



# Cornwall Council

## Digital Plans, Progress and Ambition

# Challenge Review Report

Version 4.1

July 2019

This report summarises the findings of a peer review of Cornwall Council's digital journey and plans. It was carried out by Jos Creese, CCL, during June and July 2019, through the Local Government Association 'Productivity Expert Programme'.

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## Executive Summary

This review was commissioned by Cornwall Council to build on a previous corporate peer challenge, in conjunction with the LGA, with a specific focus on a digital health check. The Terms of Reference are attached at **Appendix A**, which was provided as a briefing note for those involved and interviewed.

The review has considered the Council's:

- **Digital Cornwall programme (DC1)**, including plans and progress
- **IT service direction and strategy** (the IS Strategy now in final draft)
- **Future digital strategy ambitions** (the emerging **DC2** programme)

This was designed as a short, 'light-touch' assessment, to highlight areas of good practice and to guide where there may be gaps in thinking, over-ambition in terms of risk, or alignment issues between IT, digital and corporate vision. It has not considered every aspect of the Council's digital development, concentrating effort instead on:

- A review of core Council's documents, comparing with best practice
- Two days on site interviewing a wide range of staff, teams and members
- A number of telephone interviews, concentrating on specific areas
- Subsequent helpful feedback from those involved .

A list of source documents is attached at **Appendix B** and a list of those interviewed and who contributed to this work attached at **Appendix C**.

An important backdrop to this assessment is the Council's decision in 2015 to terminate the £160m contract with BT Cornwall after just two years and to bring services back in-house. This led to a three-year £18m investment programme from 2017, (DC1) to stabilise and modernise IT delivery and to provide a solid basis for future digital transformation (DC2).

The **DC1** programme is moving towards a close and has been largely successful in all its ambitions. The scale of the achievement is not to be dismissed lightly – this was a large and complex programme by any measures. The **DC2** programme is still in development. The ambition is becoming clearer, as is the scale of risk and change required to fulfil the vision. The DC2 programme is an important opportunity to modernise and to rethink the role of the Council for the future, provided it treats this as a whole Council change programme, not as an 'IT project' or even a digital transformation programme in isolation.

This report considers some of the likely impacts of digital developments on related topics: internal governance, customer access, a 'digital Cornwall', digital inclusion, cyber risk, finance and efficiency. In some of these areas there is more work to do to ensure alignment and cohesion, avoiding gaps and divergence of aims that could conflict with digital ambitions.

A summary of key Actions of attached at **Appendix D**, whilst recognising that the Council is on a journey, and some of the suggested areas may already be in progress.

# Key findings

## Summary of Positive findings:

The Council has made outstanding progress from a relatively low base, both in extricating itself from a complex outsourcing partnership to bring services in house, and also in stabilising and modernising its IT estate. Credit is due to the leadership of officers within and outside IT, political support for this radical change, and in the willingness and confidence to invest and manage complex change.

The scale and pace of delivery of the complex and foundational Digital Cornwall Programme is impressive and should be commended; in my opinion, few public or private sector organisations could do better. This bodes well for the future DC2 programme which will arguably contain some even greater challenges

The drafted IS Strategy is well thought-out and contains a good balance of modernisation and improvement of legacy IT estate, alongside new technologies that will underpin digital transformation in the future. There is also good evidence of successful and effective implementation, albeit that this has yet to reach every part of the Council's service teams

There is a strong and cohesive team spirit within IT and across the different areas represented in this review. This collaboration and collective commitment to improve, coupled with greater capacity and capability levels, will be essential ingredients for the future. The IT function, whilst relatively new, appears mature and forward thinking in its approach

The digital vision is still being formulated but is progressing well and led by a team of committed and creative individuals who are involving the wider Council. As work develops it will be important to ensure a broad and deep range of ideas emerges, unconstrained by existing limits (money, technology, or thinking). Moderation in what can practically be delivered can subsequently follow

Customer focus under the umbrella of the Council's Customer Access Strategy and Customer Service Promise is strong, putting citizens preferences and needs at the heart of policy and strategy. This will help with digital prioritisation and should define any final choice of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. The Digital Inclusion Strategy for the region is a compelling document, with multi-agency endorsement of how to create a prosperous and inclusive digital community across Cornwall that harnesses digital benefits and recognises its risks

Members are involved in digital development through a representative group of 'digital advocates' and the Portfolio Holder is a supportive leader in this. This is very positive in connecting digital ambition with member priorities, not always found in councils. These advocates in Cornwall are well-informed and strongly supportive of the direction of travel, and enthusiastic about the possibilities of technology, as well as the progress being made in modernising IT. They recognise the Digital Cornwall opportunity and the priority for the Council to achieve maturity in its own IT and digital plans. They are concerned to ensure appropriate risk management, resource allocation and digital inclusion.

## Areas of Risk or Improvement:

In creating momentum for IT-enabled organisational change, it will be important that the Council distinguishes between 'IT' and 'digital' (the former being about technology improvement and the latter about business change and service remodelling). Whilst noted in the Digital Improvement Plan, agreed by the previous administration in 2017, much of the focus to date has been on IT improvement, stabilisation and development – the DC1 programme.

'Digital' is about wider organisational change, risk management, governance, service design – the IT is an enabler. There is a risk that the DC2 programme may be viewed by some as a continuation of the DC1, rather than a fundamental review of how the organisation works. DC1 is a foundational programme and has not required a great deal of cultural and behavioural change, whilst DC2 will depend on this. DC2 must also be driven by customer access strategy ambitions, and more work is needed in this area in order to provide a clear steer for digital and IT programme priorities.

The Council has 10 main corporate strategies, each of which needs to have a symbiotic relationship with the digital developments across the Council. A number of these connections are not yet clearly made, and it will be important for the Council to ensure that DC2 is not a standalone programme but impacts every one of the corporate strategies and activities. DC2 must also link directly to financial, commercial, environmental, customer and wider economic targets that the council has set, and this is not yet strongly evidenced. The Customer and Access Strategy in particular needs to drive digital ambitions. It is over three years old and in need of refresh in order to describe in detail how digital and technology choices will be made.

There is currently a challenge with prioritisation of IT activity. Despite significant growth and capacity, the volume of demand on IT is considerable. Prioritisation across the whole organisation will be important in order to resist 'change overload' and to put IT under pressure to deliver an impossible workload. This is being planned and will be essential for the success of the digital programme, particularly in ring-fencing and focusing scarce resources (including resisting high levels of backfill requests to build digital capacity).

Communications and marketing will need a greater emphasis going forward. Whilst staff at the centre of the organisation are in general well-informed, there is a need to widen staff (and citizen involvement). This also requires simplification of the message (there are many reports and they are often long and wordy). This will be important for those who are not close to the centre of activity within the Council and who need to understand in simple and practical terms how 'digital' will impact their work.

In laying out the digital ambitions for the future, the Council could be bolder in its vision for a Digital Cornwall and its benefits. Cornwall has some significant advantages in terms of infrastructure, climate and geography that could be harnessed in a variety of ways, bringing economic, environmental and social benefits to the Council and to the region. The Council needs to define more clearly how radical it wants to be in this respect and the role that it should play.

Many of the digital challenges and opportunities for the Council itself are still being assessed, and there are a number of risks that this report describes. These may already be understood, but the scale of the challenges ahead will be at least as great as those already encountered. In some respects, the Council needs to be more radical and less risk averse, provided it ensures the necessary governance and cultural change needed to ensure success.

## Terminology

This report uses the terms 'IS' (Information Systems) and 'IT' (Information Technology) interchangeably, recognising that the Council's IT strategy (draft) is now called an IS strategy.

There was some confusion found by the review in the use of the word 'digital'— particularly in the 'Digital Cornwall 1' (DC1) programme, where most of the activity in practice is to do with technology management and improvement.

'Digital' (as in 'Digital Transformation') is 'business change enabled by technology' (i.e. the Digital Cornwall 2 programme DC2). Digital transformation is a whole organisation process enabled by (and often driven by) technology opportunity. The challenge lies in governance, leadership, culture, skills, behaviours, business analysis and risk management methods, as much as in the successful deployment of the technology itself.

This distinction is important, and it is recommended that the Council defines 'digital' more clearly in order to be able to prioritise, understand and to focus on the cultural and workplace changes that the DC2 programme will bring. Otherwise there is a risk that DC2 may be mis-interpreted in some quarters as another phase of technology improvement alone, rather than something that will change the whole council and the majority of jobs.

# 1. Introduction

This report was commissioned through the Local Government Association (LGA) Expert Productivity Programme. This is a nationally funded programme that provides grant assisted independent expert advice to assist councils in England in tackling complex challenges, especially related to efficiency and productivity improvements.

This review for Cornwall Council builds on a previous corporate peer challenge, now assessing more specifically the digital plans of the Council and the extent to which these are 'fit for the future'. The Terms of Reference for this 'digital health check' are attached at **Appendix A**.

Financial risks and opportunities are not directly assessed here, though there is a commentary provided on efficiency and productivity opportunities, along with the scope in general for savings and return on investment from digital investments.

An important backdrop to this assessment was the Council's decision in 2015 to terminate the £160m contract with 'BT Cornwall' after just two years, and to bring services back in-house. This led to a three-year investment programme from 2017 of £18m to stabilise and modernise IT, to build a new IT team, governance and tools that can provide a solid basis for future digital development (DC1).

DC1 has formed the first part of this review, and was a significant undertaking in terms of scale, complexity and risk, depending for its success on political and executive leadership, investment and change management capability. Not only did the Council face the challenge of exiting a major outsourcing contract and building new in-house capability to replace it, but the inherited IT base on which all council services depended was at a seriously low level of quality and maturity.

This report does not consider the background to the BT contract, but the Council is to be highly commended for the success in stabilising its position so effectively - evidencing an ability to manage change and insourcing by council-wide collaboration, a willingness to invest, vision and leadership (political and executive). The DC1 improvement programme is now nearing completion and few public or private sector businesses could have achieved more or better.

The DC2 programme is still in development; the review therefore concentrated not just on the iterations of reports that were made available describing the DC2 programme, but also the ideas and the feedback of the team members who are leading the development and who were interviewed.

The review seeks to highlight areas of good practice as well as helping to guide where there may be gaps in thinking, over-ambition in terms of risk, or alignment issues between IT, digital and corporate vision. It also suggests actions for consideration (**Appendix D**). In particular, it considers areas which are often a risk to the successful delivery of digital transformation programmes:

- Are digital developments and priorities reflected in the strategic plans of the Council? Digital development is not a service specific programme, but a cross-cutting theme that needs to connect across traditional service boundaries

- How well is 'digital' embedded into the wider Council, informing IT planning? Digital definition and ambition should provide the mechanism for prioritisation of IT investment, aligned to Council aims, helping to unlock IT from legacy constraints and departmental demands
- Is there the capacity and capability in the Council (existing or planned) to ensure sustainable digital progress and momentum? This is not just the capacity and skills in the IT department, but more broadly in digital leadership, senior management understanding of the digital programme, and the impact on frontline staff
- Is there a realistic alignment of digital ambition with risk appetite? And, beyond this, are ambitions and vision for the digital programme over-ambitious or too timid? Sometimes digital programmes and strategies set high ambitions which are a stretch too far.

Inevitably for a quick assessment, this review is high-level, depending on a range of documents, interviews, meetings and conference calls. A range of 'challenge meetings' on-site over two days, and a wide research and assessment of a range of strategic background reports and strategies has led to the conclusions contained here, with acknowledgement that there may be gaps and misjudgement about the exact position on some developments.

The Council has been supportive throughout this review. Staff have been universally open and constructive, clearly comfortable with constructive challenge from an external consultant. This has made the review easier to conduct and hopefully more valuable in the honesty and accuracy of its insight. It also signifies a powerful ingredient of successful digital change is already in place – a culture that is comfortable with challenge, open, collaborative and adaptable.

## 2. The DC1 Programme

The 'Digital Cornwall 1' (DC1) programme defined the first stage of the digital transformation journey for the Council. It's prime purpose was to establish a firm basis for IT delivery after the BT Cornwall contract ended in 2015:

- Build the basis of a new in-house IT team
- Develop a new vision, strategy and ambition for IT
- Establish new IT governance, policies and leadership
- Prioritise urgent action to stabilise and resolve technology performance issues
- Create the technology architecture needed for future digital developments.

The assessment in this area included reviewing:

- The final draft of the IS strategy, Target Operating Model (TOM) for IT
- Progress in delivery of the new technology products (the DC1 programme)
- 'Drill down' into areas where risk is more likely to be found in future delivery.

The challenge for IT delivery after the termination of the BT Cornwall contract was to be able to build the IT capacity and capability required for the future and at the same time to sort out the weaknesses and under-investment in IT provision inherited from the previous arrangements.

### 2.1 Building the IT Team

Building IT capability in-house from scratch is challenging for any large organisation, let alone in the public sector where there is a complex and disparate range of technology skills and services required. It requires a mature marketplace for IT skills which Cornwall does not have, and considerable resources to recruit and source the skills required.

It also depends on a clear and effective organisational structure which reflects both the skills needed today and also anticipates changing IT trends. The Council has been remarkably successful in this and is close to creating the team it needs with full capacity. It is recruiting IT skills in areas that will be required in future but often in short supply (for example, business analysts, cyber security and data science).

Despite good progress, some areas of recruitment has proved difficult. IT will need to work with HR colleagues to establish the pay and rewards schemes necessary in a digital business to attract and retain the best IT professionals in key areas. Traditional job evaluation and grading mechanisms to establish remuneration may not always be suitable (see on).

## 2.2 The New Target Operating Model (TOM) for IT

Over the last 2 years the Council has built a Target Operating Model for IT with seven areas of change (see diagram):



Cornwall Council IT Target Operating Model (TOM)

This model is sound, well-understood by the IT team and simple to communicate. There is some notable forward-thinking:

- Building data skills
- Prioritising cyber development and risk management
- Focusing on IT business analysis and IT customer relationship management
- Adoption of agile methods and business-like procedures.

These areas will help to ensure that IT is not an inward-looking technology service team in a traditional way, but an outward-looking team focused on the digital and service plans of the Council, equipped and able to respond as well as any external service provider (and better). IT must be a 'strategic enabler' not an 'operational engineering service' alone.

The TOM should stand the test of time, but it will be important that activity in each area continues after the current DC1 programme is completed, and there will be challenges such as:

- Recruitment and retention of key skills and capacity in IT in a competitive marketplace (**TOM part 1**) will always prove difficult. The Council may wish to consider how to create greater incentives in this area, especially in specialist areas such as digital leadership, cyber, projects management, business analysis and data exploitation. It is not necessarily about salary levels alone, but a modern workforce model will recognise the value of individual roles above and beyond traditional metrics such as budget responsibility, team size and direct political or policy contribution

- There is a strong focus on ‘the customer’ (**TOM part 3**), but over time this may need to change with a maturity and expansion of the ‘customer definition’. In terms of IT provision, the customer will not always be ‘right’, whether suppliers, shared services, contractors, or the departments being served. Strong IT governance can help to ensure a balance between the ‘corporate’ customer and the needs of frontline staff in ways which maximises the value of IT’s contribution to the digital journey. For example, the customer journey may need to adapt, not just the IT that supports it
- Developing and retaining technical skills necessary for a modern and up to date technology platform (**TOM part 4**) will require a training and development budget in IT that reflects the difficulties in recruitment and retention of scarce IT skills. Competing in the marketplace locally will be expensive, and the options to become a training ground should be considered, including ‘recruiting for potential’ (rather than recruiting existing proven skills), nurturing talent, and an IT apprenticeship programme. It is a positive move that the IT service has recently introduced a small number of apprentices for the first time.
- IT business processes (**TOM part 5**) will need to be under constant review, and with a growing focus on IT (its costs, risks and opportunities), this is not a matter for IT alone. With an in-house IT team, independent external verification of value, performance and practice not only provides reassurance, but also identifies objectively priorities for improvement within and outside IT itself. The Council may wish to consider adopting ISO27000 series of externally auditable standards for IT management and security specifically
- The IT organisational structure (**TOM part 7**) must be maintained in a fluid way. The changing needs of the organisation, rebalancing IT and digital resources as well as technological advancement will require flexibility both in structures and re-evaluating the mix of in-house and bought in capacity or skills. There is also likely to be an on-going need to demonstrate commercial levels of efficiency and productivity in the newly formed in-house IT teams, including a clear IT business plan.

The success of IT will not rest with the IT department alone; it will depend on a new relationship between IT and the Council, reflecting the permeation of IT into everything that the Council does, and partly the impact of the planned digital change programmes ahead. For example:

- A. The **responsibility of all staff** to change and to take personal responsibility for their part in digital deployment and in IT risk management
- B. **Acceptance of compromise and limited subsidiarity** – digital implies less choice and more stability in core aspects of IT provision, and also agility and flexibility in some aspects of IT use with less corporate constraint
- C. **Digital leadership** from middle managers to executive directors, setting an example of digital working and driving for change in areas that may not always be popular in their individual teams.

The Council should consider defining these three changes in simple and practical ways, with examples of what will be different and how it will change the existing methods outside IT as well as within IT itself. HR, change and comms support will be central to this.

## 2.3 The New Technology Base – Fixing Weaknesses

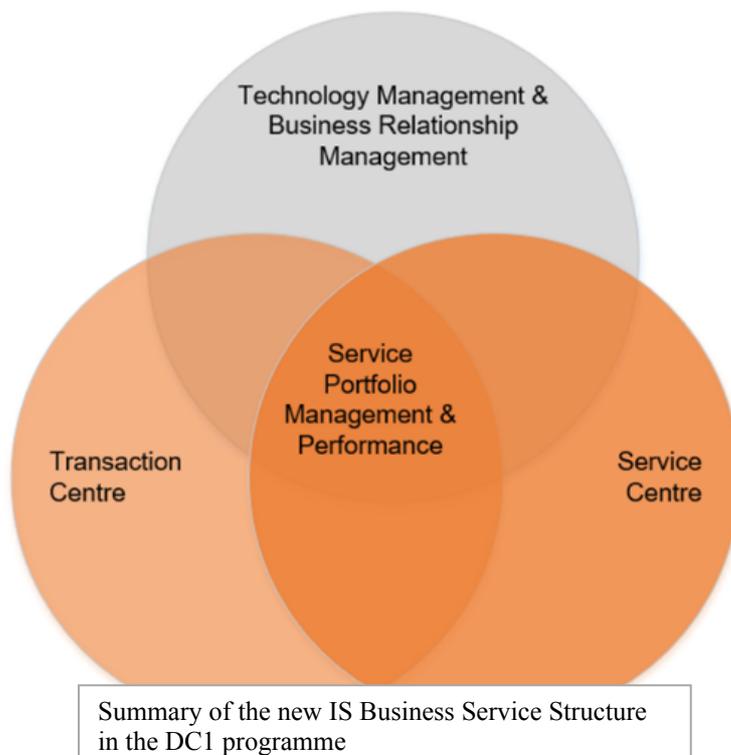
The IT base inherited from the BT Cornwall contract had two major problems:

- Significant IT underinvestment over a period of time and a base IT budget set too low. Resources for IT were also scattered across the organisation in departments
- Serious weaknesses and short-comings in the technology itself, partly as a result of under investment and partly as a result of poor strategic vision and delivery practices.

Progress is strong in moving from a low level of technology provision (technology debt) at the Council. Some of the previous IT performance metrics (time to log on to a PC, provision of modern equipment, Wi-Fi access) were some years behind most organisations and unacceptable in any modern technology service measurement.

IT needs were comprehensively reassessed, and priorities quickly set after the decision to terminate the BT Cornwall contract. £18m funding agreed by the Council to enable the DC1 programme and to deal with the ‘technology debt’ position.

The DC1 programme is now nearing completion, broadly within budget and timescale - to be commended for such a large, complex IT programme. Previous technology short-comings appear to have been stabilised and risks reduced. Although the DC1 programme is not complete in every part of the Council, the areas served to date are now benefitting from a modern, resilient, better performing and well-managed IT service provision.



As the DC1 programme moves to its final stages, there is a risk it may drift on, seeking to satisfy all business needs and expectations, adapting as requirements change. This will absorb critical IT capacity from more pressing digital work that is now emerging. The challenge is to quickly complete the DC1 programme, either by dealing with the existing backlog of requirements not yet met, and/or by creating a new plan in a new programme of IT developments.

Looking ahead, key technology challenges likely to persist include:

- Successful delivery of the **Oracle ERP platform** – this will inevitably prove a major challenge and there needs to be strong governance in HR and Finance, especially to ensure a new model of corporate services delivery, understanding of implications in all parts of the Council, as well as careful preparation of the technology ground (e.g. data quality, testing, performance etc). Resources will need ring-fencing and IT must be at the heart of planning and driving this (see on)
- Completion of the **Microsoft Office Platform roll out**, including switching on some of the more modern tools and methods (such as mobile working and Yammer). This should move to a ‘business as usual’ status as soon as possible, adopting standard support and maintenance IT activity as quickly as possible
- Ensuring **other major technology plans** (such as the CRM choice) are individually defined as new programmes, driven and prioritised by corporate and digital priorities, not IT opportunity alone. For example, the CRM technology choice should be determined in line with the Council’s vision of how a ‘single view’ of the customer, the future contact centre, self-service and ‘right first time’ principles, a ‘citizen account’ and other principles of public engagement are determined.

This is before any of the new emerging technology areas described in the IS Strategy are exploited, such as artificial intelligence.

## 2.4 IS Strategy

The Council’s emerging IS Strategy is a sound vision which ‘ticks all the boxes’ regarding technology planning and direction. It is a mature visualisation of the future IT model, with clear visual impact which covers for example:

- **New methods** for IT (e.g. Agile, Cloud and Low-Code development)
- A central **focus on data and information**, rather than just technologies and processes
- How **platforms of core IT provision** can be created and maintained (e.g. Microsoft and Oracle), reducing the number of legacy systems and the overall portfolio of applications the Council maintains
- **Building strong IT-business interfaces** (business analysts, IT relationship management, integrating with ‘shadow IT’ rather than seeking to remove it, and supporting IT business case development)
- Anticipating **future technology trends** that need to be embraced (e.g. Cloud, Master Data Management (MDM), Internet of Things (IoT), Robotic Process Automation (RPA), low-code tools and Artificial Intelligence (AI)).

Part of the strength of this vision lies in the recognition that simplicity and coherence is more important than optimisation – for example, choosing a platform such as Microsoft in its entirety (rather than just picking the best-known components) , might be challenged as too restrictive or proprietary by some, yet is realistic, practical and in general, has clarity of risk.

It will be important for the Council to ensure continued coherence and understanding of the risks, priorities and opportunities in this IS Strategy. This will require simple and on-going communications with the wider organisation, using terms that will be understood and descriptions that relate to how people work (not IT terms).

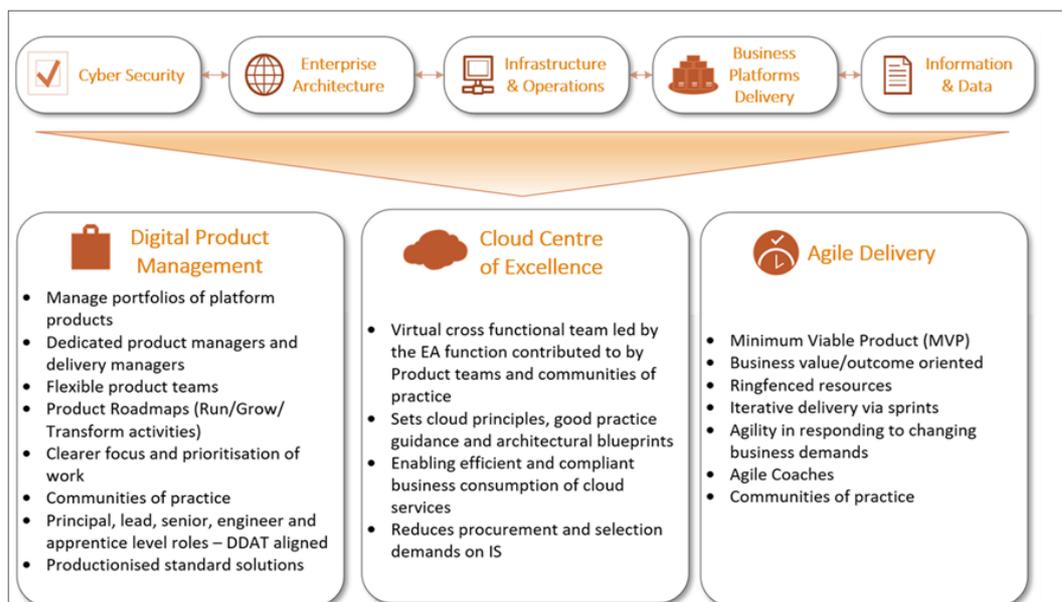
It will also be important to ensure that the governance of IT can assess and address when the model is not valid, and compromises are needed because of cost, performance, sustainability or value (Microsoft solutions will not be right everywhere). This needs a partnership between IT and business leaders and a maturity of architectural assessment, avoiding the situation where every area demands a bespoke solution.

This governance model is not yet fully in operation, although it is planned. In particular it will require control of both technology architecture and digital architecture, as future decisions regarding technology choices are considered.

A cloud-basis to the strategy will help the new in-house team to avoid the overheads of on-premise systems processing, except in specific and unavoidable cases. Procurement practice will need to reflect this preference in evaluation and weighting, with a clear cloud adoption policy that can be used for supplier due-diligence testing, especially in areas such as data, cyber and compliance with standards. This is not yet in place.

Whilst it is still draft, the strategy shows a careful balance of future technology opportunities against a realistic assessment of more short term needs, linking product, technologies and methods:

### Cornwall Council’s Technology Management and Delivery Model:



The two main platform areas in the IS Strategy are reviewed in more detail below.

## 2.5 Oracle and Microsoft

The Council has chosen these two IT suppliers as the source for its core IT platforms. This has advantages in terms of:

- **Simplifying IT options** and resisting the temptation to create a complex and diverse set of individually optimised IT systems
- **Rationalising the software portfolio** of the Council and reducing overheads such as integration, data risks and supplier support costs
- **Maximising the return on staff training** in products, with fewer technologies to learn and understand
- **Reducing procurement demands** and delays by being able to flex and adapt within a supplier contract portfolio of products, as needs change
- **Maximising cloud-based adoption** for IT delivery reducing on-premise costs and overheads.

Both of these vendor specific platforms are credible, reputable and proven solutions which are widely used. Whilst some may criticise a proprietary basis to IS Strategy, this approach can offer great value for money, access to innovation and an easier 'digital journey'.

However, this depends on:

- Being careful about using the suppliers' offerings for solutions at the 'edge' of the portfolio core capability – i.e. not 'switching on' everything possible because it's there or because it's 'free to use'.
- Ensuring that both these suppliers see their privileged position as a true partnership with the Council, with lower cost and higher service benefits, along with risk-bounded innovation that other less strategic clients could not secure
- Honesty and integrity about risks and value from these suppliers, with realism regarding challenges and costs of adoption of new technology, based on agreed outcomes.

Because of their central nature, this review has considered each platform area in more depth:

## 2.6 The Microsoft Platform Rollout

The Microsoft delivery programme at the Council has progressed well, with significant consolidation of previously fragmented IT functions, modernisation of tools by implementing Office 365, and further new technologies within the Microsoft family planned for release. There is greater reliability in these basic tools and positive feedback from staff interviewed for this review.

These are cloud-based, removing the temptation to tailor IT for different teams and purposes and simplifying upgrades necessary for currency and security. There is more to do in terms of the roll-out across the organisation, and it will also be important for the new in-house team to ensure it benchmarks local performance against the best organisations of a similar nature (in terms of reliability, function, performance and response times).

Other considerations for the Council include:

- **Ensuring that everyone understands** how the new Microsoft tools can be used and how they need to change working habits to maximise their value. This is less about formal training (which should no longer be necessary for Microsoft tools) but about culture and behaviours – modernising routine daily working styles that can be addressed in the ‘Working Differently’ programme. For example, it is not enough to introduce Skype or Microsoft Teams (say), without also creating a new working model that delivers tangible productivity and efficiency gains
- **Use Microsoft methods, not just the technology**, supporting workforce productivity and the adoption of business change. This is where the relationship with Microsoft will be important, using their experience and change methods adopted successfully in other client businesses, but with insight regarding what is best for Cornwall Council. Microsoft should be able to treat Cornwall Council as a reference site, and exemplar for others to follow
- **The Council should also quickly switch on ‘Yammer’** (Teams) as part of the communications strategy for the various digital programmes, reducing dependency on email. Whilst this should not be a ‘free for all’, minimal controls, policies, business cases and debate should be required. The delays here indicate maturity is still developing in terms of the councils approach to digital methods
- In view of the volume of work in the ‘Office tools’ roll out and other digital developments (such as the Oracle ERP programme, - see below), it is also recommended that **a decision on customer relationship management tools (CRM – e.g. Microsoft Dynamics) is deferred** at least until the detail of the new continuous improvement centre of expertise/customer experience programme (part of ‘Working Differently’) is defined and agreed. Whilst it is technically logical to choose a solution for CRM from within either the Oracle or the Microsoft product sets, there may be other reasons (especially risk) not to rush this decision and to consider other options in the mix. This is covered in the Customer Service section of this report.

## 2.7 The Oracle Platform and the ERP Programme

Whilst not part of the DC1 programme roll out, the other main proprietary platform chosen by the Council is from Oracle. Oracle provide a rich tool set for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) functions, covering the main areas of financial planning and accounting, HR, procurement and order management, enterprise performance and revenue management. Along with SAP, Oracle is a common basis for corporate functions in bigger corporations. But it is also neither low-cost to own, nor simple to implement.

The Council will need to be careful in ensuring a clear ring-fenced set of functions are defined for adoption, to maximise the value of the products set in terms of business change and automation but avoiding unintended or unmanageable risk from the complexity and scale of change.

Inevitably, the current Council ERP programme for Finance and HR will be complex, and difficult - these projects always are. There are already issues emerging on the programme in terms of delay

and cost increases and the programme now represents perhaps one of the biggest digital challenges for the Council looking ahead.

If this programme is not to create on-going and growing challenges that detract from other digital developments, then it will be important to focus on business process change (not just the IT aspects of the project) and the associated communications across the council. Governance 'grip' and collective corporate adherence will be essential, especially in tracking benefits and risks in the business case and in areas such as:

- Defining, and resolving the gap analyses between 'today's position' and the 'to be' model for HR and Finance core functions
- Ensuring adequate and dedicated resources on the programme, from all professional areas and from departments, prioritised over other activities
- Adequate testing, planning and PMO (Project Management Office) control and reporting, especially regarding progress, risks and data
- Driving cultural change and a redefinition of corporate services as strategic advisers more than operational providers in a programme of changed working practices
- Encouraging local financial and HR management by all managers, through maximum devolvement and automation of HR and Finance operational activity
- Allowing staff to access data and transactions (financial, procurement and HR) where authorised, on mobile and desktop devices (including personal smart phones). This is particularly with regard to employee records, purchasing and expense
- Reviewing and simplifying traditional decision-making and authorisation practices, in areas such as procurement and HR
- Tracking key IT risks, such as data quality and security, integration and dependencies, access methods and identity management prior to final testing
- Prioritising core changes, and not trying to change everything at once or be led by Oracle ambitions to maximise product portfolio adoption
- Being rigorous in resisting pressure to compromise or to reflect local practices, from suppliers or business areas in the Council
- Driving Oracle hard as a prime partner, on cost, innovation and risk, seeking their input and commitment to see the programme at the heart of Council efficiency and productivity targets.

These areas were discussed in the review and are reported as being already being considered (although time did not permit the evidence to be tested). They are restated here as they are a source of many of the ERP implementation risks across public and private sectors, especially with the larger programmes.

It is recommended that the Council gives this Oracle ERP programme high focus and priority above other digital programmes, at least until the roll out is stable. This includes ensuring the necessary resources, governance and visibility. It will be important to avoid trying to tackle too much organisational change at once and so stretching scarce resources.

## 2.8 Other DC1 Challenges

Despite the success to date in the DC1 programme, there are a range of complex and significant challenges for IT delivery as it moves to the next phase of development. When in-sourcing IT there is often a big effort to create the initial iteration of IT, coupled with undeliverable expectations of what will then be possible now IT is back in internal control.

Realism will be required, in particular in the following areas:

- Recognising and anticipating the level of **on-going demands for resources** to sustain the IT team. This will be in terms of new technology, dealing with legacy issues, maintaining capacity and skills, and in rebalancing budgets from service departments; and from capital to revenue (see on – Finance section)
- There will be increasing **pressure on the internal team to perform** as well as or better than the best in the private sector. Individual, team and technology resilience will be important, and sustaining the very best IT leadership to steer the strategy
- Acceptance that **'Agile IT' does not mean responding to every demand** and IT service request – prioritisation is essential, coupled with strong corporate governance to prevent over-engineering or tailoring of IT product solutions
- That **IT has to operate as a business unit**, with strong commercial capabilities (despite being 'internal'). Without this there is a risk of IT gravitating to a traditional IT department driven by budgets rather than being directly involved in business and strategic developments and planning across the Council, at board level and with politicians
- **Some aspects of delivery will need to be outsourced** or at least provided by the private sector – the skills in-house need to ensure that these are well-managed and coherent will be important, especially in managing the cloud provider service models.

The review also found other challenges emerging for IT in prioritisation and in the clarity of business direction:

- Delivering the final residual commitments of the DC1 programme
- A growing list of new and unmoderated departmental requests and requirements
- Expectations of small 'quick wins' to reflect a more agile and responsive IT model
- Complex requirements to be determined by business process yet agreed for major corporate programmes (especially the ERP and CRM) leading to uncertainty in IT resource planning
- Projects likely to emerge from the developing DC2 programme which will place new and unquantifiable demands on IT.

Not everything can or should be delivered and so it will be important to have an agreed method of IT prioritisation with associated corporate governance agreed for the whole Council.

It has recently been agreed that this prioritisation will take place through the Working Differently Board, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer and is more than measuring value to the business. For each proposed IT project (or project with IT elements) there need to be a consideration of:

- The digital and IT architecture impact, especially in prioritising cloud
- The need to reduce the number of council IT systems
- Potential value in terms of wider digital positioning and enablement
- Risk assessment, including overload, cyber, complexity or data issues
- Corporate opportunity cost, not just the individual business case
- Scope for integration (sharing aspects of digital components).

**The key point is that a sound business case is not enough in itself to justify an IT project being initiated, and some local sub-optimisation of IT solutions may need to be accepted in a digital model, with some projects being shelved or stopped, at least for a period of time.**

## 2.9 Recommendations for the DC1 Programme overall:

There are two main recommendations from this assessment for the Council to consider in relation to technology, systems and the DC1 programme:

1. Close the DC1 programme as soon as possible, seeking to deliver all of the pre-defined commitments quickly, or otherwise to draw together outstanding aims and objectives together in a next phase programme
2. Build a 'Phase 2 IT Improvement' programme (once DC1 is completed) that includes:
  - **Delivery of any outstanding business from DC1** (if still required), using the new IT Business Relationship Managers to rank priorities and to define a programme that balances emerging digital programme opportunities, service needs, and scope for quick wins, with capability and capacity in IT
  - **Finalisation and endorsement of the revised IS Strategy**, with a strong and simple communication of this in simple terms across the Council – what it means for all staff, in simple graphical terms, not just long IT reports
  - **Completion of the building of the IT team capacity** and capability, with a particular focus on those skills often hard to retain and recruit: business analysts, cyber and security, data specialists, and IT communications
  - **Introducing simple, agreed, rigorous and routine business reporting** for IT using the business partners: financial performance, project delivery, tracking and prioritisation, customer satisfaction, SLA and benchmarking
  - **Reviewing IT policies, prioritisation, governance and practices** that exploit the ambitions of the new IT purpose, structures and tools, especially in supporting new working methods envisaged by the 'Working Differently' programme

- **Ensuring successful delivery of the core infrastructure systems** - Oracle ERP, Microsoft suite of Office tools, and CRM, dedicating sufficient IT capacity (and considering stopping other activities if necessary, to achieve this)
- **Developing a methodology for 'quick wins' and 'small works'**, prioritised but designed to respond quickly with low bureaucracy – short in delivery timescale and low on cost, with 'fail fast' culture of stopping anything that does not prove easy and fast.

Overall, the new IT service appears to be stable, well-led, without evidence of many hidden risks or problems. The challenges ahead are to move to further modernise aspects of IT provision, balancing central control and local autonomy in how IT is used.

Whilst there are clearly areas of improvement, the Council is to be complemented on achievements to date. If there is an implicit risk in this, it is that the IT thinking is somewhat further ahead of digital planning and the IS Strategy may need fine tuning as digital ambitions become more clearly defined.

### 3. DC2 Programme and Future Digital Vision

The Future Digital Delivery programme, DC2, is part of the wider 'Working Differently' programme and defines the Council's approach to digital transformation. The source material for the assessment included the current and redrafted DC2 strategy alongside related material including board updates, and feedback from stakeholder workshops

The DC2 programme is still in development, but the early indication of progress and thinking are positive, with a strong core of digital project leads and a series of digital discovery workshops across the service departments and with the Members digital advocates group. The comments here are therefore at a point in time, recognising that some suggestions made may already have been actioned by the time this report is finalised.

The first iteration of ideas that were reviewed show creativity and potential transformation, but there is scope for a more radical approach than the title 'digital revolution business case' implies. A separate challenge discussion on this has since taken place with the digital leads team, and it is now being reflected in new thinking in a revised document. This has included three suggestions:

- **Challenging each service** in the Council to consider national best practice and innovation in digital methods:
  - What could be different/better/more efficient because of new technology?
  - Where is national and international best practice?
  - Are we thinking outside traditional service models in considering change?
- **Assessing the potential for more 'cross-cutting' digital change**, not just innovation in traditional service departments
- **Being less constrained by the bounds of immediate possibilities** (a reality check in terms of deliverability, affordability and priority can follow later).

This more radical and cross-service review could also lead to greater efficiencies. Whilst the DC2 programme business case identifies a range of savings possible, these tend to be in expected areas (reduced IT costs, less travel because of mobile working, automation of services in general). There was no strong evidence found in this review that the digital changes planned for the Council are leading to a fundamental reassessment of resource allocation, efficiencies and productivity.

Moreover, if Cornwall Council is to become a digital leader and innovator, then there will need to be more expansive and radical thinking, planning coupled with appetite for risk, and straining to push the organisation, its partners, suppliers and ultimately the public towards new ways of working.

Notably, many of the example achievements so far are inevitably to do with technology rather than business change (Wi-Fi, O365, new equipment, consolidated systems, Skype, etc). Moving to a business change basis for DC2 will bring its own challenges, such as:

- Revised governance for digital that cuts across departments with authority to act
- Less focus on technology and more on business analysis and process optimisation
- HR-led cultural change and digital skills development.

The Council can use its five strategic priority themes (rather than just traditional service areas) to assess digital opportunity and to encourage a pan-organisation engagement with DC2, involving the whole organisation in considering what is possible, desirable, and necessary:



In addition, the review found an understandable desire in some areas to ensure digital risks are fully defined and controlled before new methods or technologies are launched. This will sometimes sit uncomfortably with digital developments which require risks to be embraced and uncertainty tolerated, albeit within limits.

Adopting an agile approach (as is proposed), in order to adapt quickly or ‘fail fast’, can assist, provided it is accompanied by strong governance, tracking and risk control. That governance is not yet fully formed.

An example would be the Council's nervousness and the time taken so far to implement some of the new IT possibilities, such as 'Yammer' (Microsoft 'Teams'). In some instances, there is less justification for the traditional analyses, proposals and business case processes.

At the same time, the major change programmes must have effective business case and risk management rigour, such as the customer relationship management (CRM) and ERP programmes.

These distinctions, culture and discipline can be set by the Working Differently Board, ensuring as well that there is not a tidal wave of small well-intentioned developments. This would potentially detract from major programmes (cost, risk and skills required), or result in lower priority projects 'creeping in' 'under the radar' or by a 'back door'.

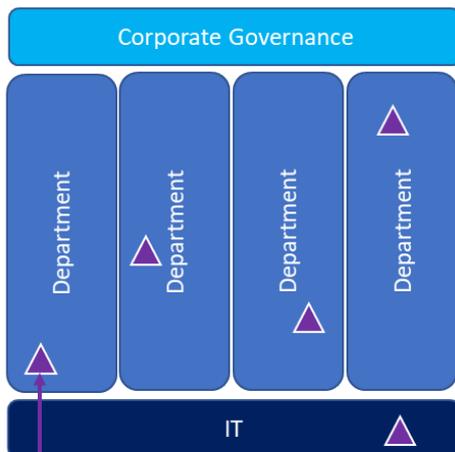
There is also pent up demand and enthusiasm for new digital solutions to be implemented, and this will require management of expectations, with explanations of chosen priorities - not everything can happen at once, however simple and attractive.

Unintentional overselling of the possibilities of digital will need to be moderated by strong digital leadership in departments and effective and honest communications about digital plans, progress and issues. The focus will need to be on:

- **Major business and service obstacles** that are so pressing (e.g. in terms of service quality or cost) they must be addressed
- **Significant enablers** – changes to IT infrastructure or systems for example that will be the prerequisites for further essential developments
- **The main 'digital transformation' programmes** (such as the Customer Relationship Management (CRM), ERP and Office developments) which require clear prioritisation of efforts and resources
- **Establishing common digital products that are shareable** : paying for things, receiving income, booking services and resources, HR process for staff, registrations and login methods, etc.

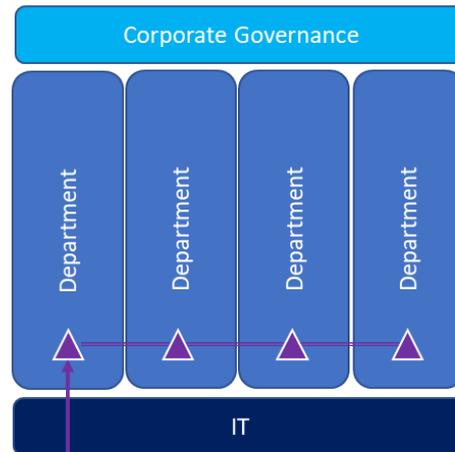
Common digital products can best be grouped together, moving away from a model 'digital islands' products to shared digital components:

**'Digital Islands' Model:**



Digital components are adhoc projects or services, spread across the organisation to optimise specific areas. Often 'IT-opportunity led', rather than 'business change-led'

**Targeted Digital Model:**



Digital components are common and linked, with standard components which are optimised corporately, not departmentally, creating fundamental shift in how the whole organisation adopts digital principles

▲ = Individual digital projects and programmes

After these, careful consideration will be needed to ensure that activities do not detract from the overall corporate priorities of digital improvement. This does not mean 'one size fits all', but it does mean harmonising options wherever possible and focusing on common, standardised and reusable digital components rather than seeking digital optimisation within traditional service boundaries – the agreed Microsoft First Strategy lends itself to this approach.

A review of the DC2 programme status reporting demonstrates effective reporting in a dashboard progress and performance. However, as the focus moves to DC2 delivery, the make-up and nature of reporting may need to be reviewed, with stronger focus on business-change and less on IT, especially in terms of the range of risks and projects being monitored.

## 4. Customers

### 4.1 The Customer Access Strategy

Cornwall's digital programme places the customer experience at the heart of planned development. This is not always the case in public service organisations. Sometimes digital programmes talk about 'the customer' but focus mainly on transforming internal processes to create service delivery efficiency and optimisation, rather than designing around the needs and preferences of service users.

The challenge for the Council will be to ensure that this focus continues as investment priorities are established for the DC2 programme, especially where choices have to be made to meet short-term savings' targets, rather than longer term investment value.

Additionally, the needs and wishes of customers will not always be possible to meet. Whether staff, members, or residents, the digital programme will require standardisation of interfaces, more automation and a willingness to adopt new ways of working.

The existing Council Customer Access Strategy was published 3 years ago in 2016 (and was probably drafted well before this). It is a good document and it is noted that the strategic principles have been subject of scrutiny by a Member 'Task and Finish' Group with recommendations currently being progressed. But it is now in need of revision and greater depth in terms of digital and IT implications. This includes new opportunities and pressures that have emerged over the last 3 years, locally, nationally and in terms of technology possibilities.

For example, as other corporate strategic themes develop is still not entirely clear how far and how deep the customer strategy ambitions go. Examples would be a single point of access services, single sign-on, and the breadth and depth of customer definitions. This makes it difficult to assess whether the plans for digital improvements will be appropriately targeted and driven from a customer perspective. This is particularly true for frontline staff and areas with the greatest customer interaction where difficult decisions will be needed about choice of delivery channel, technology and even affordability.

Priorities for the different groups of customers will need to be established, with segmentation and harmonisation as far as possible, i.e. customer principles being universal, to include (for example):

- **The needs of staff as customers:**
  - Providing the IT tools to do the job and to deliver outcomes as productively as possible, and expecting them to be used effectively
  - Changing HR policies and practices if necessary, to empower staff and enable them to act with the data, systems and technology they need
  - Ensuring staff can work when, where and how they need, with the necessary cyber protection for data sharing and systems access on multiple devices
- **The needs of members as customers:**
  - Supporting councillors with suitable technology that allows mobile working and multiple roles
  - Modernising democratic processes and citizen representation, to reflect a digital world, including reduced bureaucracy for decision-making

- Helping to ensure the right balance between political and council business for councillors in how systems are designed and delivered.
- **The needs and preferences of residents:**
  - Designing and developing systems in collaboration with individual customer groups, to ensure their needs and preferences are reflected
  - Understanding the types of external customers (e.g. service users, clients, voters, residents, tourists, taxpayers etc) in developing digital products
  - Supporting residents who may find digital methods more difficult and helping to reduce the barriers to digital adoption across the county.

Designing around customer needs and preferences, if done well, has a number of benefits:

- It is **more efficient** in the longer term, building trust and a willingness to use digital methods. But it may require more upfront investment in time and planning
- It should ensure **greater uniformity in approach** across different customer groups, which lowers overheads, *provided* there is a willingness to adopt standards and standardisation, resisting tailoring and customisation.

These aspects should all be factored into the DC2 programme objectives and the Customer Service Strategy. This includes defining measurable outcomes in all services areas and especially those services with higher than average costs. Such measures could include customer satisfaction, reduced customer support overheads, increased transactional efficiency and reducing avoidable contact.

There is also a challenge for the Council in its '*digital by preference; and 'access for all' approach*. This could be construed as a desire to meet all needs, flexibly and responsively, especially for those less willing or able to adapt to digital delivery methods – whether staff, partners or residents. Care will be needed, since such an approach can create impossible and expensive demands on IT that will need resisting:

- **Optimising IT systems acquisitions** in each service area, creating vertical systems design, not broad digital platforms serving multiple areas
- **Perpetuating preferred old ways of working**, marginally modernised through automation, rather than reinventing processes and roles
- **Maintaining delivery channel capacity** preferred by citizens, so increasing costs through digital implementation, rather than limiting or reducing channel use of more costly delivery channels.

There is also a gap at present in terms of the defined impact of the Customer Access Strategy on IT delivery. Stating that modern digital services need to be simpler, cheaper, faster and easier, reflecting needs and preferences (such as smartphone access), is not enough. Areas that need considering include (for example):

- **The future role and ambitions for the Council's contact centre.** In the past for example, the volume of transactions dealt with, the speed of resolution and the satisfaction of callers, would have been the main criteria for success. Today, with an ambition of greater self-service and automated delivery, a contact centre should be tasked with driving down all non-digital contact

- **The relationship with other agencies** in the provision and fulfilment of service will be important. The Council is already working in partnership with community organisations, private companies and other public bodies who may be better placed to deliver on behalf of the Council and at lower cost
- **Artificial intelligence, robotic process automation and digital assistants**, along with business insight and low-code tools, to integrate and link customer data, reducing avoidable contact, automate services and repurposing them for complete end-to-end smart phone delivery
- **Use of a citizen account, single sign on and other access tools**, if well-designed, can increase public trust, ease of use and as a result, the pace and reach of digital take-up. With simple app-based smartphone functionality, the Council may not need to intervene in many transitions and service requests at all
- **Case management tools** may assist with fulfilling the more complex service needs, especially with sensitive data, and where support is required across multiple services and agencies. But establishing the right tools and how they can support business outcomes, is necessary before an assessment of integration can be made
- **The appetite for ‘channel shift’, self-service and end-to-end automation** should be defined. The review indicated a reluctance to move too fast towards complete self-service, for a range of practical and philanthropic reasons. Pressure for ‘digital first’ will build, so this will need to be addressed openly
- **The relationship with the public** in a primarily digital operating model (a ‘digital business providing public services’) has changed for all public services in recent years. This will need to be reviewed in due course; the ‘Customer Service Promise’ says how quickly the Council will answer mail or phone calls – but is this desirable or sustainable as a target?

It is for the Council to determine the pace of change, the balance in digital and non-digital delivery, and the priorities that reflect its geography and demography. But the pressure will grow as resources tighten, for new ways of meeting citizen needs and expectations, and new service standards and methods.

This work, reflected in an updated customer strategy, will help to determine not only how a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system should be used and its desired functionality, but even whether it is required at all. This lack of clarity is currently making it harder to prioritise IT activity and to be sure that the emerging digital strategy is driven by a vision of customer service of the future for a public service organisation.

## 4.2 ‘Digital By Preference’

The Customer Access Strategy describes the ambition as ‘*digital by preference*’ rather than the more common ‘digital first’ or ‘digital by default’. The reason for this is to ensure that no one gets left behind on the digital journey, avoiding the negative impacts of digital exclusion, as well as the recognition that if digital is done well, then it will be the preferred method of service access.

However, it creates potential issues for the Council in a number of areas:

- Customers in general (whether staff or residents, taxpayers of services users) may feel they have a right to continue to interact in traditional ways, irrespective of the cost, and that the Council is committed to this. That will slow the pace of digital implementation
- Preferences may also be diverse and expensive to meet, requiring the maintenance of multiple delivery channels and tailoring of otherwise standard methods beyond that genuinely required by those excluded
- Ironically, those generally at risk of exclusion may be more isolated simply because the Council is trying to please and support too many interests, perhaps for wider reputational advantage (being seen to reflect preferences, not just needs).

For these reasons it can be argued that ‘digital by preference’ is not entirely desirable, affordable or deliverable as an ambition – for a public or for a private sector organisation. To overcome this, the Council may wish to revisit what the ‘digital by preference’ means in more detail, ensuring it is not misconstrued.

For example, this could include always involving service users in service design and dealing with the underlying causes of digital exclusion which are often not to do with technology itself. Digital exclusion comes from a variety of causes which can be mitigated or reflected in digital design and other activities of the Council:

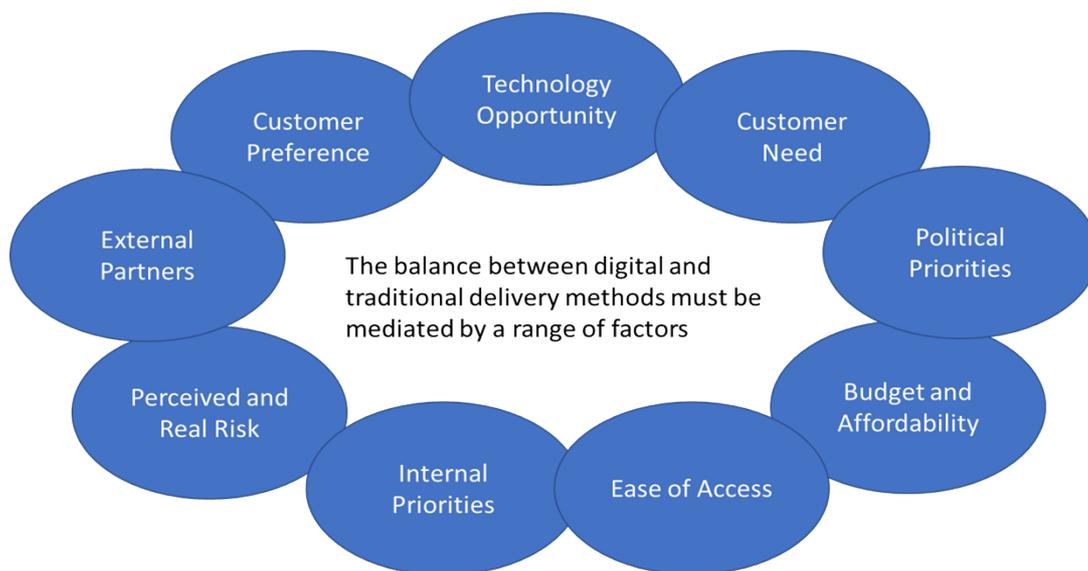
- Physical or mental disability mitigated by mediated access and assisted technologies
- Access to banking services for those with low economic means, to allow online access and shopping, incentivising the use of digital methods for public services
- Recognising and helping to address the fears (real and perceived) of digital risks, cybercrime or just ‘breaking the IT’
- Language barriers or use of unfamiliar jargon, overcome by careful design
- Lack of IT experience or mediated support networks, reduced thought, say, support in libraries and with community groups
- Poor access – even though Cornwall has an enviable broadband coverage, there are areas to address with poor coverage.

In practice, many of the reasons of exclusion today can be mitigated by technology, if well-designed, opening up opportunities for excluded and minority groups in ways never before possible:

- Simple digital access can reduce travel where mobility is restricted
- Easing loneliness through communication, collaboration, and online support
- Avoiding the need to ‘make an appointment’ and transacting easily at home
- Using assisted technology for both mental and physical impairment
- Designing services around individual needs (and preferences)
- Using artificial intelligence engines to anticipate risks and service needs
- Making services more personal, by ensuring data links to inform support teams
- Targeting interventions at the right time by increasing insight.

In these ways, the Council's digital development can increase personalisation of public service delivery and lessen disenfranchisement that may exist today.

The challenge is to explain this in the Customer Access Strategy, showing what is possible, reflecting public, political and service leadership concerns, not just the practical efficiency gains from channel shift. Specific initiatives can prove the point and demonstrate the possibilities, such as in digital delivery of the 'Blue Badge' service, already in place in some councils, using low-code fast and agile developments that connect disparate services and data sets around individual service users. This can help to establish the factors that must be balanced in establishing the pace, direction and extent of a 'digital by preference' approach:



### 4.3 Digital Inclusion

The Council should be praised for leading on the development and adoption of the 'Digital Inclusion Strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, 2019-2023'. This document has been adopted by the multiple organisations that form the 'Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board'. It is an impressive and a commendable demonstration of the possibilities in securing multiple agency support for a regional approach to digital development. It should be (and is being) used as the backbone to the Councils own digital planning.

The strategy lays out simply and compellingly the barriers, opportunities, and associated actions that can create a 'digital Cornwall, without leaving behind those less able, for multiple reasons, to embrace digital services, covering many of the points about digital inclusivity described above.

Cornwall can build on the significant advantage in terms of the reach and range of broadband investment, but it would be a mistake to be complacent about this. It was clear in this review that there remain concerns about digital access in some Cornish communities. For the future, this will

need to continue to be prioritised, not just in terms of traditional broadband and public funding, but also in terms of Wi-Fi and mobile coverage in particular.

Success in areas such as Norfolk and Bristol should be considered as an example of securing internet access coverage in the most difficult to reach areas and in the use of new technologies and partnerships to achieve this, along with other tactics to reduce digital exclusion.

## 5. Finance, Efficiency and Productivity

### 5.1 IT Budgets

This review did not look in depth at the business cases for either IT investment or the digital programme in detail. However, the review did identify a number of resource challenges ahead relating to the approach taken to date and demands from the future programme.

The Council has made a significant investment in IT already, (£18m new capital expenditure and £2m from reserves for the DC1 programme). It has also committed to new revenue budgets for the new in-house IT provision and for the development of the Digital Futures work (DC2).

This investment has been well-managed for DC1 and the delivery effective. It has stabilised the position post the BT contract and built a strong in-house IT provision – people, methods and technology. This is, however, only the starting point:

- There will need to be continuing and growing **investment in IT itself**, not necessarily to increase IT capacity (although there are still some key roles to fill), but to maintain capacity and skill levels and the maintenance of the current technology estate
- The digital programme (**DC2**) **will require significant new investment** in transformation programmes, new technologies and new ways of working. These resources will need to be dedicated, and there will be pressure on backfilling resources
- **The level of departmental IT spend independent of the digital programme** and core IT provided at the centre will need to reduce and be more strongly controlled. There are currently IT roles outside the IT department and there has in the past been a culture of local IT procurement
- **Specific projects such as the CRM and ERP programmes** will place new demands, inevitably, before they are completed – these projects often cost more than was anticipated and the return on investment can be set too high
- There will need to be a **greater relative proportion of Council spend on IT** – the current revenue budget seems too low for the Council's ambition in comparison with other councils
- There will also need to be a **shift from 'capital' to 'revenue' spend on IT** – particularly because of the move to a primarily cloud-based model of provision.

The Council is currently spending around 2% of its budget on IT. This is relatively low (most councils spend c.2.5%-3.5% on IT according to Socitm data). This depends of course on how the costs of IT are counted (e.g. is departmental spend on IT fully measured?), and few are spending as much as Gartner might recommend (over 4%). The Council has some residual IT spend in departments, both in IT activity and IT procurement which will need to be centralised or at least made more transparent.

It is recommended that current visible level of IT spend will need to increase, with greater centralisation of control, and ideally to around 3.5% of total Council revenue, with separate management of the capital projects across the organisation that will also place demands on IT resources.

This may require a rebalancing of traditional resource allocation between IT and other services and is becoming pressing given the move to build in-house IT capacity and capability including on-going costs of retention, training and recruitment.

Furthermore, as the basis on which technology is funded in all organisations shifts from capital projects to revenue costs – particularly software and cloud services, there may need to be even greater increases in IT revenue budgets to sustain digital ambitions.

This is particularly hard for the public sector, where cuts have required a stringent review of revenue budgets, spending on projects to transform in order to reduce future revenue overheads. Whilst IT can assist the wider Council in this, it will create a need to regularly review IT budgets.

It will be important to be sure the in-house IT provision delivers value for money as the dependency on IT and the investment in IT increases:

- Benchmarking of performance and cost
- Business cases that are measurable in terms of service (not just IT) outcomes
- Direct value and contribution to digital programmes that transforms the Council
- Independent financial reviews and audits
- Regular business performance assessment and business reporting
- Challenge from digital and business operations moderated at Board level.

The level of scrutiny of the IT in-house team will be uncomfortable, but is needed to justify their position, building their commercial focus and the contribution made to the organisation. A business plan for IT will be helpful.

At the same time this review found a level of business maturity in IT that is ahead of the digital programme as a whole, and it will be important to ensure that IT as a business unit does not move too far ahead of the Council's ability to keep pace, encouraging and justifying IT investment that the wider business is not yet ready to assimilate.

## 5.2 Wider Return on Digital Investment

The Council has avoided setting the hard-to-reach savings targets for its digital programme, adopting a softer approach to efficiency and savings:

- Hard cashable savings that are in general deliverable with confidence
- Less tangible wider customer service quality improvements.

There is much to be said for this approach that ensures the 'customer comes first', rather than a more aggressive approach that secures immediate savings in current methods without taking a longer-term view. A focus on the customer, should in theory at least, lead to savings from higher and faster digital take-up, internally and with citizens.

In the enthusiasm about the service improvements and customer benefits of digital delivery, it is tempting to speak less about the efficiency savings that could be made, especially if it protects vulnerable services and customers from the impact of wider cuts. However, there is scope for a more

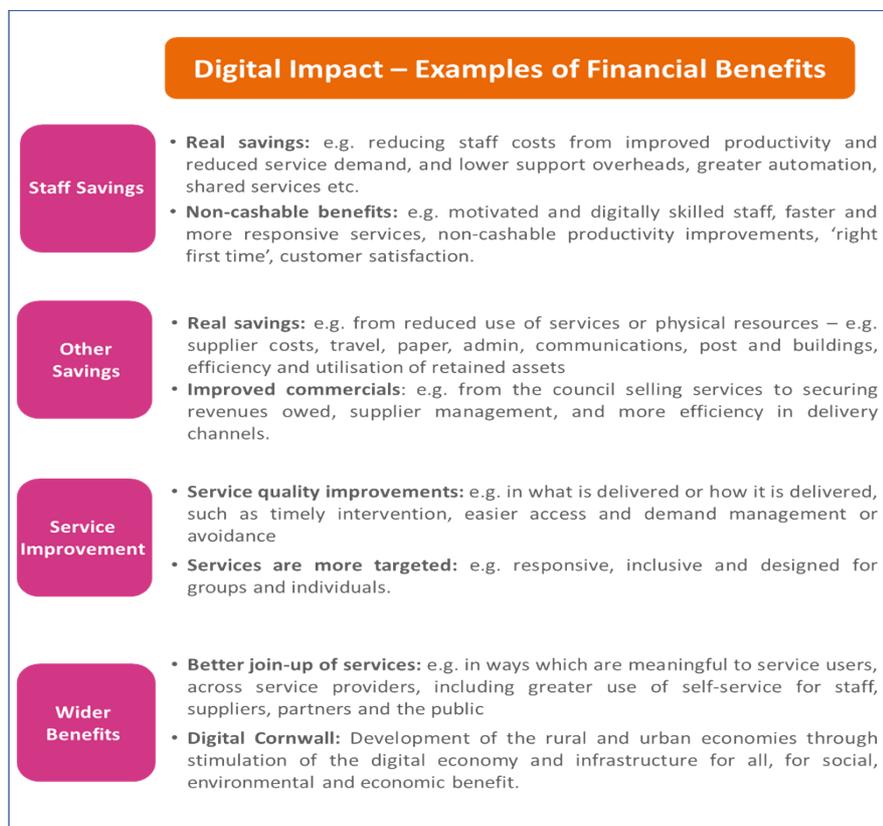
rigorous and demanding approach in the Council, pushing wider change in culture and practices that will result in lower costs to the Council and higher productivity.

This is necessary if the Council wants to become a digital leader in the public sector. Without a more radical approach to the draft DC2 digital business case, which, for example, drives savings from traditional costs in infrastructure and frontline activity, there is a risk that:

- Digital and IT will be largely used to automate and streamline existing ways of working, not to change fundamentally the business itself, potentially creating future legacy problems and solidifying a higher-than-necessary cost base
- 'Digital' just becomes an 'IT' project, buying tools and implementing methods to modernise IT, not the wider business
- Staff do not absorb the cultural change necessary for digital to succeed as a new way of doing business, and resistance builds to 'carry on as usual', rather than changing old habits.

Given the challenges of a more radical approach to savings, digital principles should be agreed, and from this, regular challenges made of current working practices through the 'Working Differently' programme. No areas, including the commercial teams across the Council, should be exempt. This is where the role of digital champions in departments comes into play, with strong leadership and cohesion from the Executive Team when there is inevitable push-back.

Each phase of the DC2 programme will need clear savings targets associated with it, with classification of hard and softer savings, cashable and non-cashable benefits, for example:



This will help to secure on-going commitment and investment to the digital development in the face of growing financial pressures on public services and demands from frontline services:

- The level of required savings possible and desirable should be considered openly, challenging the existing cost base in departments
- The pace of the programme could be increased, with a greater focus on savings alongside customer service improvement.

There was no strong evidence found in this review that the digital changes planned for the Council are as yet leading to a fundamental reassessment of resource allocation, efficiencies and productivity. Digital delivery should drive productivity as well as cashable savings and improvements in services. However, this can be difficult to track and to measure, not least because it can require unpopular changes to working practices.

### 5.3 Shadow IT

There is still a level of ‘shadow IT’ at Cornwall – IT activity, decisions, procurement and practices that are outside the central IT service and not always visible in terms of risk, cost and impact. This should not necessarily to be removed, but it does need to be brought out of the ‘shadows’.

Perhaps built up over years of devolved budgeting and frustration with the central IT provision, this has been estimated as being as high as nearly 50% of IT costs in the Council.

Whilst this level seems unlikely to be the true today, as a result of the DC1 programme, it is clear that there has been and remains in some areas, a culture of IT devolution that will be a counter-balance or break on digital delivery.

Whilst IT can be embedded in departments, it needs to be part of a professional group and under a central governance arrangement in order to avoid common problems:

- Wasted resources in IT procurement, support and technology fragmentation holding back cross-cutting digital developments
- Risk of creating a patchwork of IT solutions, products and applications that are costly to integrate and build a legacy IT problem for the future
- Greater pressure and focus on central IT to reduce its costs, because it is the ‘visible’ part and seen (wrongly) as a corporate overhead
- Conflicts between central and local IT provision (technology itself and practice), where there is incompatibility or the need to accept ‘good enough’ solutions from central IT, instead of optimised and tailored IT solutions built or bought locally
- Higher integration overheads, especially as new digital models are rolled out that come up against incompatible local IT that has become critical, embedded and costly to change
- Data risks, and resilience in wider digital infrastructure as the Council becomes blind to the range of Cloud applications, hidden data risks and a potential cyber risk
- Inability of the Council to develop a single coherent digital infrastructure and approach that depends on standards and policies that allow new technologies.

This is not to say that local IT should be 'stopped' – enthusiasm and creativity at a local level is to be welcomed. But in terms of managing risks, costs, and digital homogeneity, greater transparency is needed, alongside some centralisation of resources:

- **Being clear on the total costs of IT** that might be 'hidden' and use this as a total IT investment measure
- **Ensuring procurement of IT is controlled** centrally, with no software, hardware and service purchasing 'off radar'
- **Controlling all technology investments** against a corporately agreed digital architecture, including data risks, technology standards, compatibility, cyber, corporate priorities and integration tests.

## 6. Other Factors

The review considered a range of other aspects of the digital plans, covered here as more general observations.

### 6.1 The Role of HR

There is a central role for HR in helping to define and to develop the required skills and the digital culture in the organisation and to support the necessary Organisational Development (OD) practice. This includes areas often left to IT, but where HR should have a key role, such as:

- **Creating dynamic joint development environments** using agile and 'low code' methods that involve service users in the design and development of digital products
- **Defining what a 'digital culture' looks and feels like** for the Council and then making it happen, especially in teams who are remote from 'HQ'. This includes staff, members and citizens taking more control, such as in using data responsibly and embracing new ways of working, building on the current examples of 'a day in the life'
- **Growing digital leaders** across the organisation, able to 'lead the charge', act as exemplars and champions of the digital changes taking place
- **Helping to build specialist skills and IT capacity** in-house, where the market is competing for those scarce skills, such as change management, business analysis, systems planning, data scientists, AI, testing and cyber.

This will be particularly important for the recruitment to replace the current CIO who is leaving in addition to the Customer & Support Services Directorate creating a new role of Service Director for People, Programmes & Digital which closely aligns HR & Digital. The new role needs to be suitably graded and remunerated in order to send a clear signal that the Council is serious about the reliance it is placing on its IT and digital programmes for the future, and its ability to step beyond the traditional boundaries governing job evaluation.

### 6.2 Communication

A critical aspect of the digital programme will be the communication plan behind it - internally and externally. This is already underway in the Council, but three areas may need more attention:

- **Simplifying the message.** The range of reports is comprehensive, but probably hard for those not directly involved to assimilate. Simple storyboard descriptions of the key aspects, and how it will affect individual roles and activities will help
- **Ensuring the message reaches the further parts of the Council,** in a constant drip feed of simple messages and interactions, agreed and consistent across management teams. Internal social media would be an ideal mechanism for achieving this
- **Wider communication and discussions with the public** about the changes in how the council will deliver service in the future and how services will be supported.

Particular recommendations for consideration include:

- Creating an integrated communications, HR and digital communications team
- Instigating ‘floor walking’ by senior digital advocates and named individual staff representatives who want to be part of the digital future – building on the current ‘Digital Champions’ network.
- Building a culture of informality and approachability and all communications
- Ensuring all communications on digital planning and delivery have authenticity, limited jargon, Executive Board backing and maximum relevance
- Keeping Members involved and informed – building on and using the Members’ digital advocates group
- Using electronic methods alongside briefings, and tools that support two-way communications, with leadership and examples set from the top of the Council (e.g. ‘Teams’).

Staff are the best messengers for digital transformation. It will therefore be important to be honest and upfront about the issues as well as the opportunities of digital development. Over-enthusiasm about what might be possible, and then failing to deliver or to be able to match the expectations will undermine digital programme credibility.

Some of the cultural aspects of digital change are covered in the following diagram, with a subjective RAG status for the Council from this review:

### Digital Change – Cultural Preparations

Staff Readiness:	Staff Measures of Readiness:	Delivered By:	RAG Status
Awareness	I understand what we need to change and how it will impact me and my role	Strong and open two-way communications	Developing
Willingness	I feel positive about the change and want to engage and learn	Empowerment and leadership that inspires	Appears strong
Knowledge	I feel informed about the change, including the new cultures and behaviours required	Culture defined and demonstrated in practice	Mostly central
Ability	I am confident in the training and support I have had to make the change happen	Training and support methods working well	Variable
Reinforcement	I feel recognised and rewarded for my support for change and my part in it	New reward and recognition systems embedded	More needed

### 6.3 Cyber and Digital Risk

The Council has successfully navigated significant cyber risk in its migration from the BT Cornwall contract and in the implementation of DC1. However, moving to the next level of digital implementation will require a level of organisation-wide awareness of cyber risk. This is covered in the IS Strategy but will need to have a broad and deep focus as the programme matures.

Cyber risk management for a local authority is much more than cyber security protection, and to be successful in its digital migration plans the Council will require governance and management of cyber risk in the broadest sense:

- **Cornwall civic risks** and wider community infrastructure protection
- **Corporate risks** relating to digital services and methods
- **Digital programme** delivery risks
- **Information and data** security risks
- **Cyber security** and technology risks.

In terms of the layers of governance, this can be summarised as the importance of linking broader corporate risk to specific IT risk control. For example:

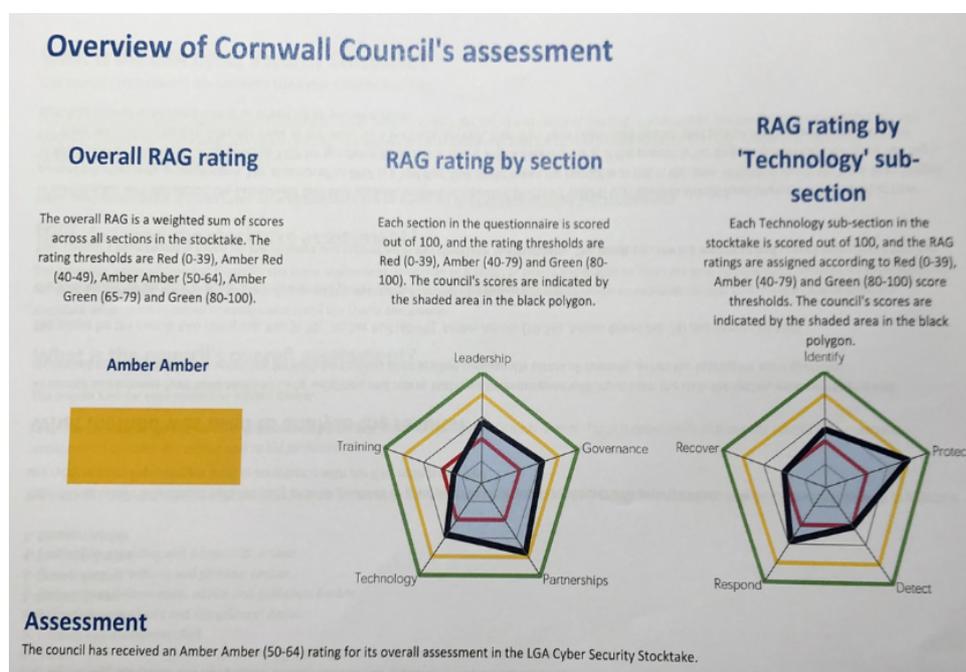


The types of self-assessment checks the Council can make include checking that:

- The **Corporate Risk Register** contains prioritised cyber risks, reported and tracked with appropriate classification and ranking
- **Emergency planning** covers cyber risk to Cornwall communities specifically, and takes direct accountability for this

- **Emergency, business continuity and IT disaster recovery planning** are joined together (rather than assuming IT is there to prevent cyber risk materialising)
- **IT security management** is resourced and prioritised as necessary (see on)
- **All staff** are expected to be aware of cyber risks and of their personal responsibility in reducing that risk (e.g. in data handling)
- **HR policies** go further than data and computer misuse, creating a culture of personal accountability in data handling and cyber risk mitigation.

The recent Cornwall Council Cyber Security Stocktake assessment (a nationally commissioned review of English councils by the LGA) was considered as part of this assessment. Overall the Council was ranked 'Amber' with a range of areas requiring improvement:



Although improvement actions are reported as being underway including additional resource in the new IT structure, it implies a level of wider immaturity in cyber resilience and planning that may require monitoring, especially in areas outside IT itself. The most significant areas identified (red and Amber) as requiring improvement at the time of the review were:

Cornwall Council Cyber Stocktake Results Oct 2018	RAG
<i>Cyber risk reporting to the executive board and members</i>	Red
<i>Adequate levels of cyber security investment</i>	Amber
<i>Testing the IT DR Plan, including with third parties involved in delivery</i>	Red
<i>Linking business continuity and IT disaster recovery planning</i>	Amber
<i>Civil continuity plans that reference cyber risks</i>	Red

<i>Identification of technology risks in general</i>	
<i>Intrusion and vulnerability risk detection tools and methods</i>	
<i>Up-to-date incident response mechanisms are in place</i>	
<i>Review, recovery and post cyber incident learning approaches</i>	
<i>Adequacy of organisation-wide training and awareness of cyber practice</i>	

Each of these areas represents a potential weakness in the Councils preparedness for its digital future. It is therefore recommended that the Council conducts an internal reassessment of progress, using the original LGA stocktake format of questions, preferably with external challenge. This will provide reassurance that wider digital, cyber and IT risks are being appropriately addressed both within the IT service itself, but as importantly in every part of the Council.

The Local Government Association intends to bring out a cyber readiness self-assessment tool in the near future, which would help the Council with its own tracking. This would help to develop a simple dashboard or risks – for example (and not a Cornwall Council assessment!):



## 6.4 Governance Arrangements

The way in which the various decision-making bodies operate across the Council will be key to ensuring control, smooth and rapid decision making and appropriate interaction between what will often be competing agenda for digital delivery.

This review has not been able to spend significant time considering these, but there are positive aspects to the arrangements seen:

- A Digital Cornwall Board exists that is cross-cutting with senior representatives well-engaged across the Council
- The Working Differently Board has executive leadership and is focusing on changing culture, working practices and so delivering efficiencies and customer service improvement

- The Customer Information Management Board (CIMB) is leading on the delivery of a new model for customers (residents and staff). Note – at time of review, the remit of this board is under review.

These boards reduce the pressure on the main executive team (the Council Directors' Team) for decision making, strategy and monitoring, delegating authority as required.

It is understood that if complex cross-cutting issues and/or conflicts arises between the Boards, the escalation route is to the Council Directors Team. This will be important for digital delivery, since governance across different (and sometimes competing) areas needs to be aligned to avoid conflicting decisions or priorities. It is also not immediately clear that customer needs will always determine the priority outcomes, although this is a stated ambition. This is not to say that there is not a strong customer focus, but rather that the implications of this are not always apparent, or appropriate governance is seen to ensure the right decisions are taken.

Therefore, these boards need to work together closely, so that the differences in responsibility, representation and decision-making boundaries are clear, to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy building up.

It is understood that the Council is reviewing its governance structures. This could include simplifying its governance and publishing internally a decision-making framework, making it clear how any decision around the technology or digital programmes, such as a replacement CRM would be established.

Simplifying the remit of some of these groups and introducing some smaller groups with specific authority could simplify things (recognising that more boards and groups need justification). For example:

<b>Digital Board</b>	Tasked with definitions and delivery of the digital strategy including a 'Smart Cornwall' vision and prioritisation of digital ambitions
<b>Digital Architecture Board</b>	A small team of specialists tasked with setting digital principles and core components, reviewing decisions and changes required, acting on behalf of the Digital Board
<b>Customer Board</b>	Overseeing customer strategy and context for the different groups of customers, including cultural change and policies, project prioritisation and contact centre services design
<b>Working Differently Board</b>	Leading cultural and business changes across the council internally, to drive new ways of working, modernisation, resource allocation, efficiency programmes and productivity improvement, new leadership styles and maximising take up of digital methods
<b>Information Board</b>	Tasked with maximising the value of data and information, as well as managing the associated risks (cyber, GDPR, FOI, archiving, data ethics, data handling, etc)
<b>IT Board</b>	Driving the next phase of technology delivery, project monitoring (priorities, business cases, value, timeliness, quality etc) and the IS Strategy, chaired at executive level with CIO and business analysts
<b>IT Architecture Board</b>	A small team of IT specialists which acts as the authority for controlling technology decisions and sign-off, including procurement, standards and infrastructure design, escalating exceptions to the IT Board

The interaction between these boards would need to be established (e.g. when exceptions occur or there is a clear cross-cutting issue). The key aspect is to give each board a clear and distinct focus, with appropriate authority and specialists involved. It is also essential that the Directors back the delegated authority (e.g. if a request for a non-standard IT solution is made by a department and is rejected by the IT Architecture Board).

This is not typically how a council would operate, and what is different is that these groups have wide cross-cutting authority. A matrix management structure would also be needed to ensure this is effective, moving further away from a department structure of the past, especially for corporate services. Culturally this would be challenging and would require care in implementing.

## 6.5 Digital Cornwall – The Place

Many of the strategies for the Council’s outward-facing services already have digital elements within them. In addition, the Council is a partnership in a wider ‘digital inclusion’ strategy, with signatories from a range of local public service organisations.

However, there is scope for a bolder vision of a ‘digital Cornwall’, and one that will benefit the Council as much as the people who live and work in the County. There is plenty of reference research about the changing role of local government in creating sustainable digital ‘places’ (Smart Cities translated into rural locations – see <https://www.inform.socitm.net/smart-places> for example).

The benefits of creating a digital vision tailored to Cornwall is that it can reflect:

- The local demography and landscape of the County and its unique advantages
- Political priorities for the region, such as a ‘zero carbon’ targets
- The opportunity Cornwall has to stimulate and incentivise a local tech industry.

Stimulating and encouraging a local technology industry offers some potentially big direct and indirect benefits for Cornwall:

- Tech SMEs can establish quickly and grow fast, creating jobs and economic value more than any other sector (typically contributing 3x the economic value to an area)
- They (Tech businesses, start-ups and SMEs) typically have a low carbon footprint and can be located anywhere offering good broadband
- They can build wider innovation and research connections with industry and the education sector such as local universities
- They are often a magnet for other jobs and industries that depend on tech skills
- They often seek a location where the environment (climate, leisure opportunities, countryside, quality of public services) is as important as business connections for their younger workforce
- They build technology skills in the region from which the Council will benefit in its own employment (though they will also compete for those skills)
- They will help the Council in its own digital journey, encouraging digital infrastructure and digital services for business and family reasons

- They potentially offer more in terms of corporate social responsibility and social value
- In a region such as Cornwall they are more likely to remain than to migrate to other UK regions, once established.

In the UK, the main technology ‘hubs’ are mostly in the bigger cities, close to London or major universities (such as Microsoft in Cambridge). This need not be an obstacle for Cornwall given its unique advantages as a region (infrastructure, climate, services, broadband, countryside, quality of life, coastline etc).

Cornwall already has a healthy number of tech and digital enterprises, and some such as ‘Bluefruit’ ([www.bluefruit.co.uk](http://www.bluefruit.co.uk), Cornwall’s fastest growing technology company) are setting an example for others. There are also successful community tech companies such as Software Cornwall ([www.softwarecornwall.org](http://www.softwarecornwall.org)). Overall there are over 1000 IT companies and the number is growing.

Opportunities include commercial value in areas such as electric roads of the future, IoT data infrastructure, civic resilience, digital public protection and 5G infrastructure – should the Council be taking a stronger ownership in terms of future public value of these assets for economic, environmental and social benefits?

This could potentially significantly support the Council’s social, environmental and economic targets, helping all sectors and communities to prosper in a digital world, if it can create a reputation and environment that attracts start-ups and tech companies and take a create custodial or curatorial role of digital services (without necessarily providing them itself).

Growing and helping to shape the sector, encouraging SME tech start-ups and inward investment is a longer-term plan and is complex; the opportunities, ‘ripple effect’, risks and challenges are too numerous to cover here, but the benefit to the Council digital plans in terms of ‘digital citizens’, resources and take up, require this to be mentioned in this report.

## 7. Conclusions

The Council has made impressive progress from a relatively low base, both in extricating itself from a complex outsourcing partnership to bring IT services in house, and also in stabilising and modernising its IT estate. The scale and pace of the foundational Digital Cornwall Programme DC1 bodes well for the future DC2 programme.

It will be important that the Council distinguishes between 'IT' and 'digital', ensuring that DC2 is firmly a business change programme, not an IT improvement programme. This review recommends closing the DC1 programme as soon as possible and starting a new funded 'Technology Improvement Project', supporting the DC2 programme.

The drafted IS Strategy is well thought-out and contains a good balance of modernisation and improvement of legacy IT estate, although it has yet to reach every part of the Council. The IT function, whilst relatively new, appears mature and forward thinking in its approach – this review has found little to contradict or to challenge in the proposed methodology, technologies, assessment of risk or its current priorities.

However, there is a risk that the IS Strategy is moving ahead of the Council's ability to keep up – for example for the DC2 programme – which may create tensions, the need for IT to rethink elements of the IS Strategy at a later date, or a risk that the DC2 programme will become too technology led.

IT prioritisation methods also need reviewing, with IT currently at risk of being pulled in multiple directions. Examples range from the way priorities are set to ensure digital programmes can succeed, to how to categorise 'critical applications' for disaster recovery planning. Whilst much of the past IT backlog has been dealt with, there is a growing list of new requirements and expectations that require moderation to live within IT resource limits. With potentially too many projects there is a risk of trying to do too much and being spread too thinly. The council is developing a method of addressing this, and this should include ring-fencing and focusing scarce resources (e.g. including resisting high levels of backfill requests to build digital capacity).

The Council's culture appears somewhat cautious, with a reluctance to take IT risks without formal and full risk analyses and business cases. Whilst rigour is needed on complex and high-value programmes, smaller works can often be tackled with low overheads, using agile methods to adapt and change on the fly, to deliver (or fail) faster. The culture and the governance that can support this is not yet fully in place, despite the adoption of 'agile methods' in IT itself.

The DC2 programme is still in development, and the approach being adopted and the vision emerging are positive and convincing. However, the Council will need to consider how radical it really wants to be, in terms of risk, savings, and adoption of new business models made possible by digital. There will need to be significant new investment requirements to sustain pace and ambition, in both technology and change programmes, and that is likely to require difficult decisions in resource allocation.

The DC2 programme may also need to be potentially more radical in thinking about the possibilities and the challenges. There is a risk that current thinking focusses too much on technologies or specific service areas (e.g. a new CRM) rather than outcomes (e.g. the nature of the relationship with the

customer across the whole Council or re-imagining services for the future). This includes challenging the Council's 10 main strategies, each of which needs to have a symbiotic relationship with the DC2 programme. A number of these connections are not yet fully made, and it will be important for the Council to ensure that DC2 is not a standalone programme.

The Working Differently programme (especially the Corporate 'Landlord' and 'ERP' projects) should seek to establish a new culture, behaviours and a model for future service design and delivery. It will need to challenge the departmental silo thinking and the traditional 'sacred cows' of priority services. This includes thinking carefully about the implications of a 'digital by preference' philosophy. This may require reassessing elements of current corporate governance structures to ensure that the DC2 programme is customer-led, and also that its cross-cutting potential can ensure a coherent digital architecture and technology infrastructure foundation for the Council.

This may prove hard, especially if the ERP programme continues to present challenges and diversions. Currently, there is a sense that some of the organisation has yet to grasp the enormity of the potential 'digital revolution' ahead, or the need for greater levels of efficiency and productivity alongside customer service improvements. There was no strong evidence found in this review that the digital changes planned for the Council are leading to a fundamental reassessment of resource allocation, efficiencies and productivity.

A challenge ahead will lie in sustaining the pace of change by continuing to build the required capacity, capability and cultural shift on which digital transformation depends. This will require an on-going and increased investment in digital and IT, and that may need to be found from within existing resources – i.e. rebalancing budget allocation.

Many of the digital challenges and opportunities are still being assessed, and there are a number of risks ahead that this report describes. These may already be understood, but the scale of the challenges ahead will be at least as great as those already encountered. In some respects, the Council can afford to be less risk averse, provided it ensures the necessary governance and cultural change.

The Digital Inclusion Strategy for the region is a compelling document, with multi-agency endorsement of how to create a prosperous and inclusive digital community across Cornwall that harnesses digital benefits and recognises its risks.

The customer focus in the Council's Customer Access Strategy and Customer Service Promise puts residents preferences and needs at the heart of policy and strategy. This will help with digital prioritisation and should define any final choice of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system. It may be, however, that the Council does not need a CRM – at least as a traditional model.

Members are closely involved in digital development through a representative group of 'digital advocates' and through the Portfolio holder. This is very positive in connecting digital ambition with member priorities, not always found in councils. Members recognise the Digital Cornwall opportunity and the priority for the Council to achieve maturity in its own IT and digital plans. They are rightly concerned to ensure appropriate risk management, resource allocation and digital inclusion.

Communications and marketing will need a particular emphasis going forward, both internally and externally. Whilst staff at the centre are well-informed, there will need to be simplification of the

message for broader consumption in terms of how 'digital' will impact. Simple communications using internal and external social media-style communications more than email is recommended (hence the suggestion to 'switch on' the Microsoft Teams service internally).

Governance and leadership will be key. Both members and executives clearly support the ambitions of the DC2 programme and the changes in IT, but this will need to be backed up with 'leadership by example' with all senior and middle managers adopting new ways of working, coupled with cross-council governance that has the authority to change how the Council works in its traditional bases.

In the outset of this report, four challenges were set as tests for digital delivery looking ahead, assessed here:

	<b>Challenge:</b>	<b>Assessment:</b>
<b>1</b>	Are digital developments and priorities reflected in the strategic plans of the Council? Digital development is not a service specific programme, but a cross-cutting theme that needs to connect across traditional service boundaries	Not fully. This is certainly the intention, but the challenge will be in governance and resource allocation in particular. For example, a reassessment of the digital impact and possibilities in each strategic programme is needed.
<b>2</b>	How well is 'digital' embedded into the wider Council, informing IT planning? Digital definition and ambition should provide the mechanism for prioritisation of IT investment, aligned to Council aims, helping to unlock IT from legacy constraints and departmental demands	It is not yet embedded. The technology progress is good, but new ways of working and the challenge of changing cultures, priorities and processes is in early stages of development. Moreover, there are issues with prioritisation which will require strong governance.
<b>3</b>	Is there the capacity and capability in the Council (existing or planned) to ensure sustainable digital progress and momentum? This is not just the capacity and skills in the IT department, but more broadly in digital leadership, senior management understanding of the digital programme, and the impact on frontline staff	There is clear commitment in the council to establish capacity and skills necessary for digital delivery, and this is to be commended. Maintaining the capacity and capability will no doubt be challenging, and more resources will be requiring to be redirected towards both IT and also digital programmes, potentially from frontline service budgets.
<b>4</b>	Is there a realistic alignment of digital ambition with risk appetite? And, beyond this, are ambitions and vision for the digital programme over-ambitious or too timid? Sometimes digital programmes and strategies set high ambitions which are a stretch too far.	Not yet, but this is emerging. In some areas, the Council needs to be more radical in its thinking (and discussions indicate that this is happening), and also less risk-averse. Improved communication is needed to simplify the message about the impact of digital changes ahead on everyone's jobs and in how the council will function in the future. This is particularly important in areas of customer service, choice and change prioritisation.

In laying out the digital ambitions for the future, the Council could also define a stronger vision for a 'Digital Cornwall'. Cornwall has significant advantages in terms of infrastructure, climate and geography that could be harnessed in a variety of ways, bringing economic, environmental and social benefits to the Council and to the region – such as the climate emergency. The Council needs to define more clearly how innovative and entrepreneurial it wants to be in this respect.

Cornwall Council has all the key ingredients for a truly transformative digital programme that can connect and modernise public services for all those in the region. The challenge now lies in the 'delivery', more than in the 'ingredients' or the 'recipe'.

## Acknowledgements and References

This work would not have been possible in a short space of time without the commitment of time and support from a wide range of staff and members at the Council. Their input, acceptance of constructive challenge, inspiration and creativity was refreshing and positive at all times. Notably, there is a strong 'team' culture and respect for perspective and views.

I am particularly grateful for the support from Jenna Miners and Mark Read who responded to a barrage of requests for information and arranged the complex logistics for this review.

Those who have contributed to this review and given a considerable amount of time and expertise willingly, are listed in **Appendix C**.

Source material is listed in **Appendix B**.

# Appendix A

## TOR for the Review

### Digital Review – Briefing Note

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide background to persons who will be interviewed by Jos Creese - the LGA lead officer for a Digital Review that the Council is undertaking, primarily on 13/14 June 2019.

#### 1. Background

One of the recommendations of the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge in December 2017 was to "consider how you (Cornwall Council) deliver a digital revolution (given your legacy issues) to transform service delivery to your customers and equip your Members and staff to deliver".

The backdrop to recommendation was the Council's decision in 2015 to terminate the £160m contract with BT Cornwall after just two years and bring the service back in-house, with the subsequent provision in 2017 of a three-year investment of £18m as part of a Digital Cornwall (DC) Programme to deliver the following;

- Ensure we have the right technology and tools available that are safe and secure to do our jobs
- Empower employees wherever and whenever they work with the necessary skills and training, productivity tools, collaboration tools and access to systems and data
- Make sure that the way our customers contact us is easy and efficient, safe and secure, and in the way that they want and need
- Enable customers to access more council services online
- Bring most of our IT equipment and systems up to date to ensure we are fit for purpose, safe and secure now and in the future
- Standardise systems across the Council and family of companies to ensure consistency and allow easier collaboration

#### 2. Description of Review

Following on from the Corporate Peer challenge, it was agreed to follow this up with a smaller, Digital focussed review in conjunction with the LGA which will provide a 'critical friend' challenge and health-check on the following areas;

- Assessment of the Council's current Digital Cornwall programme including plans and progress
- Assessment of the Council's IT Service, direction and strategy
- Assessment of the Council's current thinking in terms of future digital strategy and investment (digital revolution) to inform their shaping prior to formal consideration by the Council.

The review will be led by Jos Creese and will be undertaken by a combination of document reviews and interviews with key personnel. The output will be a report for the organisation to hi-light areas of good practice and help guide as to where there may be gaps in thinking, over-ambition in terms of risk, or alignment issues between IT, digital and corporate vision alongside any suggested actions for consideration.

#### Timetable

Jos will be onsite (based at New County Hall) on 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> June and will interview the majority of key personnel then alongside follow up interviews with those unavailable.

## Appendix B

### List of Source Documents

The following documents were provided to support background and initial research:

- Published Customer Access Strategy 2016-2020 – alongside the Digital Improvement Plan, delivery of the majority of this strategy is through the Digital Cornwall Programme
- Published Digital Inclusion Strategy 2019 – 2023
- Published Information Technology Strategy 2016-2020
- Draft IS Strategy 2019 – including Digital Principles - currently in draft form and undergoing initial consultation with departments
- Digital Improvement Plan Business Case – 2017 £18m Digital Investment business case approved by Members and forming the basis of the current Digital Cornwall Programme
- Digital Cornwall Programme Documentation - used at the Digital Cornwall Board to review programme progress etc
- Customer Service Promise – Introduced in 2018
- Customer Access & Digital Services Structure – structure chart for the whole service but note, the IT element of this is the former structure which is being replaced from June 2019
- New IT Service Structure being introduced from June 2019
- Corporate Business Plan and Risk Register
- A variety of corporate governance structure documents and minutes of meetings such as the Customer and Information Management Board

## Appendix C

### List of Contributors

A large number of council officers and councillors were generous in their time and experience to support this review, including in particular:

Kate Kennally	Chief Executive
Andy Brown	Chief Operating Officer and Section 151 Office
Paul Masters	Director Neighbourhoods, Chair Customer & Info. Management Board, SIRO
Mark Read	Director Customer Access & Digital
Pippa Sandham	Business Analyst, Digital Programme
Alex Fillingham	Business Analyst, Digital Programme
Jo Gray	Business Analyst, Digital Programme
Marcus Cosway	Business Analyst, Digital Programme
Jenny Payne	Head of Customer Experience
Patrick Weir	Head of HR & OD
David Witts	Digital Cornwall Programme Manager
Mike Eathorne-Gibbons	Cornwall Councillor - Portfolio Holder - Customers
Ian Robinson	CIO
Stuart Benson	Head of Service Business Standards and Registration
Rebecca Cohen	Advanced Information Analyst
Paul Constable	Communications Specialist
Jeff Goostrey	Senior Procurement Specialist
April Milne	Head of Business Support & Compliance (EGD)
Alan Pengelly	Business Systems & Assurance Manager
Rachel Siviter	Group Head of Business Systems - Corserv
Andy Jory	Service Manager
Dave Witts	Digital Cornwall Programme Manager
Mike Thomas	Cornwall Councillor
Hilary Frank	Cornwall Councillor
Barry Jordan	Cornwall Councillor
Sally-Ann Saunders	Cornwall Councillor
Tracey Clark	Democratic and Governance Officer
Derrin Bray	IS SLA Manager

## Appendix D

# Summary of Key Actions and Recommendations

Not every possible action is listed here, but key points are drawn out from the report for ease of reference. They are intended as *suggested actions to consider*; i.e. not all will be suitable, possible or desirable when considered in detail by the Council in the context of other plans.

The DC1 Programme	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, this is a well-designed and well-delivered programme, tackling complex change from a low base. The support in terms of finance, risk management, as well as political and executive backing, is to be commended and, alongside strong IT leadership, has been fundamental to success.</li> <li>• The IS Strategy is a strong vision of the future priorities for IT and in how these priorities can be delivered. There are no obvious gaps or over-selling, although it will need to adapt as the Council more generally catches up.</li> </ul>
<b>Could be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT prioritisation needs formulising to embrace small changes faster and to prioritise bigger changes based on corporate need. This largely lies in wider corporate governance rather than within IT itself.</li> <li>• Internal communications and marketing of IT impact on the Council could be widened. The central teams are aware, but less so in the further reaches of the Council. 'Microsoft Teams' should be considered as a way to do this.</li> <li>• Care is needed in terminology – 'digital' and 'IT' are not the same. Indeed, world-class IT delivery and maturity can hold back digital transformation by allowing outdated practices to be masked and to persist.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>The DC1 programme needs to be ended as soon as possible, either delivering the outstanding commitments or recalibrating and starting a new programme focussed on IT enablement, which is a fully resourced IT programme (not digital) for the next 3 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritised outstanding actions from DC1, including capacity building</li> <li>• Delivery and action planning for the new IT Strategy</li> <li>• Concentration of resources on the delivery of the Oracle ERP programme</li> <li>• Support for the DC2 programme as this becomes clearer</li> <li>• Completing planned changes to IS policies and methods (business planning, prioritisation, cyber, IT business partners, performance reporting dashboards etc).</li> </ul>	

<b>The DC2 Programme</b>	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DC2 programme already has a range of creative and imaginative digital ideas emerging and the approach is sound (political involvement, wider council collaboration and strong programme/business analyst leads).</li> </ul>
<b>Could be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The programme perhaps needs to be more radical in its initial thinking, especially in considering cross-cutting digital possibilities, so that ideas do not create 'islands of digital innovation', rather than a holistic change to the Council.</li> <li>There is a need to consider prioritisation more formally, otherwise the Council will be overwhelmed with projects emerging from all areas (especially in IT). This will need to be coupled with strong central PMO challenge and support to avoid a complex web of projects and inter-dependencies resulting in drift or unseen risk.</li> <li>Business case models for individual projects and their impact may be needed – a standard format does not work well for digital where the risks and benefits are harder to quantify. There also needs to be strong IT and digital architecture control at the centre, to prevent a more traditional (and comfortable) silo culture continuing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>The DC2 programme is still in a formative stage. The real challenge will come once this moves to the stage of justifying investment required, agreeing the level of acceptable risk, prioritisation, gap analysis, and also the impact on IT and on traditional department silos. This will be as complex and challenging as anything the Council has faced so far on its DC1 journey. Action areas for this include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger governance may be needed, from the centre but with wide involvement across the Council (and potentially with partners)</li> <li>Significant rebalancing of traditional resource allocation will be needed, including challenging the status quo in front line service areas which will need handling with care</li> <li>The DC2 programme needs to be aligned to (and have direct influence over) existing 'in flight' programmes and existing strategies of the council</li> <li>A new balance between 'corporate' and 'departmental' will be required, as well as redefining the purpose of the Council and how it fulfils its remit. This is as much a cultural change, as an organisational or strategy change.</li> </ul>	

<b>Other Areas Considered: Customers</b>	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council has a strong focus on 'customers' in all areas seen in this review, particularly in the IS strategy, DC1 and DC2 programmes and the Customer Access Strategy itself. This is essential for the successful delivery of change programmes in general and 'digital' specifically and will help to ensure high take up (and therefore efficiency and productivity benefits) from changes planned.</li> </ul>
<b>Could be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design and delivery of the DC2 programme will require considerable input from the Council in all areas. The council needs to be ready to reallocate staff and resources from traditional roles into the digital delivery programmes, potentially without backfill (in order to realign priorities).</li> <li>The 'customer' is widely talked about, but will vary considerably in different areas (residents, voters, service users, staff, suppliers, visitors etc). The approach, style of collaboration and prioritisation will vary between these groups and will potentially need considering.</li> <li>The ambition of 'digital by preference' is understandable in order to be able to prioritise inclusivity, but without careful boundaries in definition this could prove to be unaffordable, undesirable and undeliverable (complete customer choice for all customer groups could be impossible in a digital model).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>It is recommended that the Council reviews the Customer Access Strategy in terms of future digital operating models for groups of customers, to maximise inclusion, take up and design around preferences and needs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To update and review the current Customer Access Strategy now several years old to reflect this report and emerging technology possibilities, including use of AI, low code, RPA and business insight</li> <li>To determine how far the Customer Service ambitions should go (including in terms of affordability), particularly in areas impacting digital operation (e.g. single point of contact and working with partners)</li> <li>To define the role of any future contact centre and therefore (for example) CRM, case management choices, smartphone self-service and other options as described in this report</li> <li>To consider and to communicate clearly what 'digital by preference' means and its boundaries, to avoid creating a significant and costly future barrier to change</li> <li>To open up possibilities for a 'Digital Cornwall' vision (see on) where the Council sets a lead for the positive aspects of digital delivery (inclusivity, infrastructure, data methods, cyber resilience, partnership working etc).</li> </ul>	

<b>Other Areas Considered: HR and Communications</b>	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council's HR team have a clear understanding of the impact of digital and their role in supporting cultural and behavioural change. This is a significant benefit to the Council in supporting the DC2 programme and wider Working Differently' ambitions looking ahead.</li> </ul>
<b>Could be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR need to be active in driving new ways of working for digital, and in the involvement in defining what a 'digital business providing public services' looks like for the Council. This includes leading on how skills, capacity and HR policies will require adapting to reflect this digital model.</li> <li>HR and Comms teams should consider merging for the purposes of digital, to ensure communications are relevant, consistent, timely and related to changing working practices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>There are a range of actions for HR to consider, dependent on the way the Council wishes to operate. However, HR needs to have a central and a leadership role in digital change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing all HR policies and practices relating to work style for digital</li> <li>Building digital leadership skills in every team across the Council</li> <li>Working with Comms teams regarding all digital programme communications and the introduction of collaboration methods (such as 'Teams', floor walking and a network of digital champions')</li> <li>Defining the 'digital culture' in ways that are meaningful to staff and related to modernised performance measures, reward systems and recruitment policies</li> <li>Supporting new ways to develop digital capacity/capability required in specific areas and roles, (such as in IT and in leadership teams). This includes ensuring and appropriately sized remuneration package and role description for the new Service Director for People, Programmes &amp; Digital recruitment (at least as big as similar county councils and large unitary councils).</li> </ul> <p>Some background reading specifically on the area of HR in digital change programmes:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>The HR Professionals guide</p> </div>	

<b>Other Areas Considered: Finance and Resources</b>	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council has made a clear commitment to its digital journey, with a significant investment in the DC1 programme and strong financial leadership and involvement to ensure its success. The CFO is closely involved in the digital programme and more widely in leading the 'Working Differently' programme. This recognises the close interaction between efficiency, productivity and customer improvement aims.</li> </ul>
<b>Could Be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council does not, in all areas, have a sense that 'money is tight'. There may need to be more done to communicate the challenge and therefore the importance of adapting to a digital model to sustain services in the future.</li> <li>The Council is still currently under-investing in IT compared with many councils and this needs to be addressed, especially in the DC2 programme – it will be important to sustain the excellent improvements made so far.</li> <li>There may also need to be greater centralisation of spend as the digital programme develops, in IT and beyond. 'Digital' will require a different approach to how traditional corporate services are viewed and used and also in how resources for digital change are harnessed and maximised.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>There are number of areas where this review has identified the importance of financial control and investment to the success of the IS Strategy and also to the DC2 vision. The DC1 Programme has demonstrated what can be achieved but looking ahead there are more challenges emerging. Some of the key areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing overall IT investment to around 3-3.5% per annum, whilst building more rigour in prioritisation and the in the return on investment (ROI) expected from IT spend which will often be in department budgets</li> <li>Determining a business case model for digital ROI that makes savings and delivers benefits from restructuring frontline operation around digital principles, not just in central or traditional savings areas that do not necessarily require 'working differently'</li> <li>Tackling some of the potential issues and risks associated with 'Shadow IT' in the Council, including in terms of lost productivity, cyber risks, harmonised IT infrastructure, missed data opportunities and, potentially, some unseen and avoidable IT costs</li> <li>Stabilising the Oracle ERP programme, so that this does not become an ongoing drain on resources and can deliver the benefits and savings envisaged</li> <li>Determining the investment level and benefits for the DC2 programme and the next stage of the DC1 programme (see above), ensuring the Council can make provision for this over the foreseeable future</li> <li>Considering adjusting 'rewards and performance' systems to recognise the contribution of key individuals leading change or in specialist roles, who may not have large budgets or teams (which is the traditional basis for rewards and grading).</li> </ul>	

<b>Other Areas Considered: 'Digital Cornwall'</b>	
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council is working with a range of partners to promote digital opportunities for the region, and there is a growing tech sector. It has also been instrumental in the commendable 'Digital Inclusion Strategy'.</li> </ul>
<b>Could Be Better</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential for the region is more than the review found in its discussion with officers and review of emerging plans. A clear and ambitious digital strategy for the region as a 'smart place' would find wide support as well as potentially bringing a range of new social, economic and environmental benefits. However, this is a complex topic, and was only lightly touched on in the review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Actions to Consider:</b></p> <p>Cornwall has some UK-unique advantages in terms of its potential to promote 'digital' that would bring benefits to the Council, to residents, to tourists and to business. Its landscape, climate, infrastructure and the unitary status of the Council all create a digital opportunity greater than elsewhere in the UK. To nurture this opportunity, the Council should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a digital vision and strategy to attract tech businesses, developing commercial and economic strategies that prioritise this. These tech businesses can contribute more to the local economy than any other sector in term of GDP and also bring in technology skills and jobs (which would help the Council with its own recruitment). They also have a relatively low environmental impact.</li> <li>Making sure that the DC2 programme explains the position of the Council in this wider context for the region, setting an example in terms of being 'digitally friendly' to tech start-up businesses and SMEs, including the prioritisation of infrastructure that supports this aim. Social value in procurement that prioritises digital, data ethics standards, cyber resilience for the region, planning policies, digital inclusion and diversity aims can all assist</li> <li>Working closely with other industry partners and agencies to build skills and capacity, especially the university sector, major employers, farming, tourism, and other public service bodies in the region</li> <li>Considering environmental policies and strategies that put 'digital' at their centre, to tackle climate change, carbon emissions and environmental protection. This includes supporting research and changing behaviours, as much as in how technology is used positively to make a difference (not just to drive productivity at a cost to the planet).</li> </ul> <p>Further reading from recent Socitm research on Smart Places may be helpful:</p> <p><a href="https://www.inform.socitm.net/smart-places">https://www.inform.socitm.net/smart-places</a></p>	

## About CCL



Jos has been working with the LGA on a range of assignments for several years. His work has included a national IT procurement strategy, member support, digital advisory, and in the 2018 LGA commissioned cyber stock take of English local councils. As a retained LGA 'Productivity Expert', he support local authorities in peer reviews.

With over 30 years IT leadership experience, Jos has held a variety of CIO roles and non-executive director positions in the public sector. He is a recognised independent analyst, writer and researcher, associate director and past president of Socitm, strategic advisor for multiple businesses, and past president of BCS, (the Chartered Institute for IT). He chairs the Open University School of Computing Industrial Board and is a member of the Risk and Audit Committee for the Department for International Trade.

For over a decade Jos was CIO and latterly CDO for Hampshire County Council, leading a range of ground-breaking shared services, achieving recognition with a range of awards for IT innovation. He set up and chaired the Local Public Service CIO Council and has worked with central government on a range of strategic programmes for many years. His experience includes large-scale mergers, national and international IT programmes and the start-up and subsequent sale of a tech business. Jos was named as the 'most influential and innovative CIO' in the UK in the 'Silicon 50' CIO survey in 2017.

Now operating as an independent consultant, Jos provides expert advice to public and private sectors on digital and IT strategies. He has worked with over 150 clients since starting the CCL business, typically at board level on digital assignments and constructive challenge.

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