

Belfast City Council Digital Strategy

2024 - 2028



Belfast
City Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to Belfast City Council's new 2024-2028 Digital Strategy.

This strategy presents a new chapter in how we use technology in the council. We examine the ways technology can be leveraged to transform practices, processes and procedures within the council – influencing our business strategy as it does so. In the past, our more traditional ICT strategy looked to change, fix, or improve technology without impacting on the council's business strategy. In simple terms, an ICT Strategy was focused on designing the 'technology engine', whereas Digital is about using technology to help answer a business problem and transform how we operate.

Strategy Overview

- **Introduction:** Setting the scene for how a re-imagined council can better support a re-imagined Belfast through our work delivering the Belfast Agenda.
- **Strategic Context:** Outlining our drivers for change in terms of financial efficiency, service improvement and digital capability.
- **Is Digital Transforming the Council?:** An honest assessment of where we are today with our use of technology to improve how we work.
- **Operational Context:** An overview of the current opportunities and challenges around our digital approach, capacity, capability and skills.
- **Our Ambition:** An overview of where we want to be in five years' time once we have delivered this Strategy.
- **Our Vision and Objectives:** Our Vision, workstreams and key objectives.

- **Delivering our Objectives:** A breakdown by objective of our work, project and improvement actions.

Key Messages

- **We have a bold vision for how technology can transform Belfast City Council.** We want to strengthen our digital and information capability, enhancing our ability to be an effective civic leader in our data-enabled smart city.
- **Service Improvement is integral to the next chapter of the Council's development.** This digital strategy goes beyond just planning digital in isolation. The benefits of digital innovation come from being able work differently and that involves designing all aspects of our services so they work together.
- **Digitally enabled service design** will drive our service improvement agenda. It is only when services can be fully automated end-to-end, with no additional work required, and can be designed so work is completed in a single transaction, that we will improve the customer experience, remove inefficiency, and ensure our resources (finance, people and assets) are focused on what matters to our communities.
- **Our technology architecture** gives us a robust foundation for the delivery of the target operating model this strategy will deliver. We now need to exploit our enterprise solutions (Finance, Asset Management, Customer Relationship Management, Document Management) across our operating model.
- **Prioritising and resourcing our digital programme of work** appropriately is key. If our programme is integral to our future council operating model then we need to ensure our digital teams and change teams are resourced to meet this challenge.



INTRODUCTION

Belfast is a special city. By 2035 we want Belfast to be a magnet for talent and business and admired around the world; a city re-imagined in which no-one is left behind. By 2035, everyone will enjoy attractive, well-serviced, clean neighbourhoods and a thriving city centre equipped with a range of facilities, activities and things to do.

Digital has a pivotal role to play in making this happen.

The Smart Belfast Innovation Framework we have developed with our partners has a strong focus on digital innovation to enhance life in Belfast. Inclusive growth in Belfast will be delivered through the acceleration of a modern, and sustainable, digital infrastructure in Belfast with local and commercial partners. This digital capability helps us accelerate plans to grow the number of jobs in the city and provide support for residents to take advantage of these.

As a major employer and provider of public services in Belfast, we want to use our digital capability to accelerate our own development. We want to lead by example, to innovate and transform our services to be the best we can provide whilst providing value for money for our communities.

In the last five years Belfast City Council has embarked on the replacement of some of our core digital platforms such as HR/Payroll, Finance, Asset Management and Customer Relationship Management. These are significant projects and provide the capability to enable staff to work effectively, manage and maximise our use of assets, and deliver our services to customers ever more efficiently. Ensuring our Elected Members

have the information and technology tools to deliver their work well also remains a key priority.

We are ambitious to do more but recognise buying technology is often the easiest part of transforming how we operate. We will need to reimagine how we deliver and configure all aspects of our services - people, processes, assets, and information - to truly exploit digital capability. To do this requires us to design services from 'first principles' to ensure all aspects of our delivery are optimised and offer best value. We will remove barriers to making change happen and ensure our service design approach means we are structured and clear on the benefits to be achieved.

We are an information-driven organisation and quality information is one of our main assets as a public service provider. It allows us to understand our communities and plan the services they need. Information drives every aspect of our strategic, management and operational activities and we want to make sure we have the right information readily available to our staff in modern, digital solutions. Removing paper from our processes will ensure valuable information is not 'locked into' unstructured documents or older, electronic formats which are less accessible and hard to analyse.

Customers rightly want us to deliver services which work first time, every time. Our philosophy is that there should be 'no wrong turn' for our customers, and they should experience the same level of support whether that is face-to-face or digitally. Social media is increasingly seen as a convenient channel to engage with the council and we intend to maximise its use moving forward.

A re-imagined City rightly demands a re-imagined digital council to lead it - this strategy defines our route to achieve this.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT



Service improvement and efficiency are integral to the next chapter for the Council. A savings target of £12.5m has been set for 2023/24. There is a recognition digital will play a key role in moving these ambitions forward.

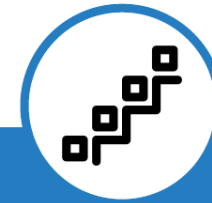
The Smart Belfast Framework acknowledges the powerful contribution that collaborative digital innovation can make to the city's shared outcomes.

The Digital Services team can help ensure Belfast City Council is an important partner in collaborative digital innovation.



The Digital Services team are well respected and seen as an effective and hard-working partner to the wider Council. They are responsive and flexible and have worked hard to tailor digital to meet the organisation's needs.

Being flexible is getting harder. Recruitment is challenging in key roles such as Cyber Security. There is a growing succession planning issue. In five years' time 54% of the workforce in Digital Services will be over 55. Nearly 60% of managers (tiers 1-3) will be over 55.



What Does This Mean?

The Council will need more from Digital Services at a time when its own capacity is most challenged.

So we explored the current relationship between Digital Services and the wider council to understand the current approach to digital.

Figure 1 - Digital Strategy Strategic Context



Is Digital Transforming the Council?

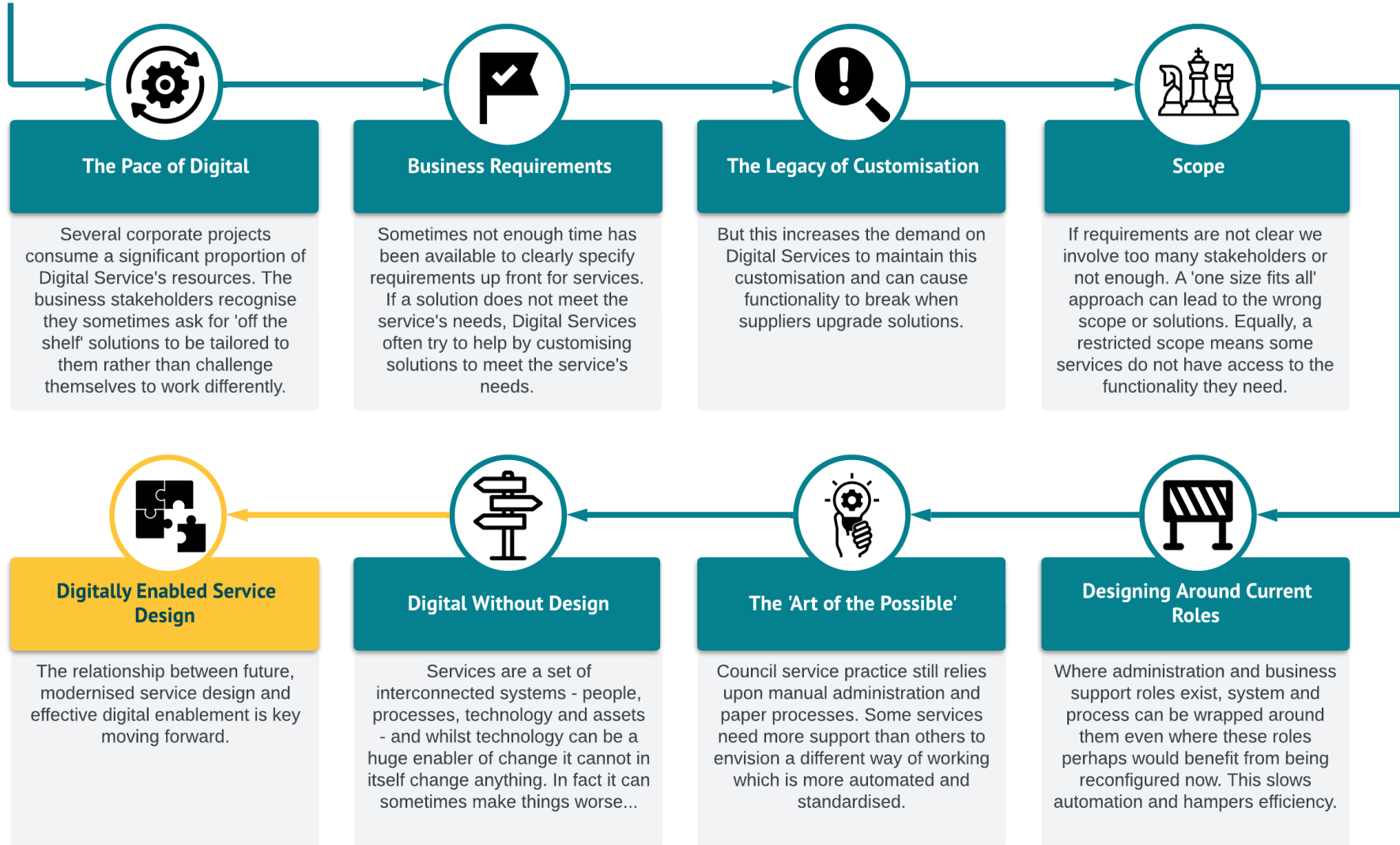


Figure 2 - Is Digital Transforming the Council?



IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMING THE COUNCIL?

The status quo is always powerful in an organisation. Our deep seated 'norms' of how we operate are a strong and dominant driver for keeping things as they are. Services will always be most comfortable to keep their tried and tested ways of working if we are not clear on the benefits of changing. Even the best service design approach cannot succeed without a clear and understood need to operate differently.

The council is currently resourced to operate without the benefits of self-serve, automation and digital workflow. Business and support staff can bridge gaps in workflow, prepare operational management information and re-key information across systems where this is necessary. In this context, there is a risk digital projects can just be an overhead and distraction from the 'day job'.

Rising customer expectations, a commitment to digital innovation and reducing budgets may not be enough to change the status quo unless these drivers for change are translated into a clear business driven and owned digital strategy which describes a new, digitally enabled operating model for the council.

Our digital strategy must go beyond just planning digital in isolation. The benefits of any digital innovation come from being able work differently and that involves designing all aspects of our services so they work together. Our people, our most valuable asset, need the right tools and ways of working to do their jobs well. Customers need to be able to readily access our services and remain confident in the level of service they will receive, even in the context of reducing budgets. Elected Members equally need the right tools and information to serve their communities. To develop this

strategy, staff and Elected Members in the council were asked to articulate what they wanted to see in the next phase of change in the council:

"I've noticed a lot more digital responses from the public - lots of social media contact"

"We can now use the infrastructure we have built to help support connectivity across the city"

"We need to maximise the benefit of new systems and the capability we have today in how we deliver services"

"The way we use and report data is patchy - we wanted a visual dashboard and ended up with a spreadsheet"

"When promoting digital access to services, we just need to be mindful of people who can't access through these routes"

"We don't always go back and review whether a new system delivered all the benefits we set out to achieve"

"We manage a lot of our asset information on paper and spreadsheets - if I need to know something I have to pick up the telephone and try to speak to someone"

Figure 3 - Digital Strategy Engagement Key Points



OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Any council strategy leads to change, or it should do. This strategy must be real and we must all feel committed to deliver it. We must be able to describe the change we are trying to achieve but importantly we need to understand where we are today. If the change is really important to us we will create the conditions whereby the strategy can be seen in action every day. To do that requires an honest assessment of the operational context the strategy will be implemented within.

Digital Workforce

- The Digital Services team is well respected and valued service within BCC and partners. This creates a positive environment for delivering a new approach to Digital.
- 31% of the Digital Services staff are aged 55 or over which is creating a growing succession planning issue. In five years' time that will rise to over 54%. Attracting new talent is problematic in specialist areas such as Cyber Security and Software Development and at present most roles in Digital Services are therefore internally recruited. Salaries are not competitive with the flourishing IT sector in Belfast.
- The digital workforce skills mix is not fully aligned with future needs. Skillsets such as commissioning, business relationship management and programme and project management are either absent or under capacity to meet the current and forecasted demand on Digital Services.
- Deeper specialist skills around cloud, network replacement and telephony are externally sourced, particularly for technology commissioning, to augment the Infrastructure team in the delivery of their work programme which is growing in complexity.

Process and Practice

- Prioritisation of projects is hampered by the number of long term, large corporate projects absorbing the capacity of the Digital Service, delaying delivery overall of the 2018-21 ICT strategy programme.
- Time to capture business requirements with service areas is sometimes curtailed by the urgency to re-procure applications.
- There is currently no formal business relationship management processes or associated fitness for purpose review cycle of business applications. Supplier management does not now exclusively sit with Digital Services.
- The Information Governance team's capacity is hampering the refresh of the Information Governance Framework and the confirmation of information asset ownership.

Enterprise Architecture

- We do not formally carry enterprise architecture capability and tend to develop our IT infrastructure and information architecture solution by solution. Developing an Enterprise Architecture approach will ensure that our technology choices meet our immediate and future business needs.

Service Improvement

- We focus on non-cashable savings (like time efficiencies) through the investment in digital currently more than the cashable benefits that might be achieved if we took the opportunity to redesign services during implementation.
- Current approach focuses on mapping current processes and using this a starting point for improvement rather than reimagining how we work through automation and workflow and redesigning our workforce to enable this.



OUR AMBITION

We have a growing ambition to really exploit digital capability to enhance how the Council works.

Creating a Clear Digital Operating Model

Service Design

We want digital to be a key enabler of our wider change and efficiency work. We want to simplify and automate how we deliver our services to improve our efficiency but also improve the customer experience. We have already invested in some key applications such as our finance, asset management, and customer relationship management (CRM) applications. We have new electronic document management capability and in many operational business areas we are looking at moving away from dated legacy applications to more modern applications. We know we need to take a more holistic design approach to better exploit these capabilities. This strategy will re-think our approach to digital and in future we will deliver new, major digital line of business applications as part of a review and design of a service wherever possible. We will consider these as business projects and the benefits will be owned by the services themselves. In the future there will be fewer projects we consider as 'just' technology projects and most will be business led projects.

We will agree simple design rules so we challenge ourselves to understand the true opportunity presented by new technologies to drive new, modern and efficient ways of working. This may challenge our received 'norms' of how we work and change people's roles too but this will ensure everyone's contribution is valuable, work is rewarding and our staff have the right tools to work efficiently.

Customer Experience

We want to make sure we deliver a consistent level of customer service regardless of which service is being provided. Adopting an omni-channel approach will mean our customers receive the same experience regardless of how they access our services (whether in-person, online, by phone, social media, or any other customer access channel). We will build on our work to develop a customer hub and onboard more of our services into this facility. For example, we will actively design our social media channel to support customer transactions and integrate this with our CRM functionality. We will explore the benefits of Webchat and Chat Bot Virtual agents on our website. We currently use an array of customer access portals depending on the service being accessed. We need to review this and consider the introduction of a single customer account and/or the benefits of a single master portal for all customer online transactions with the Council. Where it makes sense, we will shift transactions onto digital channels to reduce the cost to serve. We have the potential to automate over 10,000 calls per annum and deflect many more by reducing failure demand (demand which results from us not getting our service right the first time more of the time). This will release capacity for the transition of other services into the customer hub.

Our customer capability will be better exploited by designing it into every service as part of a prioritised service design programme. This will reduce the amount of different and competing change exercises happening at any one time in a service and instead bring these valuable capabilities (digital, customer, service efficiency work) to each service as part of one design exercise. This will also make better use of our colleagues who support service improvement.



Digital Capability

Enterprise Architecture

The council's applications, networks and infrastructure are like a big jigsaw and to ensure it all fits together well we need to invest in a capability called Enterprise Architecture (EA) which we do not formally carry. This will enable us to understand how each element fits with each other (for example how our new Finance application needs to interface with say our new Asset Management application) and how each new digital capability supports our service portfolio. It will help us scope and sequence our work carefully, so we can understand where we will store key datasets and plan how applications will interface with each other to avoid confusion, duplication of effort and delays.

EA will allow us to develop a clear end operating model and maximise our use of ICT assets. This will help shape our data model (what data sits where in our applications) and help us prioritise and plan more effectively. We can better achieve a 'develop once, use many times' philosophy with EA and extend the use of applications where they provide functionality more than one service can benefit from.

An Intelligent Client for Digital

We know there are some practical changes we need to make to how we approach digitally enabled change. We have a talented and well-respected digital team but we also recognise by 2028 54% of our workforce will be eligible for retirement. In the lifetime of this strategy we will want to address our succession challenges as well as introduce new skills into our digital services model to support our direction around Digital:

- We want to spend more time capturing our requirements for technology but do this in the context of how we should work in the future, not how we work today. This requires us to have more dedicated **business relationship management support** that gains and maintains an ongoing understanding of our services and their information and technology needs, to help them understand the 'art of the possible' and look beyond their current working practices.
- We want to strengthen our approach to **supplier management** and support our services to get the most from their relationships with ICT suppliers.
- **Commissioning is the continual process of planning, agreeing, and monitoring services.** Moving forward we will commission some digital services from others where it makes sense to use specialists. To do this well we need to ensure our own teams are adept at **commissioning** such services, so we can specify and manage these relationships well and ensure they offer value for money.
- We provide application support, processing and hosting for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) around housing benefits. We will continue to ensure a strong client/supplier relationship and support the NIHE through the changes in benefits arising from the introduction of universal credit.

Governance and Resource Management

We recognise that how we govern digital change needs to sit at the corporate level as an intrinsic part of our planned organisational change. We need to ensure all planned change for services is aligned to an agreed service design and co-ordinate our change with this in mind. A corporate change board will direct the Digital Work Programme as part of the wider council change programme.



By prioritising our change corporately, we can also ensure we more successfully prioritise our finite digital resources (people and budgets) and lock in business ownership of the digital programme and its intended benefits.

An Information Led Organisation

Everything we do needs information. From collecting bins, to undertaking a food inspection, to processing a planning application the information to make these things happen must be easily accessible, relevant and of a high quality. Information is a vital asset for the provision of services in Belfast and for the efficient management of council services and resources. It plays a key part in governance, service planning and delivery as well as our performance management. Information Governance is how we ensure it is doing the right things, for the right people, in the best way, in a timely, inclusive, open and accountable manner.

Today, much of the information we need requires intervention by hard working officers to retrieve it, cleanse it and re-present it in reports, analysis and schedules. Information is not always easily retrievable and may sit in a variety of formats, applications, spreadsheets, paper documents, versions, e-mails and stored in different locations. It can make it difficult to repeat analysis, and puts the focus on data retrieval and cleansing rather than analysis to gain insight to support operational decision making and strategic planning. We need to ensure we have the practical information governance foundations in place to ensure information continues to be a real asset.

Information Governance

Information Governance is a vital part of how we safely collect, use, retain and dispose of information. An Information Governance Framework enables us to maintain robust arrangements for information protection and security. Our framework is now due for refresh and it is important we prioritise this as part of our future digital programme as it provides the foundations and building blocks of a robust information culture. It allows us to balance our need to protect information with our need to use it to good effect – providing the guidelines on how we can increasingly share information across services and with partners where this improves outcomes for our communities.

Information Requirements

We must always start with our information needs and not jump to ‘solution’ before we fully understand our requirements and potentially obtain the wrong solution which does not meet all our needs. As an information-driven organisation capturing information requirements and ensuring these drive digital implementations allows us better access to the information we need to deliver, plan and continuously improve our services. We need a data model which is clear on where our master datasets – address data, workforce, finance, assets - reside and ensure these are maintained as the ‘single source of truth’ to avoid confusion around which version of information to use, and so avoid inaccuracy. In developing this strategy we need to remember that:

- Information can be a real asset in a council if it is the right information. We want the right information to understand our customers’ needs. We need to manage the whole information cycle, from collection, use, analysis and storage, retention, disposal, and security in a way which builds our confidence in the value of our information.



- Operational information needs to be real time to support case management, resource scheduling and troubleshoot operational service issues.

Analytical capability is important but if the information we have is hard to access, out of date, irrelevant or of a poor-quality analytical tools cannot fix that. Analysis is only as good as the quality of information we supply.

Good Foundations for Great Information

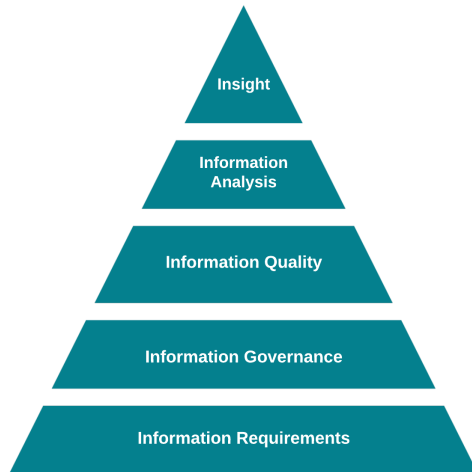


Figure 4 - Information foundations

It's not just about getting the right information available and of the right quality - our workforce need information in the right format, delivered to them in a way that is easy to digest and timely. For instance, if as a manager I need to check on the progress of my waste management rounds to make any adjustments whilst teams

are deployed I need this information in 'real time' to make this happen. I will also need this information over a longer period and retrospectively to understand trends, performance and cost to help me plan my approach to service delivery too.

Role Based Information Needs



As a Manager I want to be able to have self-serve access to basic operational management and productivity information for my function(s) real time (and all the time) without needing deep analysis skills. I will have standard reports which review trends in delivery, performance and productivity.



As a Corporate Manager I want to have self-serve access to cross-functional analysis of management information real time without needing deep analytical skills. I also need support from analysts to plan services and forecast needs.



As a Corporate Director I need the same support as a Corporate Manager, but I will also require analyst support to understand wider socio-economic information and the strategic outcomes and benefits we are achieving.

Figure 5 - Role Based Information Needs



City Innovation

Belfast has been identified as one of the world's top 10 Digital Economies of the Future (the only UK city other than London). 26% of all Belfast job openings in 2019 were in digital technology – the highest in UK¹.

Digital innovation in our city is flourishing and indeed accelerating at pace. As a civic leader, one of our responsibilities is to ensure we can articulate our understanding of how digital can improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in our city. This reinforces the importance of the council being in good shape itself from a digital and information perspective and able to access, analyse and present the right strategic information to shape the development of Belfast as a digital city with partners.

We need to ensure that our own service development keeps pace with the digital advancement in Belfast so we remain relevant to our communities and our citizens benefit from the investment in digital innovation across the city region. Our services could significantly benefit from many of the innovative smart city technologies available and emerging around artificial intelligence, smart mobility, smart sensors, robotic automation and e-governance. To put us in a position to better exploit these technologies, this digital strategy needs to give us the service design approach to articulate how and where these technologies can make a difference to city service delivery. We also need to be receptive and open minded, to accept this may radically change how we operate.

Belfast has been identified as one of the world's top 10 Digital Economies of the Future (the only UK city other than London). 26% of all Belfast job openings in 2019 were in digital technology – the highest in UK.

Building on these foundations, Belfast City Council's Urban Innovation Framework 2022-26 acknowledges that digital innovation has an increasingly dominant role to play in both urban, social and economic policy.

Our ambition is to find ways to harness this innovation to better support Belfast's transformation to a more productive and sustainable city that provides a rich quality of life for our citizens.

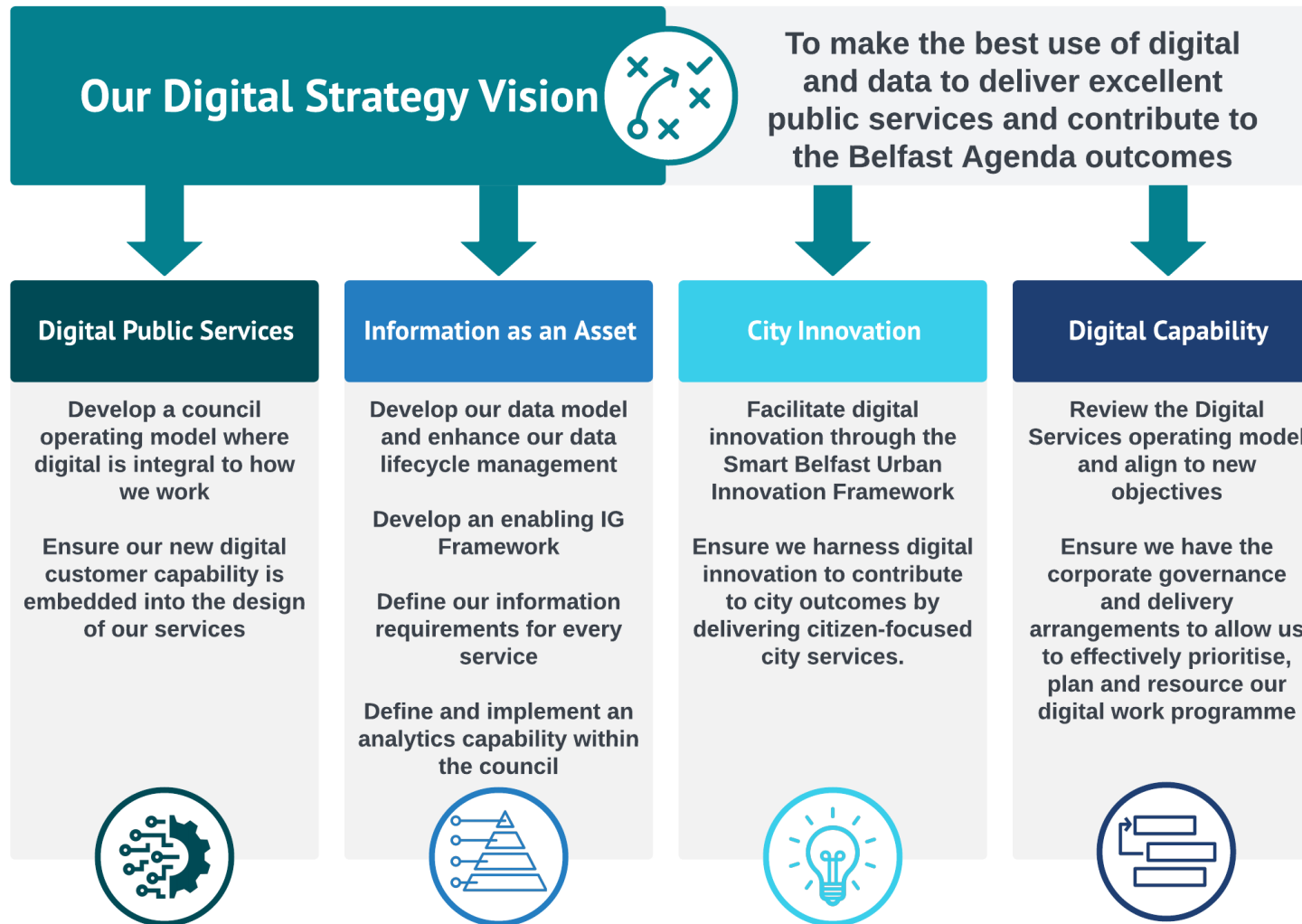
The framework aims to stimulate collaborative innovation between local industry, SMEs, academia, government and communities. It identifies eight core pillars that need to be in place to support this approach including: partner commitment to innovation, a focus on the citizen; and the generation of an urban data environment. Partners have identified a series of recommendations to grow these innovation pillars.

As a civic leader one of Belfast City Council's roles is to foster this shared ambition for urban innovation and the strengthening of Belfast's innovation pillars. It is also to ensure we, as a council, have the necessary digital ambitions, capabilities and systems in place to contribute to this urban innovation approach.

¹ Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022-26



OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES



DELIVERING OUR OBJECTIVES



Digital Public Services

"Develop a council operating model where digital is integral to how we work"

This objective recognises we need to design digital into our overall service design. It should become an intrinsic part of our services and when specified and designed well should allow us to improve information management, transform our processes, re-imagine our roles and improve our service quality.

"Ensure our new digital customer capability is embedded into the design of our services"

It is only when services can be fully automated end-to-end, with no additional work required, and can be designed so work is completed in a single transaction, that we will improve the customer experience, remove inefficiency and ensure our resources (finance, people and assets) are focused on what matters to our communities.

How will we achieve this?

Digital Design Principles

We will adopt some simple design principles which will govern the specification and implementation of digital technologies in our services.

- **We will buy, not build as a default** by using commercial products we will exploit the best options in the market and reduce the burden on our specialist development capability.
- **We will automate and simplify our processes and remove paper where this no longer makes sense** to remove inefficient re-keying of information into systems and improve our efficiency.
- **We will capture our information needs** (strategic, management, operational) **from the outset** of any software implementation and build those into every digital project to ensure we build our digital applications around these needs.
- **We will take a cloud-first approach** for new or refreshed applications and strategically move towards the removal of on-site data centres.
- **We will ensure the wider strategic tools are in place to support digital transformation** such as supportive HR and Change Management policies and a service design methodology and approach.
- **Wherever possible, we will manage digital line of business applications projects** as part of an overall service design exercise.



A new Digital Operating Model

We already have many of the important technology foundations either in place or being delivered as part of the previous ICT Strategy's 2018-21 work programme. Our current technology architecture gives us a robust foundation for the delivery of the target operating model this strategy will deliver. It provides us with important enterprise solutions which we can deploy across the Council.

This Strategy will ensure we optimise the use of our current enterprise applications and identify our requirements for new functionality where we do not carry this at present.

Cloud hosting has been our direction of travel since the 2018-21 Strategy was adopted. Increasingly we will reduce our on-premise hosting arrangements in favour of 'software as a service' applications as the default. Where this is not viable for applications or data hosting we will consider a move to 'Infrastructure as a Service' solutions which will shift the responsibility for hosting, support, and disaster recovery to industry standard private sector suppliers who can offer off-site disaster recovery arrangements.

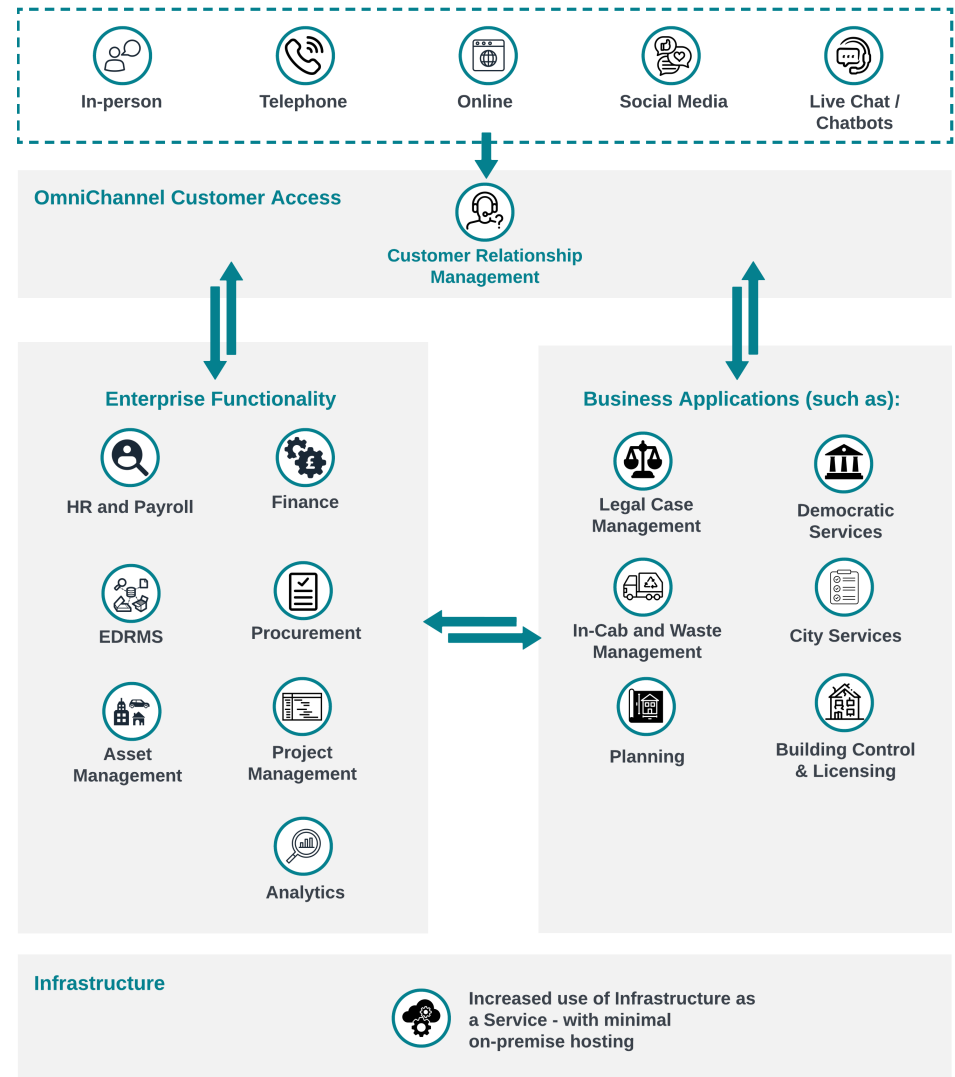


Figure 6 - Future Enterprise Architecture

Service Design

We will adopt a three-stage, whole system service design methodology with digital at the heart of it. We need a consistent, systematic and comprehensive approach to designing digitally enabled change which recognises that sustainable and transformational change is not achieved by changing one element in isolation of the others. The intention is to design our information, technology and business processes together to maximise the use of our highly valued workforce and assets and better meet customer need.

To achieve that outcome, we will always start with our understanding of customer and community need and define the business and customer benefits to be achieved (non-financial and financial). We will aim to design our services to improve outcomes and provide an excellent customer experience.

We will look to take a service design approach in all planned or forecasted digital projects to replace line of business applications. In some instances, we will redefine the scope of current business application projects to introduce service design thinking to better exploit the introduction of the new technology. We know today that our improvement exercises around *digital, customer, information, assets*, for example, are often progressed independently of each other. Moving forward our approach will design **all** of these aspects of service **together, and bring to the exercise all of our relevant enterprise digital capabilities, as well as any new digital capability we may need, to take a much more 'joined up' and holistic approach to service design.** This includes ensuring new document management capability will be implemented and designed into our services alongside the refresh or introduction of other business applications/technologies. This approach is described in figure 8 – Future Service Design Approach:

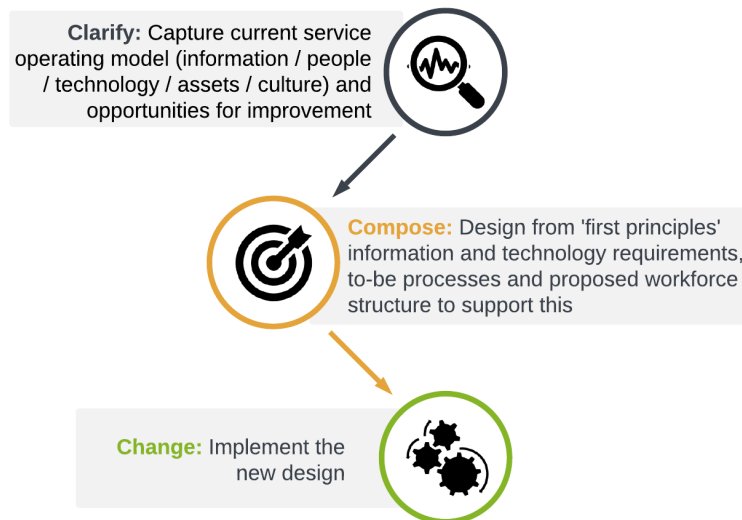


Figure 7 – An overview of the three-stage Service design approach



Current Improvement Approach



Future Service Digital Design Approach

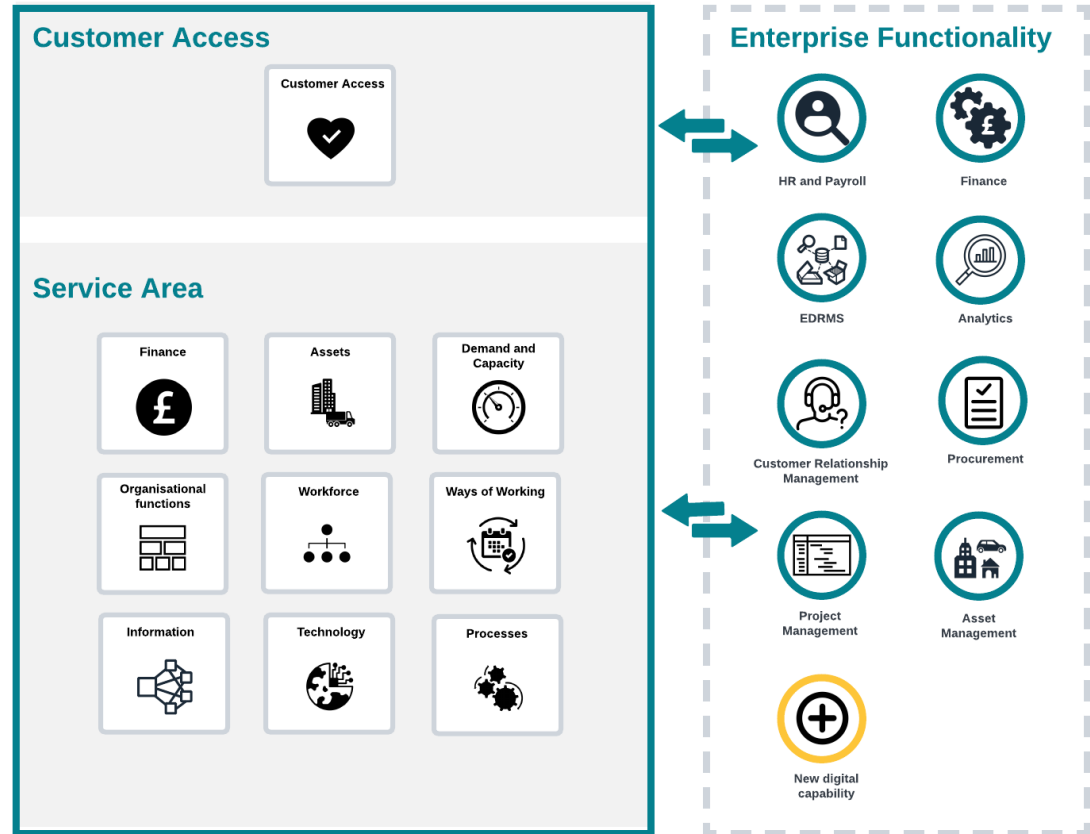


Figure 8 - Future Service Digital Design Approach



Our Projects

Target digital operating model development project

- Create detailed target operating model using enterprise architecture method
- Confirm overall service architecture and its relationships to technology architecture

Business Application Refreshment projects:

- **Finance (E5) replacement**
- **HR, Payroll and Time and Attendance**
- **Customer (E-forms)**
- **Building Control**
- **Corporate Asset Management**
- **Corporate EDRMS**

Fleet and Resources In-Cab project

Environmental Health service design project

Summary Improvement Actions

- Introduce a new service design methodology and approach to its use linked to required benefits (cashable and non-cashable).
- Confirm approach to deployment of digital customer capability in each service design.
- Review all live business application refreshment projects to identify where it is appropriate to adopt service design approach and re-scope accordingly
 - Pilot a service design approach in a service area.
CMT to agree the selection criteria for a pilot service design.





Information as an Asset

"Develop our data model and enhance our data lifecycle"

A new data model will ensure we are clear on what data we carry, where it is stored and by whom. The adoption of the UK Government Data Lifecycle will provide practical approaches to assessing and improving the quality of input data rather than just focusing on the quality of analytical outputs.

"Develop an enabling Information Governance Framework"

The Information Governance (IG) Framework covers the information, roles, processes, communications, metrics, and tools that help the council formally manage and gain better control over information assets. The refresh of our IG Framework is all about balancing security, stewardship and protection of data with accessibility, sharing and use of data - ensuring data assets can safely and appropriately go where the council needs them most. The refresh will ensure we continue to comply with UK GDPR, provide secure and appropriate storage of our data and put in place the most appropriate standards, controls, roles and responsibilities. **This is a critical 'early win' to support the effective design of services so we can use information as a real asset in service design moving forward.**

"Define our information requirements for every service"

This objective will ensure every service has clearly defined information requirements upon which we base our design of services.

How will we achieve this?

As part of our service design method, we will design services that:

- Only process and store the information we need – saving time and money as well as ensuring we comply with UK GDPR guidelines.
- Have better insight into their performance, productivity and outcomes – improving how we deliver for our customers and service users.
- Can better understand operational issues and manage the impact to service delivery and quality standards.
- Can anticipate and manage service demand better.
- Have the information we need to understand the impact of any planned change to our services – improving their resilience and protecting our services from unwanted risks.
- Can more easily share information with other services and partners appropriately and safely - joining up service delivery around the needs of customers across the council and with partners.



"Define and implement an analytics capability within the council"

Building upon the strong foundations of a robust data model and information governance arrangements, we will then better understand the role of analytics in the council. We will define and then implement the skills, capacity, approach and tools we require to best meet the needs of different strategic, managerial and operational users of analysis.

Our Projects

Data Modelling Project

- Work with services to confirm their current information assets, storage, collection, and information users to inform the data model and data management.
- Adopt the UK Government Data Quality Framework².
- Identify corporate-level data improvement plan (as required) for data stewardship, information flows and management of master datasets.
 - Embedding of the data lifecycle into the design of services:

² UK Government Data Quality Framework
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-government-data-quality-framework/the-government-data-quality-framework>



Figure 9 - The Data Quality Lifecycle - The Government Data Quality Framework 2020

- Identify service data improvement plans to operationalise new data model and information governance framework (see IG refresh project) in services and inform on-going service planning and service design exercises.
- Confirm standards, approach and templates for information requirements capture in service design projects.
- Build information requirements capture approach into service design method.

Information Governance Refresh Project

- A refreshed information governance strategy and Framework by 2024 including:
 - IG Strategy aligned to corporate objectives.
 - Confirmed roles and responsibilities (SIRO, information system owners and information asset owners in the council and training provided)
 - Confirmed information stewardship standards (password and data encryption, data retention, archiving and disposal, document storage, roles and responsibilities, training).
 - Refreshed data security, information and document management arrangement and corporate solutions, quality and privacy policies.

- Confirm standards for EDRMS and deployment approach
- Outline data management processes to share, protect, define, archive, access, and synchronise data.
- Improve data documentation.
- Confirm data and data-related risks and issues and their management.

Analytical Capability Project

- Confirm requirements by user type.
- Define analytical tools and applications (dashboards, in application, analytical reports) against needs (timeliness, usability, self-service, real time operational vs management/strategic analysis), operational scenarios and datasets. Review of current licensing arrangements for analytics applications and how these are distributed both within Digital Services and across departments.
- Review business requirements captured around analytical platforms (e.g. Climate Change, Economic Development) and consider the benefits of a corporate platform to avoid data fragmentation.
- Define workforce model, skills, capacity and likely demand.

Digital Service Review and Design Project (part of the Digital Capability workstream)

- Terms of reference for design will include designing in work developed under the council analytical capability project
- Introduce Information Security Officer into the design of Digital Services

Summary Improvement Actions

- Corporate awareness sessions with services to raise the profile of the information as an asset workstream and the implications, benefits and responsibilities for services.
 - Promote the ownership of this workstream as the departments and services, facilitated and supported by Information Governance and Digital Service teams.
- Review capacity of Information Governance Team to refresh IG Framework in the timescales needed.
- Look at investment and sourcing of the capacity and specialist skills to take forward this workstream.
- Ensure privacy impact assessments are undertaken for all projects in the work programme.





City Innovation

"Facilitate digital innovation through the Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework"

Whilst it would be remiss not to cover City Innovation in this digital strategy, it is not the primary delivery vehicle for this. Belfast City Council's City Innovation Office have established the Smart Belfast urban innovation programme which aims to grow and strengthen the conditions that can support Belfast's urban innovation ecosystem. It encourages city partners to contribute to a set of commons pillars that are important for sustaining such an ecosystem. And sets out a series of recommendations and actions aimed at building these pillars.

There is much that the Council's Digital Strategy can contribute to the urban innovation framework and to its pillars. It will strengthen our digital and information capability, enhance our ability to be an effective civic leader in a data enabled city. Through our work to develop a digital operating model, we will have better access to the information needed to plan and forecast with our partners.

We anticipate as Smart Belfast is developed there may be projects which feature as part of the council's Digital Work Programme, particularly around service design. As part of our service design work, we will be able to work with colleagues in the City Innovation office to identify opportunities to utilise digital innovation.

"Ensure citizens benefit from the City Innovation Framework in the design of city services"

The Emerging Projects

The Belfast Urban Ecosystem aims in part to drive enhanced data-led public policy making and service design. Belfast City Council services will work closely with partners to strengthen the council's capacity to deliver on its civic leadership role in a data-enabled smart city.

The Supporting Advanced Urban Services sees our council's departments and other public bodies working together to build greater innovation capacity, and to co-design interventions to establish advanced urban services for a twenty-first century city.

We will build opportunities to encourage SMEs to work with our service managers on significant council challenges related to waste, net zero and the future of our city centre. The intention is to drive more effective, efficient and enhanced council services.

The Augment the City initiative will bring together industry partners, our universities and the local creative digital sector to explore the future role of Immersive technologies in major visitor investments such as Belfast Stories and other Belfast Region City Deal investments.

It will encourage the creative adoption of advanced wireless networking, cloud computing, and immersive technologies to create and showcase new opportunities for residents and visitors to explore our city's stories, architecture and environment.



Summary Improvement Actions

Align governance of Corporate Change Board with City Innovation Office to identify mutual areas of interest and overlapping strategic activities.

Ensure regular reporting on City Innovation initiatives at Corporate Change Board and vice versa.





Digital Capability

"Review the Digital Services operating model and align to new strategic objectives"

Our well-respected Digital Service needs to remain fit for the future. We want to address succession planning challenges and actively manage our talent by developing and recruiting to our workforce so it is as productive as possible and likely to stay in the council long term. We know the role of Digital Services is changing, as this strategy describes, so we want to introduce new capabilities in our operating model, providing development opportunities for our staff and opportunities to attract new talent to the team.

We have outlined our ambition to introduce Enterprise Architecture (EA) into the council as a new capability. We need to ensure that our business, technology, and data decisions are aligned with our enterprise architecture, and vice versa. We need to maximise the digital tools and capability we have, so our default is not to buy specialist applications for every service, but to make decisions within a well thought out Enterprise Architecture. We cannot manage our architecture 'project by project' moving forward. We need to anticipate and plan interfaces between our applications and ensure we get the sequencing right. EA will also ensure we get the scope of technology change correct in our service design projects and we understand what our options are in terms of future digital provision.

There is preparatory work to be undertaken to better describe our baseline architecture ahead of developing this new capability. We

also have an on-going programme of infrastructure projects to deliver to ensure our current technology architecture is resilient, secure, and fit for our needs. Moving forward, we have a commitment to move applications into software as a service type hosting and support arrangements. Where this is not appropriate or viable, we will be exploring our options to provisioning our other applications in private cloud arrangements over the next five to seven years.

"Ensure we have the corporate governance and delivery arrangements that allow us to effectively prioritise, plan and resource our digital work programme"

This digital strategy and work programme will be governed by a new Corporate Change Board being established. This will allow the proposed work programme to be prioritised strategically against corporate priorities. The Head of Digital Services will oversee resource allocation to the programme and present the investment case (cost vs intended financial/non-financial benefit) to the board where resources are not available internally and may need to be sourced externally to achieve outputs and intended outcomes in the timescales. As an important early win, a programme management arrangement must be established to ensure the investment to get the strategy to this stage is not lost.

All project planning will be in accordance with the PRINCE2 methodology and our development work will utilise agile project management methods. All projects within this programme, including software change, will include the work to plan and decommission existing solutions.



The programme, its projects and resource management arrangements need support via a project management software solution. This will provide rigour and visibility of plans, activities, resources, progress, and risks and issues.

How will we achieve this?

Our Projects

Digital Services Review and Design Project

- Introduction or enhancement of service capabilities (EA, Solution Architects, Commissioning, Business Relationship Management, Supplier Management, Programme and Project Management).
- Succession plan for workforce.
- Proposed workforce model.
- Proposed governance, ways of working and service processes.

EA Preparatory Project

- Prepare baseline information on current architecture, including functionality, fitness for purpose of applications and contracts arrangement, existing interfaces and integrations, total cost of ownership of current data centre provision, risks and issues and proposed mitigations.
- Assessment of impact on medium term financial planning.

Summary Improvement Actions

- Identify programme management approach for the work programme prior to Digital Services review and design work to implement permanent arrangements.
- Review all live projects to ensure they adhere to the agreed project management methodology.
- Identify project management software solution (consider use of the Concerto P2 solution for this purpose).
- Confirm a standard corporate approach to project management based on PRINCE2 to be consistently deployed across change and digital transformation projects.



APPENDIX A: DIGITAL STRATEGY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Group	Action Description / Action	Owner	Proposed Completion Date
Digital Public Services	Introduce a new service design methodology and approach to its use linked to required benefits (cashable and non-cashable).	Director of City and Organisational Strategy	Jul-24
Digital Public Services	Confirm approach to deployment of digital customer capability in each service design.	Director of City and Organisational Strategy, Head of Digital Services	Aug-24
Digital Public Services	Review all live business application refreshment projects to identify where it is appropriate to adopt service design approach and re-scope accordingly	Head of Digital Services & Director of City and Organisational Strategy. CMT	Aug-24
	Pilot a service design approach in a service area. CMT to agree the selection criteria for a pilot service design.		
Information as an Asset	Corporate awareness sessions with services to raise the profile of this work, implications, benefits and responsibilities of services	Governance and Compliance Manager, Head of Digital Services	Nov-24
	Promote the ownership of this workstream as the departments and services, facilitated and supported by Information Governance and Digital Service teams.		
Information as an Asset	Review capacity of Information Governance Team to refresh IG Framework in the timescales needed.	City Solicitor & Director of Legal and Civil Services	Sept-24
Information as an Asset	Look at investment and sourcing of the capacity and specialist skills to take forward this workstream.	City Solicitor & Director of Legal and Civil Services	Sept-24
Information as an Asset	Build information requirements capture approach into service design method.	Director of City and Organisational Strategy, Head of Digital Services	Aug-24



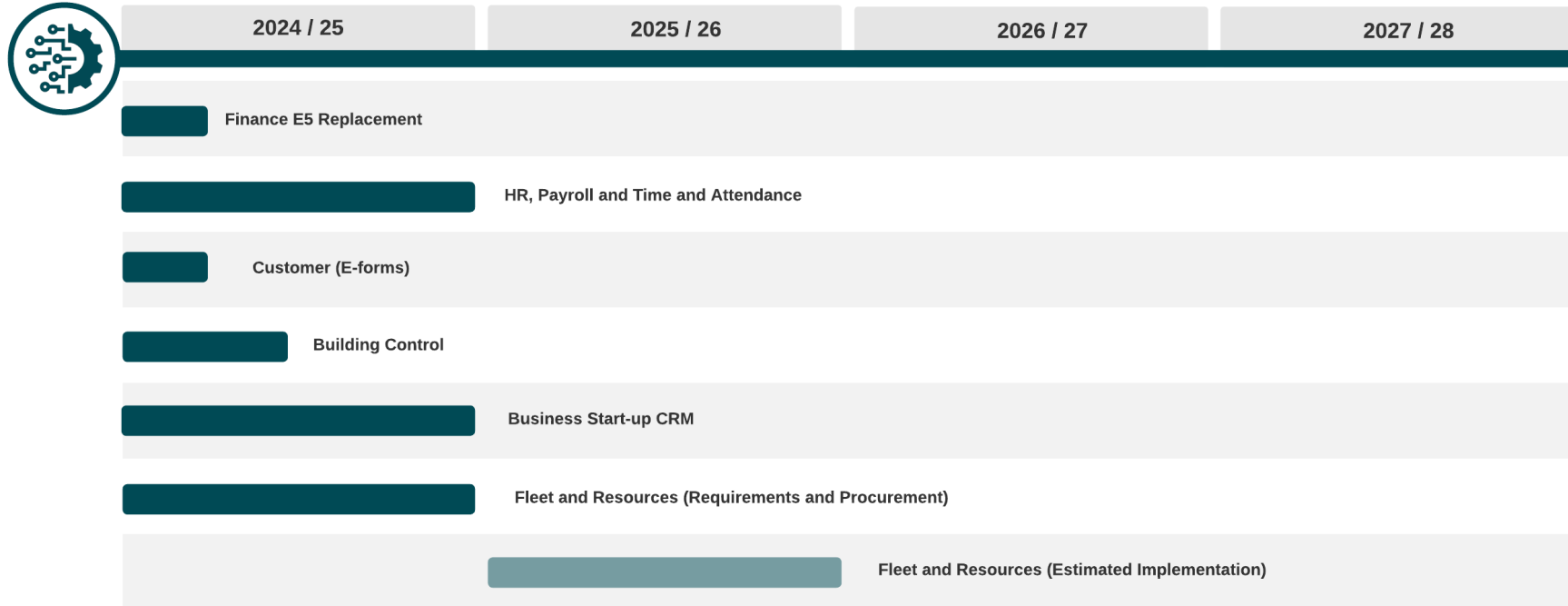
Information as an Asset	Ensure privacy impact assessments are undertaken for all projects in the work programme.	Head of Digital Services, Project Managers	Oct-24
Digital City Innovation	Align governance of Corporate Change Board with Smart Belfast Boards to identify mutual areas of interest and overlapping strategic activities.	Head of Digital Services	Oct-24
Digital City Innovation	Ensure regular reporting on smart Belfast initiatives at Corporate Change Board and vice versa.	Director of City and Organisational Strategy	Oct-24
Digital Capability	Identify programme management approach for the work programme prior to Digital Services review and design work to implement permanent arrangements.	Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services	July-24
Digital Capability	Review all live projects to ensure they adhere to the agreed project management methodology.	Head of Digital Services	June-24
Digital Capability	Identify project management software solution (consider use of the Concerto P2 solution for this purpose).	Head of Digital Services	Nov-24
Digital Capability	Confirm a standard corporate approach to project management based on PRINCE2 to be consistently deployed across change and digital transformation projects.	Director of City and Organisational Strategy, Head of Digital Services	July-24
General	New Digital Strategy must be positioned as a corporate document and requires the support of key corporate services and stakeholders, such as Finance, HR, Procurement, IGU, Marketing and Communications and Continuous Improvement	CMT	July-24



APPENDIX B: DIGITAL STRATEGY WORK PROGRAMME

Belfast City Council: Digital Strategy Work Programme - Digital Public Services

Version 1.0 | 17/05/2024



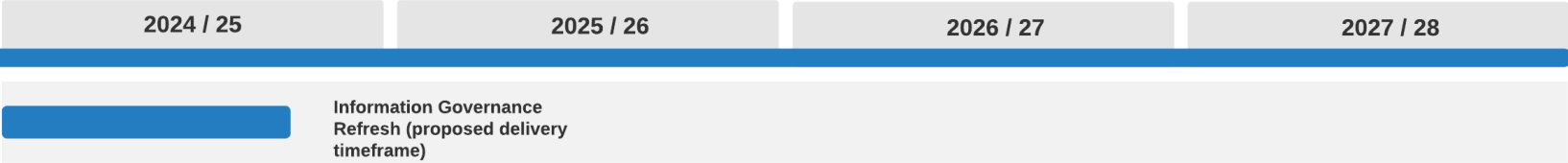
Emerging and Proposed Projects to be Scoped

Corporate Asset Management	Target Digital Operating Model Development
Intranet Screen Replacement	CIVICA APP (Flare)
Corporate Booking System	
Corporate EDRMS	



Belfast City Council: Digital Strategy Work Programme - Information as an Asset

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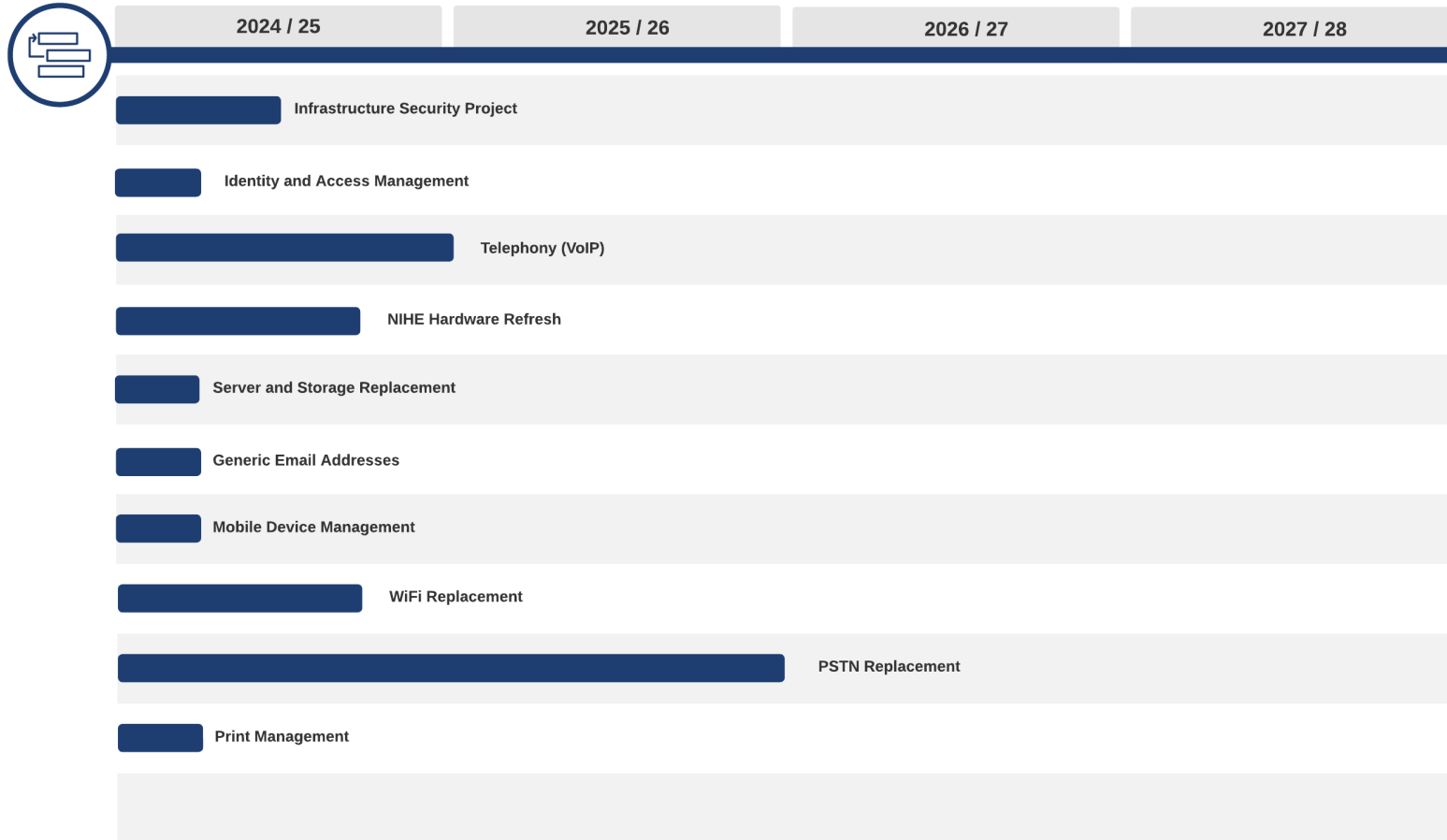
Emerging and Proposed Projects to be Scoped

- Data Modelling Project
- Analytical Capability Project



Belfast City Council: Digital Strategy Work Programme - Digital Capability

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Emerging and Proposed Projects to be Scoped

Digital Services Review and Design Project	NetConsent
Enterprise Architecture Preparatory Project	Service Desk Process Review
UPS	

