

**Meeting date:** 10 November 2022

**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Resources

**Report title:** SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2022-27

**Report from:** Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
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**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet Member and seek approval on the SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2022-2027.
- 1.2 The current Digital Strategy was written in 2017 and set out the vision and objectives for the Council through until 2022. The Strategy has provided clear direction by focusing on the Digital Citizen, Organisation and Community/Solihull.
- 1.3 The Strategy is updated annually with a full review every five years. This report provides an update on that five-year review and the revised Digital Strategy for approval.
- 1.4 After reviewing the existing strategy, much of it was still relevant and was kept with minor changes and additions. The core vision for the SMBC and the major thematic areas were retained with minor amendments, as well as the digital objectives, links to wider priorities, and strategic narrative.
- 1.5 An emphasis on staff and skills has been included in the new strategy, with a focus on how we develop staff to help ensure that they are enabled to work digitally.

**2. Decision(s) Recommended**

2.1 Cabinet Member for Resources is asked to:

- (a) Approve the Digital Strategy.

**Report Title:** SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2022-27

### **3. Matters for Consideration**

#### **Background**

- 3.1 Our Digital Strategy outlines the approach to digital technology, skills, services, and engagement for Solihull Council (SMBC) and for Solihull Community Housing (SCH). It outlines how we aim to achieve our Digital Vision, and supports our wider strategic documents, such as the Council Plan.
- 3.2 Each iteration of the strategy takes a high-level view of our objectives and goals for digital over the next five years. The previous strategy (Appendix A) was agreed in 2017 and updated in 2021. This strategy was planned to be updated in 2022.
- 3.3 The current Digital Strategy was written in 2017 and set out the vision and objectives for the Council through until 2022. The Strategy has provided clear direction by focusing on the Digital Citizen, Organisation and Community/Solihull. This update is more significant revision due to the changes that SMBC and SCH have been through since 2017, especially with the impact of Covid-19 and Smarter Ways of Working.
- 3.4 The process of reviewing the Digital Strategy commenced in September 2021 when plans for the review were shared with Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board. These plans were then followed with initial feedback from SMBC's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on 16 November 2021, and a further discussion with CLT was held on 15 February 2022 to identify the key elements of our digital vision.
- 3.5 From this a draft document was created which was circulated to SCH's Digital Board on 17 February 2022, and SMBC's Digital Programme Board on 18 April 2022.
- 3.6 Feedback from these boards was incorporated into a main strategy document (Appendix B) and a summary document (Appendix C).
- 3.7 These documents were then shared with, and have had feedback incorporated from, the SMBC's Assistant Director Group, the Corporate Leadership Team, SCH's Executive Leadership Team, the Council's Digital Strategy Group, Directorate and User representatives, with the final version agreed in August 2022.
- 3.8 The final version of the Digital Strategy and its supporting documents were presented to Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board on 3 October 2022. Scrutiny asked for the section on 'Security and Safety' to reflect the impact on our community and how we continue to highlight the risk. This feedback has been incorporated.

## **4. Changes to the previous strategy**

- 4.1 After reviewing the existing strategy, much of it was still relevant and was kept with minor changes and additions. The core vision for the SMBC and SCH and the major thematic areas were retained with amendments, as well as the digital objectives, links to wider priorities, and strategic narrative.
- 4.2 An emphasis on staff and skills has been included in the new strategy, with a focus on how we develop staff to help ensure that they are enabled to work digitally. Research has been conducted on other Local authorities' digital strategies to help ensure that the Council is pulling from best practice and that the long-term vision for the Digital Strategy is aligned with national best practice.
- 4.3 The major additions and changes to the strategy include:
- 4.3.1. Changing our Digital vision to:

*“To improve everyone’s opportunity to engage in a positive digital way in all parts of their life”* to make the vision clearer and emphasise the positive experience we want residents and colleagues to have.

- 4.3.2. Splitting up the ‘Objectives section’ into ‘Wider objectives’ and ‘Digital objectives’ to better reflect which objectives will be delivered by our Digital Programmes and which objectives digital will support to be delivered through other projects and programmes.
- 4.3.3. Reordering the ‘Our Digital Standards’ section to flow in more of a cohesive way and adding ‘Local Digital Declaration’ standards which we have signed up to.
- 4.3.4. Additions to the ‘Digital Governance’ and ‘Wider strategic picture’ sections to reflect current practice in terms of governance and the most recent versions of SMBC’s Council Plan and SCH’s Forward Plan.

## **5. Future Plans**

- 5.1.1. The section ‘Our Delivery Roadmap’ (Appendix B, pages 18-19) outlines five key areas of technologies and capabilities that provide the biggest improvement to services or allow for efficiencies to be gained. These areas will form the core focus of our projects and programmes over the life of the strategy.
- 5.1.2. These areas are:
- (a) Data analysis and dashboards
  - (b) Collaborative working
  - (c) Workflow and process improvement
  - (d) Skills and training
  - (e) Engagement and inclusion

5.1.3. Each of these areas will have projects within them that aim to achieve the objectives outlined in the Digital Strategy. These projects will be focused on delivering our objectives in each area and an internal roadmap has been developed around these projects for 2022-23.

## 6. Implications and Considerations

6.1.1. State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>Digital is an enabler for improved systems and services across the Council. A clear and cohesive Digital Strategy for 2022-2027 allows for planned and beneficial improvements to services for Adults and Children and young people in Solihull. New digital capabilities around technology enabled care can help improve quality of life and health outcomes. New engagement tools can allow digital skills and capabilities in communities to increase, enabling communities to thrive.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>Digital services are increasingly becoming a core part of economic activity and stronger connectivity and availability of these services has a positive impact on the local economy.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>Digital services can contribute to a reduction in carbon footprint through supporting hybrid working, enabling virtual working with partners, and improving the data collected and analysed about the environment.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Promote employee wellbeing</li> </ol>	<p>Stronger digital skills and increased digital confidence for employees will promote wellbeing and productivity both in employees work lives and personal lives. An 'Digital Workforce' theme has been added to the strategy to emphasise and allow focus on employee's digital wellbeing</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
	and to promote it through the rest of the strategy.

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1. Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board receive annual updates on the progress of the Digital Strategy and comments made on 3 October 2022 have been included in the final version.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1. The impact of Covid-19 has led to vastly increased digital requirements from SMBC and so resource and funding requirements are expected to increase in order to meet these business needs and customer expectations.

6.3.2. Specific digital initiatives with funding or resource allocation requirements will require specific business cases.

6.3.3. Similarly cost reductions that can be delivered through digital deployment are detailed at the Project level. However, shifting customer interaction from phones and walk-in to digital channels is a lower cost model.

6.3.4. Further investment in superfast broadband and related provisions in the borough will be investigated, and specific business cases produced as required.

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1. There are no legal implications at present.

6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

6.5.1. The key risk to the Digital programme is that we adopt incremental change without assessing the corporate benefits or priorities. This in turn will result in a missed opportunity and MTFs savings will not be realised. Steps have been taken through the Digital Programme Board to ensure this does not occur however, it is a specific risk if a Corporate approach is not adopted. Having the updated Digital Strategy as a guiding document will help to mitigate this risk.

6.5.2. The risk appetite for digital will vary across each theme and their constituent projects and individual risk appetite reviews will be conducted for each project as part of the business case development process.

## 6.6 Equality implications:

- 6.6.1. We will focus on high volume, simple transactions, that drive efficiency, whilst ensuring that we continue to support people who have more complex and specialist needs. Specific proposals will have an equality impact assessment carried out on them.
  - 6.6.2. The delivery programme for the Digital Strategy supports our fairness, equality, diversity and inclusion stance by enhancing accessibility of services to a diverse range of customers and supporting agile working arrangements for employees with different needs. Newer systems will also enable the Council to monitor the profile of service users over time and thus help to identify trends and assess emerging needs of local residents.
- 6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):
- 6.7.1. Digital work will support wider partnership working through the further development of collaborative tools to engage with partners.

## 7. List of appendices referred to

- 7.1 Appendix A – SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2017-2022
- 7.2 Appendix B – SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2022-2027
- 7.3 Appendix C – SMBC and SCH Digital Strategy 2022-2027 Summary Document

## 8. Background papers used to compile this report

- 8.1 None.

## 9. List of Other Relevant Documents

- 9.1 None.