CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET

Title of Item   Cyngor Gwynedd Digital Plan, 2023-28.

Cabinet Member   Councillor Ioan Ceredig Thomas

Contact officer   Huw Ynyr, Assistant Head of Finance and Information Technology

Date of meeting   7 November, 2023

REPORT TO CABINET

1. DECISION SOUGHT

1.1. That the Council's Cabinet approves the new proposed Digital Plan for the 2023-28 period.

2. REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

2.1. The Council does not have a formal plan for developing its digital services. The previous "Digital Strategy" period came to an end in 2018, and although the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy has been adopted in the meantime, a corporate plan has not been created in the same period.

2.2. Whilst preparing the Council Plan, we recognised the need to create a Digital Plan that would outline a vision for our digital services, as well as an associated work programme. The need to adopt and implement a Digital Strategy has been noted as an improvement priority within the "Efficient Gwynedd" field in the Council Plan, that was approved by the Full Council on 7 March this year.

3. REASON AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DECISION

3.1. The Digital Plan identifies a programme of projects for transforming the services provided to the people of Gwynedd by the Council – the aim is for the provision to be more economic, efficient and effective. These projects are divided into five development fields, which are:

- Customer Contact;
- Information and Data;
- Administration and Business Systems;
- Workforce, and;
- Resilience.

3.2. The governance arrangements for realising and monitoring the work programme is as follows. The Finance and Information Technology Department are responsible for realising the Digital Plan in the Council's Plan, and the Assistant Head of that department is the Project Manager. The Digital Transformation Board has been established to keep an overview on the work

programme's progress and to offer challenge and support, in addition to the usual performance challenge and support arrangements – this to acknowledge how important the development of the digital field is to our ability as a Council to provide services towards the future.

3.3. The Board meetings are chaired by the Corporate Director, with the Assistant Head of Finance and Information Technology also present as the Project Manager. Four sub-groups have been formed under the leadership of the officers noted below, and these officers represent the sub-groups on the Board. There is a fifth sub-group yet to be formed to act on digital developments in the workforce field, and there is representation from across Council's departments in the sub-groups.

- Resilience – Gwyn Jones, Infrastructure Systems Manager
- Customer Contact – Steffan Jones, Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC
- Information and Data – Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Support Department
- Administration and Business Systems – Huw Ynyr, Assistant Head of Finance and Information Technology

Furthermore, the Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer are members of the Board, as well as the Head of Education (who has a specific role to ensure coordination between the Digital Strategy for Schools and what is underway on a corporate level) and the Head of Housing and Property.

3.4. The Plan was presented before the Education and Economy Committee on the 14th of September this year. The Committee agreed to accept the report and to note the observations that appear in the meeting's minutes (Appendix 4 – Minutes).

3.5. In terms of Digital Inclusion, the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) notes that the developments to the Council's digital provision will not replace or come at the expense of those methods that some customers are dependent on to access services. It is important to ensure that services are accessible to everyone, whatever their digital literacy or their access to technology, and traditional customer contact methods – over the phone, face to face, and via paper correspondence – will remain for those who need it. The plan contributes towards the Council's ambition to be an Age-friendly organisation by 2025. On top of this, the work programme identifies opportunities to expand access to services, specifically the projects in the Customer Contact development field.

3.6. The plan identifies a central place for the Welsh language. Where possible, Welsh will be the default language setting on the systems that are used, and the Digital Suitability Assessment will be made compulsory and will require the Welsh language to be considered before any new digital system or service is procured.

3.7. The Council is committed to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Plan's work programme has been planned to expand and develop the whole of the

Council's work, which is the basis for realising our seven well-being goals for the same period as the Council Plan. The introduction in the first part of the Digital Plan notes how the Five Ways of Working have been addressed.

3.8. Digital technology has an important role to play when responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency Crisis. The work programme has projects that address environmental issues and the like, which includes reducing paper use and developing The Internet of Things (IoT).

3.9. Detailed work has been made in relation to the initial costs of putting the Plan into action. The identified costs are a combination of capital and one-off revenue costs, and permanent revenue. A specific fund has been earmarked for some time for one-off costs, and it will be possible to realise many elements of the projects in question by using this financial resource. However, there will be a need to consider the permanent revenue implications within the corporate bidding system annually.

4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

4.1. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, officials will develop and implement the individual elements of the work programme over the period of the Plan and will report regularly on the progress of that work programme.

5. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

5.1. Monitoring Officer

I am a member of the Digital Transformation Board and have contributed to the process.

5.2. Chief Finance Officer

I have been involved in the preparation of the Digital Plan and can confirm the contents of the report. The draft Digital Plan that is presented here is the result of meticulous work over the past few months and I am confident that it reflects the digital demands that will be placed on the Council in facing the challenges of the coming years.

I draw the attention of Cabinet members to the contents of paragraph 3.8 and can confirm that it is a fair reflection of the situation. Every single project in the Digital Plan has been costed, and as noted those costs are a combination of permanent revenue, one-time revenue and capital. One-time resources have been earmarked for the Digital Plan in the form of a fund, and I can confirm that bids for permanent revenue have been submitted in accordance with the Council's normal arrangements.

The Digital Plan will be under ongoing review and I am satisfied that the adoption of the Plan would not prejudice the bidding arrangements. Should a shortage of funding mean that some

of the bids are unsuccessful we will re-prioritise the content of the Plan as necessary.