

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET30 October 2025Report by Director of Business Operations and PartnershipsDIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2025-30**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to set out and secure approval for the Digital Transformation Strategy for the period 2025-30.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Cabinet is asked to note and approve the strategy as set out in this report and summarised in the 'strategy on a page' diagram in paragraph 16.

BACKGROUND

3. The Council has had a Digital Transformation programme since 2009. The most recent Digital Transformation Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2021; it ran until June 2025 and focused on three areas:

- Customer Experience;
- Workforce Productivity; and
- Business Systems & Processes.

4. The report to Cabinet on 19 June 2025, closing the previous strategy cycle, set out how services across the Council have made substantial progress towards realising our digital transformation ambitions, contributing to budget savings, making productivity efficiencies, improving customer service, and modernising the way we work. Since 2021 this work has impacted every household in East Renfrewshire through improvements to Council Tax, Benefits, Customer Services and Housing as well as improvements for employees through new digital HR processes. In November 2023 Education Department brought the Digital Learning & Teaching Strategy 2024-27 to Education Committee.

VISION FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

5. The vision for the new Digital Transformation Strategy is to use digital technology and data to make a step-change in how we work to:

- improve customer experience and outcomes for individuals and communities;
- make the organisation more efficient, effective and well-governed; and
- enhance our employees' productivity and skills to support their development.

6. The diagram below shows how the revised strategy contributes to 'A Place to Grow', 'Our People Strategy' and 'Organisational Health Check' which in turn feeds into the National Digital Strategy and 'Digital To-be State for Councils' being developed by Solace, the Improvement Service and Digital Office.

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Strategic Alignment & Contributions



7. What this will mean in practice is projects using data to better understand and reduce complex local issues such as child poverty. For example:

- enabling auto-enrolment for benefits that families are entitled to, without the need to apply multiple times for individual benefits;
- enabling 'no wrong door' and early intervention approaches by spotting early signs of vulnerability and understanding the wider circumstances of individual families and providing support to them holistically, on a cross-service basis, rather than forcing them through different pathways to access different services; and
- allowing elected members to take policy decisions informed by data analysis and 'what-if' scenarios e.g. debt relief criteria or service eligibility based on specific needs and circumstances.

8. Other potential future data projects under consideration could enhance the support to vulnerable people in relation to health, social care and frailty. This could allow the Council and its partners to offer advice, support and interventions that keep people safe and healthy for longer and help reduce future demand for costly or complex support.

9. In addition, future projects could involve using in-home sensor technology to help people live independently at home for longer. Other uses of this type of technology can help ensure our social housing is maintained in good condition, reducing the need for costly repairs, reducing the time properties are void or unoccupied and helping to maintain the supply of affordable housing.

PROJECT PRIORITISATION & BENEFITS TRACKING

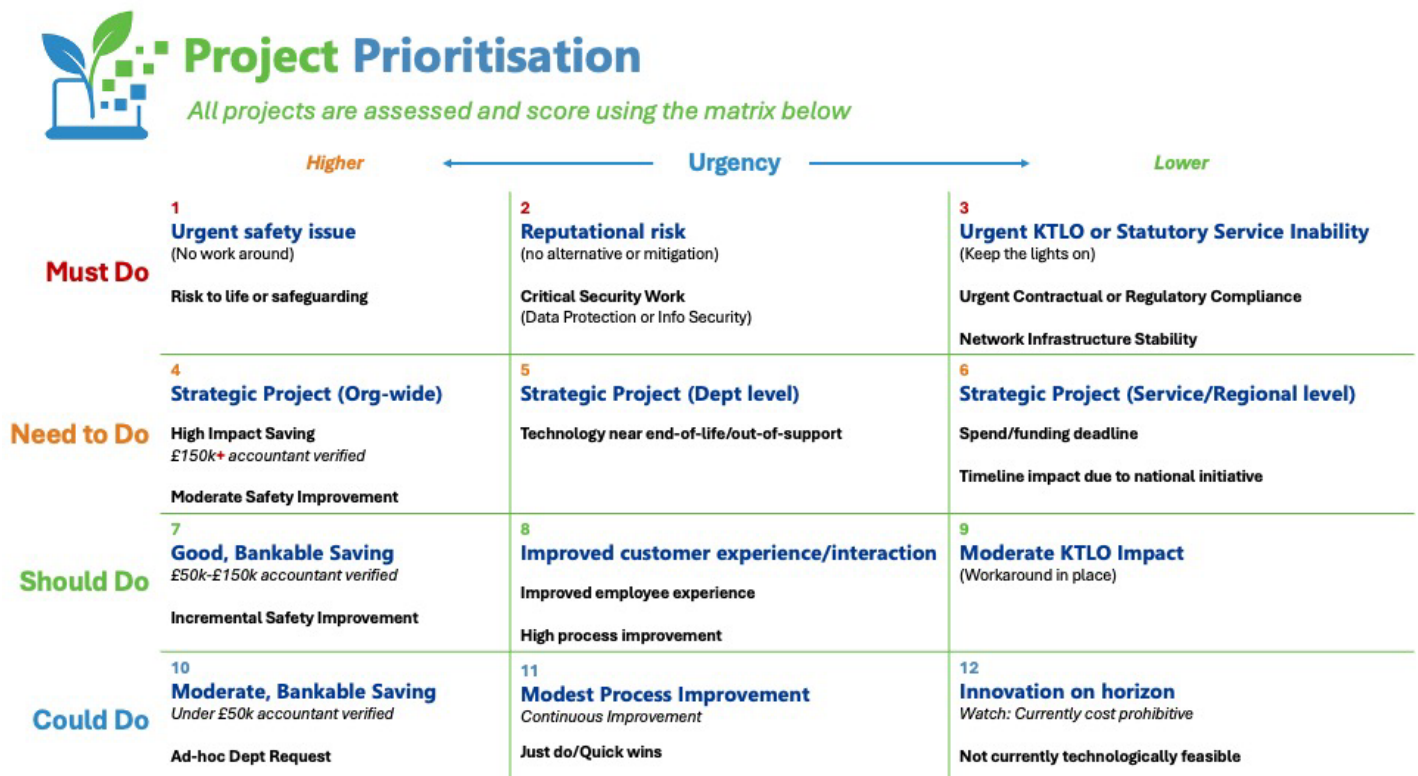
10. A key part of the success of a Digital Transformation Strategy is ensuring that, as far as possible, the projects we take forward contribute to our strategic ambitions and priorities. Over the past 30 years the number and complexity of ICT technology, tools and systems across the Council has increased exponentially. Not only does this create challenges for keeping pace and progressing future digital transformation, it also creates new and ongoing

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'business as usual' challenges, as systems that were transformative in the past age, are no longer supported by suppliers, don't meet modern security requirements, or they are no longer economically viable and need to be replaced. Once new technologies are implemented they create new 'business as usual' work that needs to be maintained, managed and governed appropriately to ensure they are secure, can be relied upon and continue to function effectively.

11. This creates a complex environment for digital transformation as we need to balance the need to maintain the modernity of our existing technology and applications while also progressing new opportunities. The Council has more ambitions than it has resources, and, within reason, this is as it should be. However, there is a small pool, and significant overlap, corporately and within departments, of the key employees and roles who help replace aging systems and deliver digital transformation projects. To address this resource and focus challenge the council has developed and deployed a project prioritisation framework.

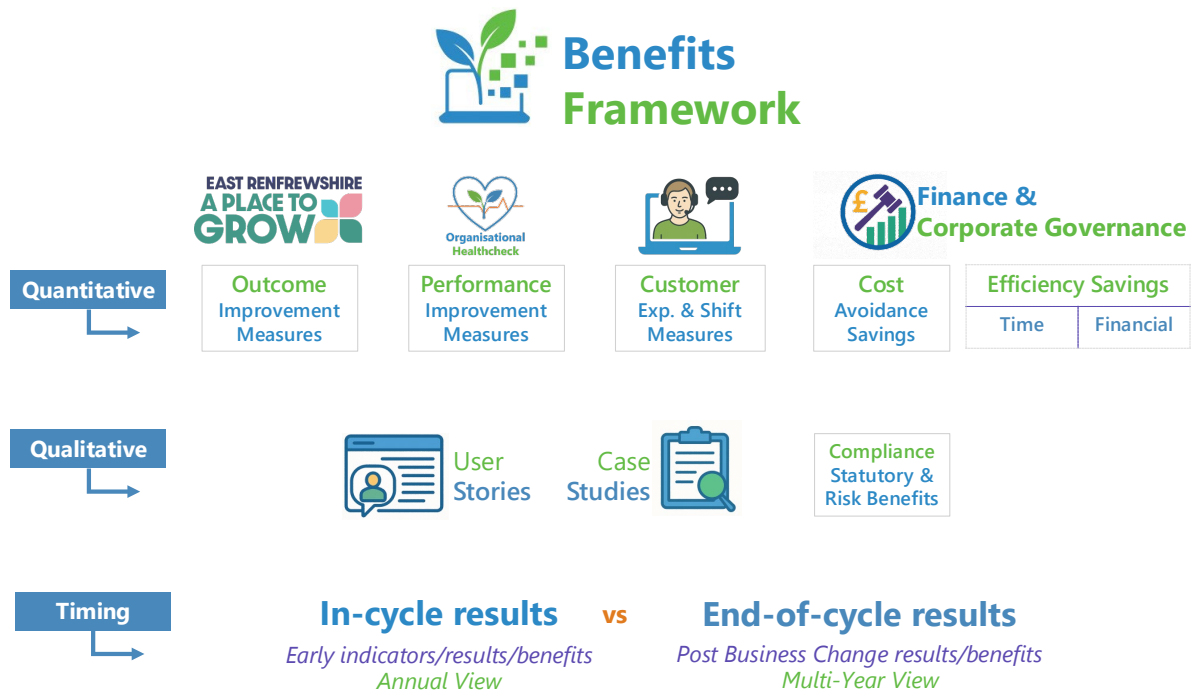
12. All projects requiring corporate resource (e.g. ICT, programme/project office support, systems officers, procurement, digital customer experience, and HR etc) go through digital transformation governance and are given a prioritisation score from the matrix below. This determines if and when they progress and what resources are attached to which projects. This framework prioritises life and limb projects and ensures, as far as possible, we are maximising the time and focus of the key shared roles and resources we have. Project Prioritisation takes account of role and workload capacity. This supports forward planning and management of workload bottlenecks.



13. The ultimate objective of the Digital Transformation Strategy is to deliver benefits to the residents and communities of East Renfrewshire by improving outcomes, customers' service experiences and service performance; making the organisation more effective, efficient, and helping to deliver budget savings as required.

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14. Digital Transformation does not happen in isolation, nor is it simply about installing new technological tools. Very often the hardest element of Digital Transformation is the business change work that follows the enablement of new technologies. This means that the most significant budgetary, efficiency and community outcome benefits are medium to longer term and follow in the months and years after new systems or technologies are switched-on as services redesign how they carry out their work, employees' job roles are redesigned and new skills and cultures become the 'new normal'. This results in early leading and subsequent 'lagging' benefits indicators, depending on the technology and project, from the diagram below. This was highlighted in the recent Best Value report on Transformation that set out the new arrangements for tracking projects through the business change phase.



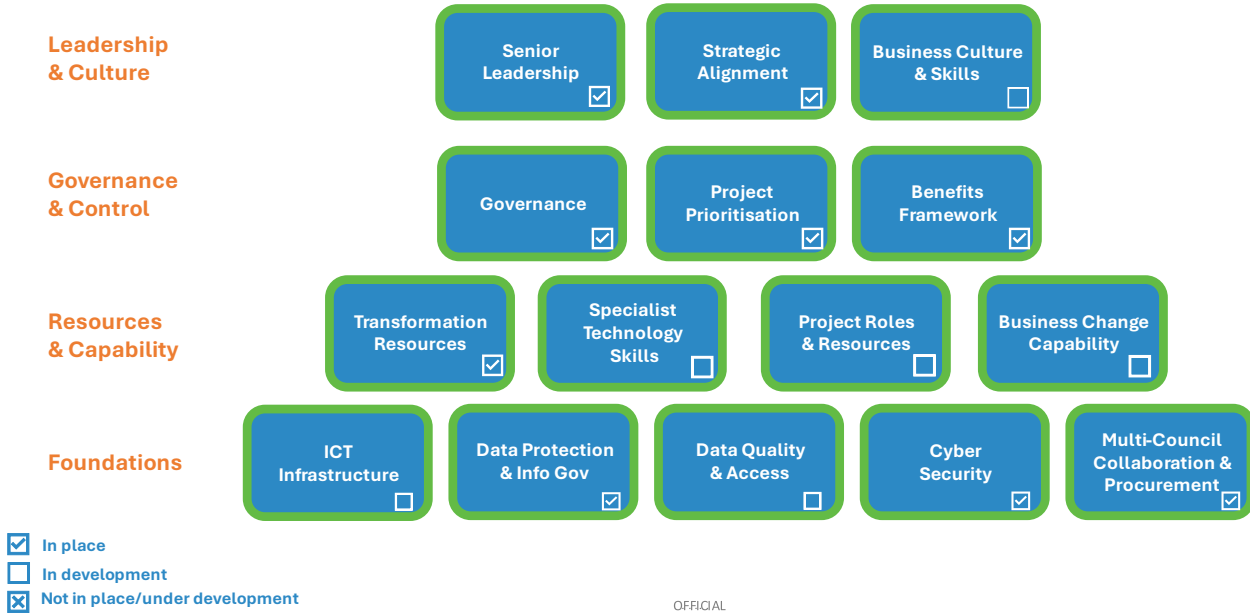
CORE FOUNDATIONS

15. To achieve our digital ambitions, we need the right mix of Leadership & Culture, Governance & Control, Resources & Capabilities and Key Technological Foundations. The image below gives a snapshot of the current baseline status and position on that journey. The Council's 16-year journey, focus and investment in building digital transformation capabilities, alongside Our People' Strategy and ongoing investment in renewing and maintaining our core ICT infrastructure is laying a very strong foundation to build on over the next five years. This strong foundational position was highlighted in the [February 2025 Best Value Audit](#) of the Council and the recent [Digital Transformation Thematic Review considered by Audit Committee on 25 September 2025](#).



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Digital Transformation Requirements



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OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME

16. The next phase of the Council's digital transformation journey centres around six technological elements and increasing unified customer experience. This is illustrated in the 'strategy on a page' diagram shown below. This highlights our strong strategic focus (golden thread) around 'A Place to Grow', 'Our People Strategy' and the suite of financial, efficiency and performance measure that make up our 'Organisational Health Check' as part of mid-year and annual reporting.



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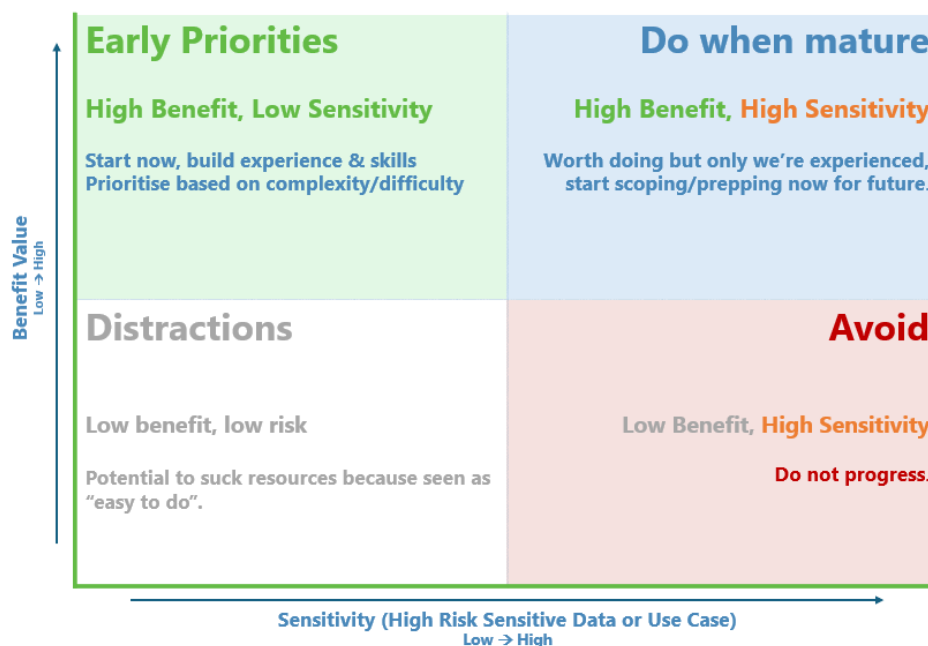
17. The seven core elements of the new strategy are:

i. **Major systems.**

This element is about maintaining and modernising our major platforms and systems. The Council has undertaken significant work over the last 10 years to modernise our major systems. The key now is to maximise the value of our investment, ensure systems remain current, secure and integrated.

ii. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

There is a great deal of hype around artificial intelligence. It is a technology with huge potential, but it needs to be utilised thoughtfully, ethically and with the same scrutiny on benefits as any other tool or platform. There are a number of exciting use cases being developed. The Council is enthusiastic about the potential of AI and is taking a risk-based approach to its roll out as seen in the high-level triage matrix below:



The Council is working with partners to ensure that personal and sensitive data is classified appropriately, retained and secured in relation to AI tools while also testing AI deployments that are low risk, and that can unlock efficiency and productivity benefits. In the medium to long-term the Council will explore how best AI might support more sensitive high value uses, but will always be guided by current best practice in relation to ethics, fairness, transparency and security.

iii. **Data & Business Intelligence**

Across the organisation, the Council has made significant progress in recent years in the development and utilisation of data and business intelligence to inform our understanding of our communities and residents, change and improve how we operate and become more efficient and effective.

The next cycle of the strategy will see that work continue, but enhancing our data matching, integration and modelling to enable us to further improve the services our residents, employees and services receive. This will include integrated 'single views' to allow customers to do more and self-serve, help improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities through projects that help to tackle issues like child poverty and targeting support to help vulnerable people stay healthy and live at home for longer. We will also continue to use data to help improve service performance so that East Renfrewshire remains a high performing, continuously

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evolving Council that provides value for money and modern services for our residents.

iv. Customer Experience

At a population level East Renfrewshire residents are well educated, skilled, and have high expectations of the services they receive from the Council. There will always be customers who will continue to need face-to-face or telephone contact, and we will continue to offer those that opportunity, however many of our residents want to access council services online at a time and place of their choosing.

Over the past few years, across education, council tax, benefits, planning and housing, more and more services are available online and a high proportion of our residents have signed up to use them. East Renfrewshire has the highest levels of parents using online systems, over 73% of housing tenants have signed up to the new housing system and over 60% of new Council Tax applications by residents are made online.

However, while this progress is hugely welcome, we face challenges due to the breadth and diversity of services we offer. Our residents often have multiple application logins and user experiences across a range of systems. The 'My East Ren' login helps with some elements of this issue but addressing this is a complex technological challenge, as we rely on a range of different specialist platforms and suppliers.

As part of the new digital strategy and the upcoming refresh of our customer strategy later in 2026, we will be actively seeking to improve and create a more integrated and unified customer experience and, where possible, reduce the need for customers to login to multiple different systems to get frequent core tasks done.

v. Process Automation

As outlined above, the Council has a large and complex estate of ICT systems, platforms and technologies.

For the first time the Council has procured new tools that enable it to connect systems together via 'low code' technologies. This enables us to move data safely and securely between previously isolated systems without relying on suppliers building expensive, often bespoke integrations that are challenging to maintain. These tools also allow us to employ robot process automation for laborious manual processes and reduce the rekeying of data from one system to another. Together, with the progress being made around data matching and business intelligence, these tools increase productivity, efficiency, compliance and help to reduce manual errors.

vi. Internet of Things

Internet of Things (IOT) involves the use of sensors and devices (e.g. on/off switches, thermostat controls, window/door/blind openers or closers) that enable automatic and/or remote monitoring, communication and control of devices in particular locations. This can include detecting the presence of people, temperature, humidity etc. This can allow the monitoring of patients taking medication, detecting potential falls in the home as well as ensure premises are warm, windows and blinds are open or closed or prevent dampness and mould etc.

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IOT devices have huge potential to help manage energy consumption and costs; reduce the spread of inflections (via air quality), prevent damp and mould and address elements of fuel poverty.

vii. Mobile Tasking

Many Council services involve employees working remotely across the authority and moving to multiple locations over the course of a day. Examples include community wardens, facilities management, housing repairs, homecare and telecare responders. The Council has already deployed mobile tasking e.g. as part of the new Telecare system, which enables employees to pick up their next job via a mobile device as their last one completes. This makes our services more efficient, improves the customer experience and saves employees from calling back to base or having employees at base spend time 'ringing around' to find someone to pick up the next job. As part of the Digital Strategy we will continue to deploy Mobile Tasking opportunities, using, as far as possible, our existing infrastructure and platforms. Housing Repairs are likely to be one of the next service areas to deploy this type of technology.

UPDATED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

18. To reflect the updated alignment between the Digital Strategy with 'A Place to Grow', 'Our People Strategy' and the 'Organisational Health Check' we have reviewed the focus, membership and operation of the existing three officer governance boards:

- Business Systems & Processes;
- Customer; and
- Workforce Productivity.

19. The revised arrangements retain the three board model, which has worked well. The revised boards will be:

- **Customers & Communities Board (CCB)**

This board is the 'outward facing' one and expands the scope of the previous customer board. It will cover projects that contribute to one or more of the three pillars of 'A Place to Grow' as well as a new Customer Strategy (once updated), e.g. the child poverty data project, single view of the customer and digital inclusion.

- **Systems & Technology Board (STB)**

This board will oversee the enablement of new technologies and platforms e.g. IOT, AI models, automation tools and platforms and major systems. Once the core technology is enabled the individual projects will be picked up by one of the other two boards. This will help to ensure that the Council has a consistent integrated estate of tools and platforms in line with Enterprise Architecture principles and practices.

- **Workforce Productivity & Development**

This board builds on the previous Workforce Productivity Board. It now includes the digital skills and culture components that align with 'Our People Strategy'. This board will cover the organisation facing elements of utilising data, AI and automation to make our workforce more efficient and effective and free up employee time to focus on high value, impactful elements of their roles.

20. Each Board is expected to, at various points, have projects that sit across the technologies at the heart of the digital strategy by: maximising the value of major systems by

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updating, expanding or replacing them; utilising AI; developing Data and Business Intelligence insights; undertaking Process Automation; implementing IOT; and moving to Mobile Tasking.

IMPLICATIONS

21. Change and digital transformation across an organisation as diverse as a Council (and HSCP and ERCLT) is a complex area. There is a complicated ICT system architecture and network of operational processes that sit behind the services that our residents interact with on a day-to-day basis. We must plan carefully to ensure that we are focusing on improving our high-volume processes whilst undertaking the routine work to keep our systems up to date, secure and integrated.

22. Budget challenges mean we must clearly prioritise our activities and resources to ensure we deliver benefits from projects, that they contribute to future savings opportunities and improve the experiences of residents and reduce bureaucracy. Learning from others' successes (and failures) will also help transition quicker and save rework. As set out above in paragraphs 10-14 the Digital Transformation programme is underpinned by project prioritisation and benefits tracking frameworks.

23. Recruiting, retaining and, where possible, growing the right skills and experience is essential to the success of our digital transformation journey. Digital, data, technology and service design skillsets are in significant demand nationally and it is a challenging marketplace. Programmes routinely have gaps in key skillsets which means the need to prioritise resource to achieve the best collective benefit – this is a key function of the three Programme Boards, which must work together to make decisions and recommendations. We continue to maintain links with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office and Scottish Digital Academy to ensure we can develop and enhance our digital, data and technology skillsets.

24. All projects undertake screening for Equality Fairness & Rights Impact Assessments (EFRIAs) as well as Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs), with relevant projects undertaking full assessments as appropriate. Given the nature of the Council's work, many of our projects are designed to have a positive impact on local communities, service users and employees. As part of the updated project governance arrangements, project closure reporting will now include specific consideration of the outcomes for vulnerable communities and service users.

TOWARDS 2030 & BEYOND

25. A key part of the success of any Digital Transformation strategy is keeping pace with modern technology and tools as they evolve. The pace of change is fast. Technology often becomes faster, smaller or prices fluctuate. As part of our approach, we will continue to monitor technology and marketplace developments and respond appropriately – with a strong focus on agility and flexibility. That is why, in part, the strategy is focussed on strategic alignment and broad technological categories rather than specific named platforms or systems.

26. Another key piece of horizon scanning is projecting what our customers, communities, leaders and employees will need in terms of skills, training, organisational culture, equipment and digital tools or platforms to fulfil their roles over the next five years and beyond. As part of the work of the strategy we are developing 'Personas' across key groups so that we can plan into the reality of what a future organisation will need to offer to meet our core ambitions.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

27. The Council is expected to continue to face particularly challenging financial circumstances for the foreseeable future. Utilising project prioritisation and the benefits

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frameworks set out above, the key principles behind the programme that will lead to budget savings are:

- improving customer end-to-end experience and expanding access to 24/7 online self-service;
- Increasing employee productivity through automation, data integration, business intelligence insights and artificial intelligence;
- maximising the use of key business systems and capabilities; and
- an increased focus on user engagement in service design and more community empowerment to provide services which put customers at the heart of provision, will help to create opportunities to lower costs.

28. One of the key financial shifts is the move away from one-off capital procurements of major systems and technologies to cloud-based services and software as a service. This shifts costs away from capital expenditure to revenue-based subscriptions. In addition, Artificial Intelligence, Automation and Business Intelligence technologies are based on consumption. While this can lower the individual cost of entry to access certain technology, that may previously have been prohibitively expensive, it can put additional significant pressure on revenue budgets that are already squeezed by year-on-year financial pressures.

CONSULTATION & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

29. The progress and ambitions outlined in this paper relate not only to the Council but also to the wider 'family' organisations of the HSCP and the Culture and Leisure Trust. We will continue to work together to progress the key priority areas for digital transformation and to share lessons learned and plan resources.

30. We will continue to work in partnership with the Improvement Service and Scottish Local Government Digital Office to share knowledge and learn from other areas of best practice. We are committed to learn from and work with partners in the Glasgow City Region to identify and take forward opportunities to implement Internet of Things (IOT) technology. We will also continue to identify and work with key strategic technology partners from the private sector who can advise us and support the delivery of our digital ambitions.

31. User engagement in service design, internal as well as external, as set out above in relation to future personas, is a key principle of our digital transformation journey. We will utilise the Scottish Approach to Service Design wherever possible to put users at the heart of change.

CONCLUSION

32. The refreshed Digital Transformation Strategy sets out how we will use digital technology to:

- improve outcomes for residents and communities (with a key focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable or disadvantaged residents or communities);
- further enhance our customer experience;
- continue to improve service performance, effectiveness and efficiency;
- to contribute to budget savings; and
- provide opportunities for our employees to further develop their digital confidence, skills and capabilities.

RECOMMENDATION

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33. Cabinet is asked to note and approve the strategy as set out in this report and summarised in the 'strategy on a page' diagram in paragraph 16.

Louise Pringle
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October 2025

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BACKGROUND PAPERSAudit Scotland/External Audit

- Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023, Audit Scotland, May 2023
- Accounts Commission Best Value Report February 2025
- Local External Audit Report, Best Value Thematic Report. Transformation: How Council's are Redesigning and Delivering More Efficient Services to Achieve Planned Outcomes, Audit & Scrutiny, September 2025.

Finance

- Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025 - 2030
- East Renfrewshire Council Revenue Estimates 2025/26

Digital Transformation

- Update on the Digital Transformation Programme, Cabinet 19 June 2023
- [Digital Learning And Teaching Strategy 2024 – 27, Education Committee, November 2023](#)
- Update on the Digital Transformation Programme, Cabinet 5 September 2024
- Update on the Digital Transformation Strategy June 2025

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