HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Executive

10th February 2022

TITLE:	**Access to Services, Digital and Organisational Development Strategies**
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS	**Cllr Anthony McKeown – Leader** **Cllr Alan Barrow – Executive Councillor for Corporate Services & Finance**
CONTACT OFFICERS:	**Andrew Stokes – Chief Executive**
WARDS INVOLVED:	**Non-Specific**

Appendices Attached:
Appendix A – Access to Services Strategy
Appendix B – Digital Strategy
Appendix C – Organisational Development Strategy

1.   Reason for the Report

1.1   The purpose of the report is to consider new Access to Services, Digital and Organisational Development Strategies

2.   Recommendations

2.1   It is recommended that the Executive:

- Approve the Access to Services Strategy as attached at Appendix A
- Approve the Digital Strategy as attached at Appendix B
- Approve the Organisational Development Strategy as attached at Appendix C
- Consider a combined action plan for delivery of the strategies at its April meeting
- Delegate the consideration and approval of arrangements for external expertise to support the delivery of the strategies to the Leader and Executive Councillor for Finance & Corporate Services following the completion of the procurement exercise as outlined in section 12 of the report.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 Local authorities are currently experiencing a time of unprecedented change. We now live in a fast paced, digitally reliant, 24/7 society which has changed the way in which our residents live and work and how and when they want and need to access our services and support. The experience of the current pandemic also has changed the way people work, accelerating moves towards flexibility, responsiveness and agile / remote working.

3.2 In order to respond to the new challenges, the Council and its strategic alliance partner Staffordshire Moorlands DC need to continue their transformation, exploring new ways to make services more intelligent and more relevant to the lives of the people who rely on them.

3.3 In order to recognise this, the following new strategies have been developed and are presented to members for consideration and approval:

- Access to Services Strategy – attached at Appendix A and summarised in section 8 of the report;
- Digital Strategy – attached at Appendix B and summarised in section 9 of the report; and
- Organisational Development Strategy – attached at Appendix and summarised in section 10 of the report.

3.4 These strategies have been in development for some time. The emerging strategies for Access to Services and Organisational Development were shared with members in late 2020 via Information Digests.

3.5 Each of the strategies contains an outline action plan. A number of the actions overlap and it is therefore proposed that, following their approval, a combined action plan will be developed which will establish timescales and milestones for the delivery of the strategy ambitions and objectives. This will be presented for consideration and approval in April. At this time there will be necessity to reflect on the outcomes from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge.

3.6 It is recognised that additional external expertise and support will be required to support the delivery of the strategies. Following the approval of the strategies a procurement process will be undertaken to appoint external Digital/ ICT and OD / HR advisors.

4. How this Report Links to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The implementation of the strategies will support the development of the strategic alliance to ensure that the Councils are more focussed on the delivery of their Corporate Plan objectives and priorities

5. Options and Analysis

5.1   There are no options to consider at this stage

6.   Implications

6.1   <u>Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)</u>
       None

6.2   <u>Workforce</u>
       The Councils' workforce have been consulted, via their staff representatives, throughout the development of the Organisational Development Strategy. A series of further consultation will be conducted following the approval of the strategy and detailed action plan. Many of the specific initiatives / actions will require more specific consultation with affected staff prior to implementation.

6.3   <u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u>
       An Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this stage. There is a commitment in each of strategies to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact on any groups with protective characteristics.

       Equality of access to services and digital inclusion are key principles that will underpin the development of services

       A number of the detailed actions / initiatives will require detailed equality impact assessments prior to implementations

6.4   <u>Financial Considerations</u>
       The implementation of the strategies will require significant financial investment. The implementation will be financed from existing budgetary provisions including the £400,000 of earmarked reserves that the two Councils have set aside for this purpose

6.5   <u>Legal</u>
       None

6.6   <u>Climate Change</u>
       A key driver for the changes contained within the strategies is to support the Councils delivering their Climate Change objectives

6.7   <u>Consultation</u>
       The Access to Services strategy has been developed in line with the large scale customer satisfaction survey that was conducted in late 2019. The implementation of the strategies will require significant ongoing consultation with residents, businesses and other stakeholders

6.8   <u>Risk Analysis</u>
       The full risk analysis will be undertaken during the development of the detailed action plan. Individual projects will be managed using the Councils' project management framework

ANDREW P STOKES
Chief Executive

Web Links and Background Papers	Location	Contact details
Access to Services Strategy – Information Digest Report – October 2020	Buxton Town Hall	Andrew P Stokes Chief Executive
Development of an Organisational Development Strategy – Information Digest – August 2020		

7   Introduction and Background

7.1   Local authorities are currently experiencing a time of unprecedented change. The environment in which councils operate continues to evolve with:

- Changing societal behaviours;
- Resident needs;
- Customer expectations; and
- Technological advances.

7.2   We now live in a fast paced, digitally reliant, 24/7 society which has changed the way in which our residents live and work and how and when they want and need to access our services and support. The experience of the current pandemic also has changed the way people work, accelerating moves towards flexibility, responsiveness and agile / remote working.

7.3   Since the formation of the strategic alliance, the Council with its partner Staffordshire Moorlands DC has undertaken a significant transformation of its services. This involved a structured programme of service reviews to ensure that the Councils are responsive to customer needs and expectations and services are high in quality, but at the same time are provided cross-alliance to realise a significant amount of financial savings.

7.4   In order to respond to the new challenges, the Councils need to continue their transformation, exploring new ways to make services more intelligent and more relevant to the lives of the people who rely on them. In order to recognise this, the Councils have developed new Access to Services, Digital and Organisational Development strategies to drive the new agenda forward over the next three years.

7.5   The purpose of this report is to present these new strategies for consideration and approval.

8   Access to Services Strategy

8.1   The Access to Services Strategy, which is attached at **Appendix A**, builds on the Channel Access Strategy which was implemented by the Councils in 2016 which continued the journey of improving the customer experience and utilising technology to make things better and easier for all.

8.2   The aim of this Strategy remains consistent to the previous approach which is to achieve the objectives set out in the Councils' Corporate Plans to:

'Ensure our services are readily (HP) /easily (SM) available to residents In the appropriate channels and provided 'right first time'

8.3   The Strategy does however reflect the significant acceleration in customer demands that has been brought about by the pandemic.

8.4 The emerging Strategy was shared with councillors in an Information Digest report in October 2020.

http://stal-modgov/documents/s25011/Access%20to%20Services%20ID.pdf

8.5 In order to meet the overall aim of the Strategy, a range of actions have been developed by following the process of:

- *Understanding* the requirements of the customer and service areas;
- *Developing* access channels and appropriate skills and resources to meet customer needs; and
- *Delivering* continuous improvement of the customer experience

8.6 The Strategy will focus on 4 key themes:

- *Access*
- *Customer focus*
- *Innovation and technology*
- *Service process reviews*

8.7 The Strategy contains an action plan which includes the following key actions:

- A programme of service process reviews that remap the customer journey to ensure that services are provided 'right first time' and avoidable contact is reduced – this will include the need to reflect on the changes to the housing service to reflect the move from the current in-house to the emerging 'Teckal' company arrangements
- Development of an approach that recognises the need for equality of access to services and digital inclusion
- A refreshed process to ensure that Councils have a clear view of customer expectations
- Further development of the culture of the organisation to embed high levels of customer service across all services provided by the Councils
- Further development of the technology to support integrated service delivery
- A redefined face to face service provision is developed to ensure that this service is retained in an enhanced form particularly for the vulnerable and more complex cases

9 Digital Strategy

9.1 Digital, data and technology change has continued to accelerate which creates more potential to connect and collaborate with others; opportunities to learn and apply new skills; the potential to solve problems based on understanding the available data; and importantly for the Councils the potential to have a positive impact to people's lives.

9.2 The Digital Strategy which is attached at **Appendix B**, seeks to exploit the technology to ensure that the Councils:

- Can place people at the heart of their own use of council services
- Take the opportunity to mainstream the co-design of services
- Use technology to embed service improvement
- Effectively use data to analyse impact and insight
- Exploit the opportunity to prototype, learn and scale

9.3 The Councils have a complex ICT infrastructure which features some 60 applications which support service delivery across the wide range of services that are provided to residents and businesses.

9.4 The Councils are aware that at present applications are managed and procured by the Councils and then their development is often driven by suppliers. At the root of this is a lack of internal strategic ICT capacity and active contract management, meaning that solutions are looked at on a piecemeal basis rather than a joined-up view to determine opportunities across all solutions.

9.5 The convergence of contract end dates for a number of systems provides a unique opportunity for the Councils to create a whole-organisation approach to define current and future business requirements to ensure fitness for the future, and to exploit a smaller number of core systems overall.

9.6 Many of the Councils' systems include basic forms, workflow and case management type capabilities that are replicable in other ways. At present customer data is held in multiple systems which hampers the clear view of demand and is a barrier to offering a seamless online service to residents across service areas. A whole-organisation approach provides an opportunity to consider the overall architecture that would enable single view.

9.7 As a starting point for the development of the Digital Strategy, it was important to gain insight into the extent to which the Councils and their ICT is digitally mature. In order to provide this insight, the Councils engaged SOCITM to conduct a Digital Maturity Assessment. This has examined in detail where best practice measures have been adopted and what degree of commitment has been invested in digital services. The assessment also provided strategic recommendations which have been fed into the strategy development.

9.8 The vision of the Digital Strategy is:

'We will authentically deliver services that improve the lives of all our residents and businesses; through better design, use of data and innovation, and community collaboration'

9.9 In order to focus strategic energy and oversight, this vision will be delivered via four key pillars:

- *Digital Services* - Simple, proactive, effective and secure public services that are designed and delivered in partnership with our communities
- *Digital Skills and Inclusion* - Giving our communities the skills, tools, access and confidence to engage digitally with us, whilst improving our non-digital experiences to match digital experiences
- *Digital Collaboration and Connectivity* - Maximising the opportunities for digital, data and technology to enhance collaborative working, the local economy, individual opportunity and our residents quality of life
- *Data and Intelligence* - Optimised data and intelligence is central to the way we configure, reconfigure, deliver and continuously improve our services

9.10 The Strategy contains an action plan which includes the following key actions:

- Instigate a Digital Board including external partners
- Implement a series of service reviews which focus on the design of services in line with future customer journeys, enabling continuous improvements for our customers
- Provide employees with the tools, technology and applications to facilitate the use of agile and flexible working
- Conduct a digital skills audit and identify and implement professional digital, data and technology skills and capabilities for staff
- Ensure that staff have access to the data and systems that make a difference to customers
- Support seamless integration and interactions between internal applications and systems alongside wider integrations with our partners and create an organisation-wide approach to ICT application infrastructure
- Alongside county council colleagues, support and grow the application of wireless technologies
- Map data, conducting a data maturity assessment
- Create a basic data management framework, underpinning the effective use of data and intelligence to drive delivery across all service areas
- Continue to work towards the creation of a single view of customers
- Work with our partner organisations to share and combine data, where appropriate

10   Organisational Development Strategy

10.1 During the COVID pandemic, the Councils have not only continued to deliver services effectively, but also have in innovative and in ever changing ways. It is therefore now important to continue to create a truly agile and adaptable workforce that is no longer confined to a fixed location to help make the best use of valuable assets and resources.

10.2 The changes to the way in which our residents live, and work and how and when they want and need to access our services and support, is a key driver for the Councils to further transform they way in which services are structured and delivered. It is essential to ensure that the workforce that is engaged,

adaptable, flexible and has both the skills and mindset to meet these changing needs and demands and ensure that the Councils continue to deliver high quality, modern and effective services

10.3 In addition to meeting the changing demands for services there are a number of other key drivers for developing the strategic alliance:

- The Councils' responses to the Climate Emergency and the recently adopted Climate Change Action Plans highlight the need for climate change to be an embedded part of the 'day job';
- The recently approved new management structures need to be embedded and developed to provide for ambitious leadership and management across the strategic alliance;
- The Councils have the ambition to ensure the strategic alliance provides a great place to work which will facilitate the retention of talent and provide the means for staff to consider their own health and wellbeing;
- In common with lots of organisations, the Councils have an older workforce and issues such as flexible retirement, succession planning and flexible working opportunities have an increasing importance in order that that knowledge and expertise is not lost;
- The ambition to further develop the Councils' approach to apprenticeships and graduate recruitment;
- In the light of the expected post pandemic economic shocks it remains a possibility that further budget reductions may impact on employees unless productivity can be increased by leveraging the full potential of the workforce allied to the maximum potential for technological advance.

10.4 The Strategy also includes the suggested development of governance and scrutiny that was recommended in the recent reviews conducted at both Councils by the Centre for Governance Scrutiny (CfGS).

10.5 The emerging Strategy was shared with councillors in an Information Digest report in August 2020.

http://stal-modgov/documents/s25001/Info%20Digest%20OD%20Strategy.pdf

10.6 The Organisational Development Strategy, which is attached at **Appendix C**, sets out a clear plan of approach to organisational development, building on the already excellent work and good practice already in place. Alongside the Digital Strategy and the Access to Services Strategy, this strategy lays out how, High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands, will create the capacity to transform services for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors.

10.7 This vision of the Strategy is to:

'Ensure that the Councils' aims, objectives and priorities are met through the recruitment, development of a well led highly skilled and motivated workforce, and effective service commissioning arrangements, that reflect local context and provide excellent services to customers in a responsive way'

10.8 There are four Aims that underpin the Vision:

- *Building strong leadership and management*
- *Sustaining and improving a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce*
- *Improving customer focus*
- *Driving transformational change, innovation and improving value for money*

10.9 The Strategy contains an action plan which includes the following key actions:

- Review and further develop governance / scrutiny and councillor development arrangements
- Implement new leadership and management development programmes
- Conduct a skills gap assessment in order to strengthen the structure of training plans that link into corporate priorities
- Refresh the staff appraisal scheme and develop and agree an employee charter
- Develop an enhanced approach to apprenticeship and graduate recruitment (including the commitment to the national Graduate Development Programme)
- Implement an approach to talent management and development
- Implement agile working – including remote / home working
- Complete a review of HR policy and procedures and pay and conditions including resolution of the incremental progression issue
- Embed climate change into workplace practices
- Conduct a programme of service reviews focused on improved productivity through smarter working
- Implement initiatives to further encourage innovation
- Develop capacity to support the delivery of the Council's wider transformation programme

11 Developing the Detailed Action Plans

11.1 As highlighted in the report, the three strategies are interrelated i.e. all focussed on responding to the common challenges faced by the Councils that have been identified and considered.

11.2 Each of the strategies has an Action Plan which outlines the projects / initiatives that will be undertaken of the next three years to ensure that the vision and aims of each are delivered.

11.3 Many of the actions overlap including:

- Skills gap assessments that are comprehensive but importantly include digital and customer service skills
- Service reviews that ensure that services are mapped to customer journeys from service request to service delivery and effectively use technology to enhance both productivity and customer satisfaction;

- Developing and implementing a robust approach to digital inclusion;
- Effective data management that supports the single view of the customer and effective collaboration between the Councils' services and those provided by partners;
- The whole organisation approach to ICT application management to join up service response and remove avoidable contact from customers

11.4 Recognising this overlap, following approval of the strategies, the first task will be the development of a detailed single Action Plan which will set out the timelines, actions and milestones for the delivery of the strategies over the next three years. There will be a consolidated approach to the actions outlined in 11.3 above.

11.5 The detail Action Plan will be presented to members for consideration and approval in April 2022.

12 Delivering the Strategies

12.1 The Councils have used specialist external support to develop the strategies:

- The Access to Services Strategy has been developed with the support of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS) to which the Councils have on ongoing subscription. The strategy development has been informed by comprehensive customer satisfaction surveys which form part of The Councils' ICS membership;
- External specialists have supported the development of the Digital Strategy – their support has been essential in providing the technical review of the Councils' systems architecture. The same advisors also provided the independent Digital Maturity Assessment which has facilitated the development of the strategic objectives and outline Action Plan; and
- An external specialist OD / HR consultancy was commissioned by the Councils to assist with the development of the Organisational Development Strategy – their support has included an independent review of our current OD / HR practices which identified areas for development; supporting the development of the outline Action Plan; and the development of the leadership and management development programmes.

12.2 Through our subscription the ICS will continue to support the implementation of the Access to Services Strategy by providing a blend of insight and knowledge, tools, training and practical solutions that will raise customer service performance levels to meet customer needs. They also provide the opportunity for the Councils to gain a national standard accreditation, Servicemark, which is an independent accreditation of commitment to and achievement in customer service.

12.3 The Councils have already recognised that the delivering the Digital and Organisational Development strategies will require additional resources. The

Councils therefore have both made a provision of £200,000 in an earmarked reserve to support the implementation of the action plans.

12.4 The demand for specialist support to implement the actions set out in the Digital and Organisational Development strategies is as follows:

- Specialist external support will be required to provide resources with the capability to deliver core foundational elements of the Digital Strategy action plan. This work includes the prioritisation of foundational tasks and the identifying the resources required. The Councils' approach is that there will be knowledge transfer to the internal team and internal capacity would then pick up and manage the ongoing implementation. There will however be the need for a small amount of external strategic capacity support in the longer term to continue to support the internal team as it picks up responsibility for delivery. This support will be specialist in nature to cover issues such system architecture and will be procured in a resilient and value for money way.
- External support will be required to support the implementation of the Organisational Development Strategy. The short term requirements for this will be to assist with the creation and initiation of the new HR and OD model for the Alliance and to continue to implement the leadership and management development programmes. In the longer term the Councils will require a specialist to act as a strategic adviser to enhance the processes for supporting actions such as talent development and the ongoing implementation of the service reviews.

12.5 The procurement of the ongoing external support as set out in 12.4 will be initiated in line with the Councils' Procurement Procedure Rules with the following approach:

- The relationships with the external providers will be for a 3 year period in line with the strategy action plans;
- The support requirements will be greater in the short term but will be reduced as skills transfer to the Councils; and
- The contract relationships will be on a call off basis.

12.6 It is recommended that the arrangements are considered and approved through an Individual Executive Decision once the procurement process is completed.