

<b>April 2017</b>		<b>ITEM: 15</b> (Decision 01104420)
<b>Cabinet</b>		
<b>Connected Thurrock – Thurrock’s Digital &amp; Information Technology Strategy 2017-20</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Shane Hebb, Cabinet Member for Finance & Legal Services		
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Murray James, Operational Service Lead, ICT		
<b>Accountable Director (s):</b> Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT Sharon Bayliss, Director of Commercial Services Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD and Transformation		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

### **Executive Summary**

Although the Council has a number of digital projects in delivery it does not have a formally articulated digital strategy.

Directors Board has requested the development of an overarching digital and IT strategy that supports the delivery of organisational priorities and complements other key corporate strategies.

Over the last 4 months colleagues and partners in Thurrock have been consulted and engaged and their views have shaped the development of the strategy which is being branded as ‘Connected Thurrock’.

Connected Thurrock has been developed as a short but focussed strategy that will take Thurrock on a journey to become a ‘digital exemplar’ and meet wider community ambitions, around place making and economic growth. In particular the strategy will enable and equip staff and residents, regardless of age, wealth or ability to participate in the new digital world.

It is expected that the various programmes will be funded from existing approved and capital budgets with work commencing on future bids under the future and aspirational programme banner. Any scheme is likely to create additional pressures on operating budgets that will be mitigated primarily through ensuring all business

cases yield a positive return, but also through the revised operating models established under the “Digitally Capable” theme.

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 That the Connected Thurrock Strategy be approved;**
- 1.2 As a result of the feedback received from the meeting of the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017, a regular update be presented to both Cabinet and Corporate Overview & Scrutiny as the strategy moves to the practical implementation stages; and**
- 1.3 That sign-posting support for resident (users) is documented on the Contact Us page on the Council’s website.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 Although the Council has embraced the digital agenda it does not have a formally articulated digital strategy. In autumn 2016 Digital Board requested the development of a new digital strategy to shape the Council’s future digital and ICT offer.
- 2.2 The overriding brief for the new strategy was that it should be more than just a refresh of existing IS/IT strategies and digital projects as this was an opportunity to set an ambitious new digital vision and strategy that creates both *a digital council* and makes Thurrock *a digital place*.
- 2.3 Connected Thurrock has been developed after engagement with our key partners and colleagues. It is attached as Appendix 1 and is a strategy of two sides:
  1. The ‘**Digital**’ side describes the behavioural, commercial and social outcomes that we aim to achieve; and
  2. The ‘**Information Technology**’ side describes how our current technology will evolve to deliver these outcomes.

## **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 Connected Thurrock has been developed as a road map to take Thurrock on a journey to become a ‘digital exemplar’. It will do this by building:
  - **Digital leadership** - Focusing on ‘place making’ by enabling economic growth, improving peoples’ quality of life and strengthening the relationship with our communities;
  - **Digital awareness** – Building a recognition amongst our staff of the need to think and be digital;
  - **Digital by design** – As part of the service review process, services will be redesigned to be digital;

- **Digital platforms** – Deploying technologies to improve efficiency and deliver user centric services; and
- **Digital skills** – Equipping our people with the skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Digital Architecture**

- 3.2 A 4 layered stratified digital model has been developed to guide the delivery of the strategy and which will be the Council’s digital and enterprise architecture for the lifetime of the strategy.
- 3.3 At its base, is the **Digital Foundation** that will build a resilient and reliable infrastructure. On top of this sits the **Digital Office** layer which is about enhancing our efficiency and enabling people to work flexibly and complements the delivery of the People Strategy. The next layer is **Digital Council** which is all about enabling citizens to access end to end services and complements the Customer Services Strategy. At the top of the model sits the **Digital Thurrock** layer which is about enhancing the lives of citizens and complements the work being undertaken to develop Thurrock as a ‘smart place’.

### **Delivery programmes**

- 3.4 The above will be delivered by 6 thematic programmes of work:

**A Connected Place** – which is about equipping people in Thurrock with the technologies & skills to enhance their lives;

**Enabling Collaboration** – which is about enabling us to work better with our partners - for example colleagues in the NHS;

**Citizen Journeys** – which is about enabling citizens and customers to do business with the Council digitally;

**Smarter Working** – which is about equipping our staff with the skills and technologies to deliver services efficiently;

**High Availability** – which is about ensuring that our ICT platform is fit for purpose and high performing to enable us to meet our business objectives; and

**Digitally Capable** – which is about transforming the way that we deliver our technology services.

- 3.5 For each theme, we set out:

- **The intended digital outcomes** – i.e. the digital benefit;
- **The potential technology enablers** – the technology solutions that can be deployed to deliver the outcomes;

- **The change required** – what changes need to be made to deliver the outcome, particularly the cultural changes; and
- **Success criteria** – what will be different as a result of making the investment in technology to deliver the programmes.

### **Governance of the strategy**

- 3.6 Connected Thurrock is an ambitious strategy. Going digital provides a huge opportunity to transform the council and to deliver place making community priorities. To realise these digital ambitions the Council will need to improve how it uses technology, uses its workforce, works with partners and understands citizens' needs.
- 3.7 It is predicted that existing technology costs will rise as a result of these investments but these pressures should be mitigated by the efficiency savings that will be enabled by the implementation of the technology. Every business case will be expected to yield a positive return.
- 3.8 To fund key elements of this strategy new capital bids have been made in respect of 5 of the 6 delivery programmes totalling £3.247m over 3 years. This will be supported by capital of £4m that has been previously secured. Members should note that these capital budgets are likely to be funded through prudential borrowing.
- 3.9 The Connected Place programme is a more community based aspirational programme that will be delivered and funded through commercial agreements, external funding and borrowing. A sum of £15.71m (of which £5m will be sourced through external funding) has been identified for the delivery of this programme. This is included within the future and aspirational programme and any allocation will be subject to future reports.
- 3.10 The strategy will be governed through the creation of a delivery plan that sets out how projects will be delivered along with their business cases, resource requirements, risks and implementation dates. The delivery plan will be owned by the Digital Board and all investment decisions will only be permitted after consideration and approval by the Digital Board with escalation to Directors' Board and Cabinet as appropriate.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 This strategy has been brought to Cabinet as part of the agreed and expected route for policy development. The strategy is designed to support the delivery of wider community ambitions and priorities.

### **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

5.1 A wide ranging consultation and engagement exercise has been undertaken to develop the strategy. Consultees include the business community, small business forum, education sector, third sector and staff forums. From the consultation a picture has emerged of what is important to local stakeholders:

- A need to invest in ultrafast broadband infrastructure and public Wi-Fi across Thurrock to remove existing gaps in provision and enable economic growth;
- The Council needing to enable more collaboration, including virtual conferencing, flexible working and integration with its public and private sector partners;
- Building a data analytics capability to enable a more intelligent understanding of the needs of communities and individuals and to manage demand;
- Working with the education and voluntary sectors to provide courses and promote digital inclusion so as to avoid people being left behind by new technology;
- Ensuring our local education offer equips people with the skills needed to build a digital economy;
- Getting the basics right – ensuring our workforce is equipped with the right tools and applications to do their jobs and work from a reliable and stable platform;
- Making it easier for citizens to access services via mobile devices as that is their device of choice;
- Increasing the amount of service offers that are available online;
- Reducing the number of large scale business applications used by the Council and building more targeted applications that enable users to operate more agilely from mobile devices; and
- Ensuring that future technology solutions are implemented via business change activity that redesigns existing business processes to make them agile and responsive to future change.

5.2 These issues have been addressed in the strategy. In addition to stakeholder consultation the draft strategy has also been peer reviewed by external agencies – the Society for IT Managers (SOCITM) and by the Regional Networks consultancy – who have provided wider professional insight and feedback which has been incorporated.

5.3 In their report, SOCITM observed:

*“Connected Thurrock presents a good Digital Strategy for the Council and the wider borough. It builds upon previous transformation work at Thurrock and sets out a clear way forward supported by good levels of technical, organisational and financial detail. The comprehensive consultation process and stakeholder workshops that took place have significantly improved the clarity and credibility of the document”.*

5.4 At their meeting on 14 March Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Connected Thurrock Strategy and resolved:

*“The Committee referred the Connected Thurrock Strategy to the meeting of Cabinet on 5 April 2017. The Committee’s support was provisional dependent upon clearer objectives, a clearer strategy for delivery and performance monitoring.”*

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1 The delivery of the Connected Thurrock Strategy will help support the delivery of corporate priorities particularly in respect of economic growth and service efficiency.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**  
**Chief Accountant**

Capital bids have been received totalling £3.247m over 3 years and this will be supported by £4m of brought forward capital funding. The Connected Place funding will be subject to further Cabinet approvals as the programme develops. It is anticipated that the operating costs of ICT will increase as a result of the investments proposed as part of this strategy, however it is a design requirement that any investment costs need to be offset by the release of efficiency savings.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**  
**Contracts Solicitor**

There are no immediate legal implications for Cabinet to be mindful of at this point in the development of the strategy outlined.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Community Development Officer**

Delivery of the Connected Thurrock Strategy will help improve the quality of life in Thurrock and enable all people to take advantage of having improved access to the internet. There is provision within the strategy to improve people’s digital education and skills which will promote digital inclusion.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Delivery of the Connected Thurrock Strategy will support the delivery of wider corporate strategies including the People Strategy and the Customer Services Strategy.

**8. Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

**9. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 'Connected Thurrock', Thurrock's Digital and Information Technology Strategy 2017-20

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