectors. This collaborative approach will enable new innovative opportunities that maximise the use of digital technologies and the skills and capabilities of our citizens and local businesses.

Technology will continue to play an essential enabling role in supporting the future aims of both the borough and the council, with Southwark Technology and Digital Service being the council platform to enable delivery of its vision for a technology enabled borough of the future. Our workforce, many of who live in the Borough have relied on technology enabled solutions to continue to support the residents in our Borough, therefore even the improvements in our internal and partnership technology service will create improvements for residents.

The strategy is underpinned by five Delivery Pillars to set out how we will do this:

- **Making Southwark one of the best connected boroughs in London and developing emerging technology:** Understanding how technology can be used to enable our residents, businesses and staff to become digital-first and innovating to ensure Southwark is the one of the best connected boroughs in London.

- **Tackling digital exclusion and ensuring our residents have the tools, skills and technology to be participate in today's society:** Providing fast, reliable internet availability throughout the Borough, and the skills to enable our residents to use digital.
- **Empowering local businesses:** Working with local businesses to ensure that they are making the most of a digital-first approach.
- **Improving resident experiences:** Reviewing how we deliver services to allow residents to have a seamless digital interaction with us.
- **Supporting our staff:** Ensuring that Council staff have access to modern workplace technology, and the skills to enable them to deliver services as efficiently as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note progress against the previous suite of strategies as agreed by Cabinet.
2. To agree the refreshed vision, outcomes and deliverables contained in the Technology and Digital Strategy.
3. To note that following the agreement to the Technology and Digital Service, Inclusion Strategy, a portfolio of projects and programmes phased over the three years of the Strategy will be implemented and monitored through the Technology Transformation and Digital Delivery Portfolio Review Groups and the Technology and Digital Strategy Board.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. There have been three related strategies that have been delivered against from previous years, namely the Digital Infrastructure Strategy agreed at Cabinet November 2017, Southwark's IT Strategy agreed at Cabinet November 2016 and Southwark's Digital Strategy agreed by Cabinet February 2016.
5. Given the Council Plan has been recently refreshed and that a number of the objectives from the strategies have been achieved, it is timely to take an end of cycle review to reset the focus and to combine the three strategies.
6. Responding to COVID-19 has impacted how local government operates internally and how residents need to access services digitally. This has resulted in an accelerated need for remote and flexible workplaces and an increasing expectation of connectivity and services to residents.
7. Delivering this strategy will provide our workforce with the tools and digital skills to deliver the council's priority outcomes and to make sure that services are fit for the future.

8. There has been extensive stakeholder and resident engagement to ensure this strategy refresh, is founded on our future organisational requirements, and is achievable but equally ambitious and future focused. When designing the delivery plan for this strategy, further engagement with staff and residents will ensure organisational alignment and support of departmental plans.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

9. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Democracy and the Strategic Director of Housing and Customer Experience are leading on the digital transformation for the organisation.
10. The Digital Delivery and Technology and Data Transformation teams will coordinate organizational wide technology transformation, whilst providing support and expertise to designing and improving digital services, ensuring efficiency savings are achieved and customer experiences improved.
11. The overarching Technology and Digital Strategy will help put in place essential elements needed to make sure that staff are able to deliver our corporate plans and priorities for our borough and as one council.

The SSWark Council Technology & Digital Inclusion Programme will deliver:

12. Transformation in these areas contribute to the Fairer Future theme – Thriving Neighborhoods, as more and more residents will be able “to benefit from opportunities to take advantage of the digital revolution.”
13. The vision is about putting citizens, customers and users first when we think about designing and delivering services, using technology as an enabler of transformation of services that puts digital at the centre of how the council wants to operate, working differently to become a digital council. As the world continues to change in recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic where technology has become a cornerstone of global leadership, future investment in technology and collaborative working opportunities will enable us to achieve our ambition for an inclusive digital borough that everyone can benefit from.
14. Digital provides the opportunity to encourage creating positive outcomes for residents. Digital engagement with residents to ensure they feel informed and listened to in a world where public forums may not feel safe to them or continue to be restricted. Where data is used to create a one council approach to prevention and early intervention to create a digital borough for the future where residents feel more engaged, have opportunities to change health outcomes and receive early support.

Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts

Policy implications

15. The strategy has been written in alignment with the Customer Access Strategy and the Council borough plan which will both be reviewed in 2024. Technology and Digital Strategy will be reviewed in 2023 in alignment with the Shared Technology Service Roadmap 2021-2023. As highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, using technology is essential to respond to change so the priorities and outcomes of this strategy will be reviewed more regularly.

Community impact statement

16. The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to a number of equality considerations when exercising their function. This process may be informed by an equality analysis.
17. Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 Southwark Council has a duty to have due regard in its decision making processes to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct.
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
18. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. The Public Section Equality Duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership but only in relation to (a) above.
19. The proposal to refresh the Technology and Digital Strategy will not negatively impact service users with Southwark Council with protected characteristics because there is no proposed reduction or restriction of the scope of the Services that are already being offered to them.

Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement

20. Please refer to points 16-17 above. The Technology and Digital Inclusion Strategy will reflect the relevant duties in relation to protected characteristics and equality.
21. A key principle of the Strategy is that “nobody is left behind”. The Strategy is far reaching in relation to digital and technology related ambitions, however the underlying theme throughout is around digital inclusion, education and skills for all. For each programme of work, impact assessments will be used to fully understand how various parts of our communities will be affected as appropriate.

22. As Soutwark digitalises and makes improvements and changes to how we work and deliver services, we need to ensure that those in each of the protected characteristics groups are still able to access council services and support using traditional methods such as face to face and telephone support. This is because not all residents may not have the capacity nor the desire to get online.
23. Digital poverty is a major contributing factor to digital exclusion and may prevent some residents from benefiting from the outcomes of this strategy. Residents facing socio-economic disadvantages may be unable to afford devices and a regular broadband connection to connect to the internet and access council services online. In addition to this, residents may lack the digital skills to engage which may lead to future exclusion. This pillars detailed within in this Strategy aim at tackling these inequalities, to ensure that as many residents and Soutwark employees as possible benefit from the improvements and programmes of work.

Health impact statement

24. There are no specific health implications related to this Strategy, however the different delivery pillars will allow the council to harness technology and innovations which can play a role in the improvement of health and wellbeing of residents across the borough.

Climate change implications

25. There are no direct climate change implications arising directly from this report. The individual programmes contained within this report will be subject to appropriate processes to assess and mitigate risks and to maximise potential benefits.

Resource implications

26. As future areas of work are developed, individual businesses cases for approval will be developed.

Legal implications

27. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Financial implications

28. As future areas of work are developed individual business cases for approval will be developed.

Consultation

29. Officers have carried out engagement with partners and other directorates to ensure the refreshed Technology and Digital Strategy reflects the all stakeholders' needs. Although there is no requirement for the Council to

formally consult for the refreshed strategy, officers have engaged with service managers, departments, senior management and the community to include their views.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Head of Procurement

30. Not applicable.

Director of Law and Governance

31. The Director of Law and Governance notes that the report asks cabinet to note the progress against the suite of IT and digital strategies previously agreed by cabinet and to agree the refreshed vision, outcomes and deliverables contained in the Technology and Digital Strategy.

32. The cabinet is delegated to make this decision in accordance with part 3B of the council's constitution.

33. The cabinet is reminded of the public sector equality duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as set out in the community impact statement paragraphs above.

34. It is noted that consideration of the need to tackle digital inclusion for all residents of Southwark is a specific strand of the policy going forward and cabinet will need to consider the extent to which this, and the strategy as a whole, will impact any individuals who have protected characteristics. An equality impact assessment has been produced which the cabinet should consider when making this decision. The PSED general duty is a continuing one and will need to be given due regard in the ongoing work plans of the strategy.

35. Whilst there is no requirement to consult the public on the production of this strategy, the report identifies work that has been done to obtain external views and how these have been taken into account.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

36. Not applicable – budget is already allocated within the existing Technology and Digital departmental budgets and each programme referenced will be subject to further discussion at the Technology and Digital Strategy Board.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark's Fairer Future IT Strategy 2017-2020	Technology and Digital Services/ Modernise	Dionne Lowndes 07523919592
Link: https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/modernise-strategy		
Southwark's Digital Infrastructure Strategy 2017-2020	Technology and Digital Services/ Modernise	Dionne Lowndes 07523919592
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/8774/Appendix-4-Digital-Infrastructure-Strategy-2017-to-2020.pdf		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Technology and Digital Inclusion Strategy

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Rebecca Lury, Finance, Performance and Democracy	
Lead Officer	Richard Selley, Director of Customer Experience	
Report Author	Dionne Lowndes, Chief Digital & Technology Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	10 January 2022	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		10 January 2022