

## EXECUTIVE DECISION REPORT

**From:** Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee - 6 November 2020

**Subject:** **Technology Strategy Update**

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** All

### **Summary:**

The current KCC Technology Strategy 2016-2020 is due to come to an end this year and a new Draft Technology Strategy 2020-2023 was prepared at the beginning of the year. Since the draft strategy was developed the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the Council's working practices have significantly changed, with the majority of staff now accessing the Council's systems remotely and services increasingly using technology solutions to adapt service delivery models. During the current period, it has been necessary to accelerate parts of the proposed new technology strategy to align with the Council's current way of working.

The Council's technology infrastructure is and will continue to be essential to enabling the Council to deliver its services. Throughout its development, the strategy has been extensively consulted on with service users to ensure it reflects and responds to evolving demand, user requirements and trends; and to ensure services and users are aware of the aims and objectives of the draft strategy and the associated workplan. The draft strategy themes and ambitions are still relevant and will be updated to ensure that the new strategy and roadmap are aligned to the emerging ambitions of the Council in due course.

This paper seeks to update the Committee on the key trends which are influencing the Council's Technology Strategy, the working strategy that is being progressed along with the draft workplan and seeks endorsement from the committee to adopt the current draft strategy 2020-2023 on a working basis.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked to **consider the report** and **endorse** the adoption of the draft Technology Strategy 2020-2023.

## 1. Introduction

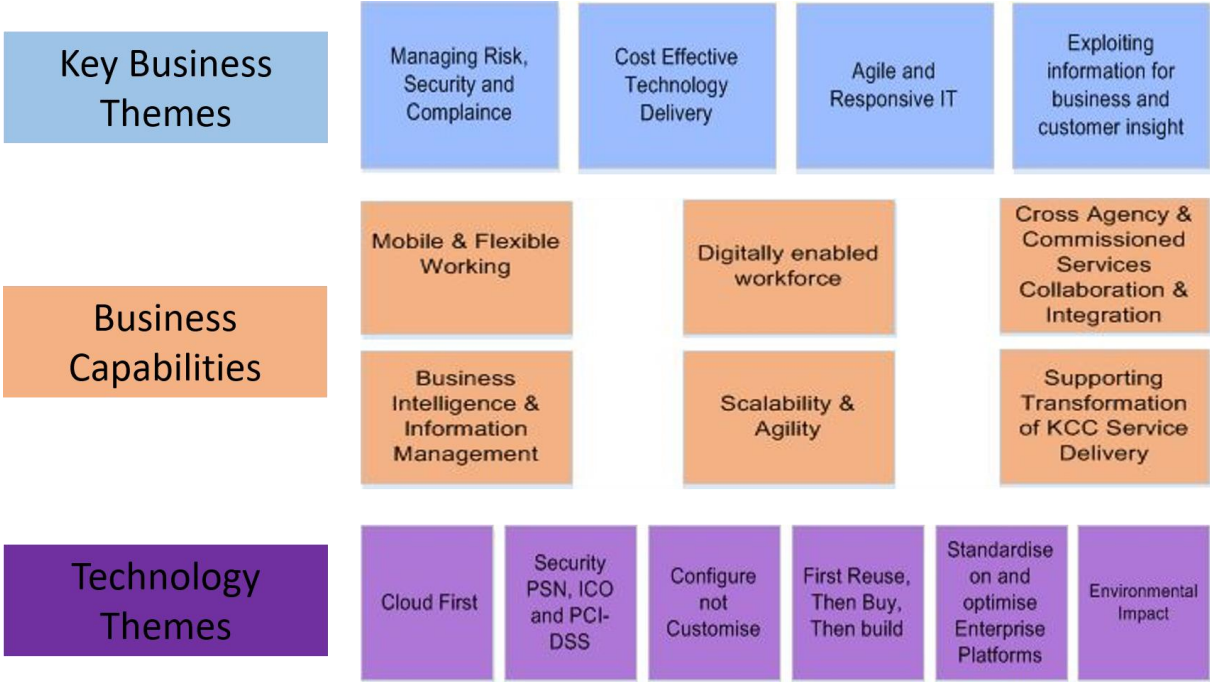
- 1.1 The current Technology Strategy comes to an end in 2020. The strategy outlined a set of technology principles and 4 key strategic themes that defined the Council's ambition to develop its underlying infrastructure platforms. The Strategy clearly demonstrated the Council's commitment to cloud technology and associated services.
- 1.2 Over the last four years KCC has developed its cloud infrastructure and transitioned approximately 50% of its computer architecture to the Microsoft Azure environment.
- 1.3 The Total Refresh Programme 2017/18 successfully distributed laptops to around 70% of staff, increasing the mobility of teams across the county, enabling greater opportunities for remote and flexible working.
- 1.4 In addition, as part of the adopted 'cloud first' principle, KCC invested in the Microsoft 365 product suite, thereby moving productivity software such as email, MS Office, Business Intelligence and SharePoint away from on premise data centres.
- 1.5 The introduction of collaboration software such as Skype for Business and MS Teams in 2018/19 provided access to staff for online meetings, instant messaging and voice calls directly from their computer device. Standard telephony and associated desk phones were removed facilitating wider use of 'hot desking' and dropdown areas. This in turn impacted on people / desk ratios reducing floorspace requirements across the KCC property estate.
- 1.6 The work undertaken prior to 2020 laid the technology foundations for BREXIT planning and also enabled the mobilisation of staff at the onset of COVID-19 lockdown. In January 2020, a new draft technology strategy was drafted for adoption by the Council. Since March 2020 KCC has been operating in extraordinary circumstances. To support Business Continuity Planning and wider remote service operations, it has been necessary to facilitate increased remote working and accelerate a number of our technology plans to ensure that the capability is in place to support a new way of working. Investment in our technology capability will continue to be critical as we shift our service delivery models and develop our business capabilities.

Examples of the changes that have been implemented during the Council's response to COVID-19 include:

- Increased laptop capacity by 1000 devices
- Increased remote working capacity to 8000 simultaneous users
- Developed alternative remote access systems to improve accessibility
- Increased usage of MS teams 1300%
- Accelerated transition to MS E5 licencing and Security Compliance modules
- Use of MS Power Platform to deliver corporate Apps (desk booking, equipment collection, etc.)

## 2. The Technology Strategy 2020-2023

2.1 The draft strategy is set out in appendix 1. The ambitions of the 2016-2020 strategy are still valid and in to maintain strategic consistency, the technology principles and themes described in the 2016-2020 strategy are broadly reflected in the new draft Technology Strategy 2020-2023. The general themes and capabilities are described in the schematic below.



2.2 Within the key themes and associated workplans, The Technology Strategy 2020 – 2023, will build on the investments made in cloud architecture over the last few years and incorporate emerging technology trends. The increased threat from cyber-attacks and importance of information security drives the implementation of robust digital security and recovery systems.

2.3 The strategy seeks to support the delivery of our ambitions through the development of a fully integrated and interoperable Digital Business Technology Platform (DBTP), that facilitates end to end digital service delivery across all corporate business units and focuses on the 4 key themes:

- A modern ICT infrastructure that enables digital transformation
- Streamline processes to create an agile and flexible digital service model
- Exploiting information for business and customer insight
- Governance, risk management, security and compliance

2.4 Within each theme, a series of work programmes will facilitate development activity across a number of service pillars to enable an underlying infrastructure that promotes digital service delivery, streamlines working practices, promotes flexible working and ensures that digital activity is undertaken in an environment protected by a compliant information security framework.

- 2.5 The strategy sets out a series of governance principles and an indicative delivery roadmap. The successful implementation of the technology strategy will require a strong business change and adoption programme across the Council.
- 2.6 In addition to the work packages associated with the strategic themes. KCC are developing cross cutting corporate initiatives that develop and improve enterprise business capability e.g. ERP systems, electronic contract signatures, digital post services and electronic document and record management systems.
- 2.7 It is important that this Technology Strategy is aligned with and implemented alongside our other key strategies. As new technology capabilities are introduced across the organisation, benefits will be delivered both within the ICT service and will also enable new working practices, changes in processes and positively affect service delivery in the future.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Since 2016 the Council has been moving to a new Cloud Computing operating model. This is generally funded using a subscription financial model and is a change from the previous 'on premises' Data Centre model traditionally funded using capital programmes for asset maintenance and renewal. As a result of the investment to date, the Council has been modernising and building its technology capabilities, it is essential that KCC continues to invest appropriately to support the Council's future service ambitions and ensure that its infrastructure is reliable, secure and resilient. Recent cyber-attack activity targeted at local authorities (Redcar and Cleveland, Hackney and Kent Commercial Services) clearly demonstrates the service impact and financial consequences of successful criminal activity. Appropriate investment in cloud security, Microsoft Office E5, Security and Compliance Modules and resilient cloud back up services will support our mitigation activity against cyber threats ensuring we focus on preventive measures and also have the ability to quickly recover our key services.
- 3.2 With this in mind, and the rapid shift in our operating models caused by COVID-19, it is imperative that KCC work within our supplier eco system and internal teams to optimise our technology estate ensuring we maintain modern technology platforms and support arrangements that provide high levels of service and best value to the Council.
- 3.3 To ensure that KCC is in line with similar organisations in the public sector, an independent benchmark will be undertaken during 2020.
- 3.4 With the emerging digital ambitions of the Council and developing service strategies that reflect the opportunities offered by new technology, it has been necessary to update our investment plans. These plans are being addressed as part of the Medium-Term Financial Planning process. It is important to recognise that savings created from an investment made in technology solutions often materialise in areas outside of the technology environment within services.

#### **4. Legal implications**

- 4.1 As KCC move towards a more digital service delivery model with information held in various cloud environments and shared across internal and external stakeholders, it is vital that all Data Protection and Information Governance frameworks are appropriately reviewed and updated.

#### **5. Equalities implications**

- 5.1 Digital Service delivery provides opportunities to support broader accessibility to Council services. By adopting digital solutions, we can offer personalised services that offer a variety of access channels tailored to those who need them most.

#### **6. Other corporate implications**

- 6.1 The Technology Strategy and its successful implementation will deliver new technology capabilities to support the Council to create innovative service delivery solutions. The governance of the strategy will provide focus on reducing unnecessary spend and duplication. Rationalising technology solutions and optimising those enterprise products used across the organisation e.g. HR/Finance

#### **7. Governance**

- 7.1 The Technology Strategy is currently in draft however, some elements of the ICT work programme have been accelerated to meet current business needs and a new way of working (e.g MS Teams Security and Compliance, video conferencing, Digital post etc.)
- 7.2 Throughout its development, the strategy has been extensively consulted on with service users to ensure it reflects and responds to evolving demand, user requirements and trends; and to ensure services and users are aware of the aims and objectives of the draft strategy and the associated workplan.
- 7.3 It is proposed that the draft strategy is now adopted as the working strategy. Individual projects will be progressed through the Council's key decision process as appropriate.

#### **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 Kent County Council is on a digital journey. The roadmap for delivery started in 2016 with an ICT strategy that clearly set out some principles based on cloud computing, mobility, flexibility within a well-defined security framework that enabled data sharing across multiple delivery providers.

- 8.2 The draft Technology Strategy 2020-2023, continues to build on the Council’s investment since 2016 to enable the Council to utilise new IT capabilities with a secure and resilient infrastructure platform. These will be critical as the Council continues to evolve its service models and the delivery of the Council’s strategic reset.
- 8.3 Whilst recognising that the strategy will need to be updated as key Council strategies emerge, it is proposed that the draft strategy as set out in appendix 1 is now adopted.

**9. Recommendation(s)**

Recommendation(s):

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked to **consider the report** and **Endorse** the adoption of the draft Technology Strategy 2020-2023.

**Background Documents**

- 9.1. **Appendix 1 – Draft Kent County Council Technology Strategy 2020-2023**

**11. Contact details**

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