



London Borough of Enfield

Report Title	<i>Digital Services</i>
Report to	<i>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i>
Date of Meeting	<i>9 September 2024</i>
Cabinet Member	<i>Cllr Leaver</i>
Executive Director / Director	<i>Fay Hammond / Adrian Gorst</i>
Report Author	<i>Adrian Gorst</i>
Ward(s) affected	
Classification	<i>Part 1 Public</i>

Purpose of Report

1. The report provides an overview of the work of the Chief Technology Officer since joining the Council in January 2024, considerations on streamlining the Councils software applications, the development of AI in the Council over the next twelve months.

Main Considerations for the Panel

2. Note the Chief Technology Officer's approach to fixing technical and service issues, modernising the Council's infrastructure, and promoting digital transformation.
3. Note the short-term actions and long-term plans for consolidating the Council's data to reduce duplication and improve decision making.
4. Note the current and future use of AI in the Council.

Background and Options

5. The committee have requested an update to include what is the new approach following the appointment of the new Director of Digital Services (otherwise known as the Chief Technology Officer); what, if any, are the plans to streamline software platforms; what are the future plans

over the next 12 months for the development of AI (artificial intelligence) and how will this transform services.

New director's approach

6. The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) joined the Council in January 2024 following two interim directors in the preceding 12 months.
7. The CTO adopted a fix-modernise-innovate approach to improving services, reducing costs, and aligning Digital Services with the wider needs of the Council.
8. These activities often run sequentially, fixing existing problems then modernising the environment before moving into innovation, however in Enfield these are running in parallel to ensure Digital Services meets the ambitions of the Council.
9. The CTO is focused on practical action; ensuring the essential housekeeping activities are completed diligently; all colleagues are working on the most important work they can; we secure best value from our suppliers when new contracts are signed; and innovation is supported.
10. The CTO is supporting colleagues within Digital Services to learn new skills and thus reducing our reliance on agency workers, consultants, and contractors, and ensuring our workforce is ready for the future.
11. The CTO has brought together colleagues from across the teams within Digital Services to collaboratively deliver what were previously project activities completed by consultants and contractors, including migrating 3500 mobile phone contracts from EE to Gamma and preparing for the rollout of Windows 11.
12. Extending collaborative working approaches to other services combines the abilities, experience, and skills of colleagues in Digital Services with colleagues that have specialist knowledge in their area so we can act with clarity and precision when negotiating with suppliers.
13. Reducing the Digital Services overspend is vital and the current forecast indicates an overspend of £1.2m in 2024/25 compared with an outturn of £4.2m overspend in 2023/24.
14. Digital Services is forecast to come in on target for staffing, with £6m of spend against a £6m budget following a restructure of the Digital Services leadership team, reducing the number of heads of service from five to two and a reduction in the use of agency workers.
15. The Digital Services contract budget is forecast to be £2m overspent in 2024/25 with expenditure of £12m against a budget of £10m. The CTO and Digital Services colleagues are challenging all contract spend and seeking competitive alternatives as contracts end or break clauses become available.
16. The CTO has empowered the commercial team within Digital Services to adopt a robust approach to supplier negotiations and secure advantageous pricing.

17. The CTO is driving the completion of previously approved projects and working with colleagues to ensure the anticipated benefits are achieved.
18. The Digital Services portfolio for the remainder of 2024/25 will be presented to Cabinet in September. The report seeks £2m of funding for the remainder of 2024/25 to maintain and enhance our cyber-security, to deliver a new design for modern infrastructure, to migrate to modern applications and to develop transformational business cases and project plans to deliver savings, avoid increasing costs and improve services.
19. The Digital Services portfolio for 2025/26 is in development now and will seek further funding for cyber-security, modern infrastructure, modern applications and transformational initiatives. Modern applications will be more prominent in the 2025/26 portfolio as the contract cycle provides opportunities for consolidation.
20. The CTO is promoting a revised process to capture more information earlier in the portfolio building process so projects can commence quickly once approved.
21. While the CTO and Digital Services are making progress in all areas, there are significant challenges to consider.
22. Digital Services is one-third smaller than it was two years ago, down from 150 posts to 100 funded posts, requiring effective prioritisation to ensure the most important work is done first and expectation management for service users.
23. Reducing the complexity of our technology, standardising on fewer platforms, and adopting modern technology and approaches within Digital Services will improve the alignment between the demand for services and capacity to deliver.
24. Funding Digital Services projects is becoming more challenging as the global move to cloud services, which are rented rather than owned, restricts the use of capital funding; and not all essential works generate the savings necessary for flexible-use-of-capital-receipts.
25. Work continues with Finance colleagues to ensure appropriate funding streams are identified early in the development of projects.
26. The CTO priorities for the 2024/25 include
27. Maintaining and enhancing our cybersecurity through continuing investment in the technology and staffing and utilising artificial intelligence to assist our cyber-security team.
28. Driving savings from contracts through a more commercial approach to new contracts and rationalisation to further close the gap between the approved budget and actual spend.
29. Improving the reliability and performance of our connectivity with modern infrastructure and enhanced resilience for key services.
30. Exploiting the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence, both as administrative support for colleagues, and for specific use cases.

Streamlining software platforms

31. All Councils deliver a wide range of services and require a wide range of specialist software to support these activities.
32. The long-term preferred approach is to separate data from often-proprietary software applications and to consolidate information on a data platform built with modular components and using open standards. This eliminates duplication and reduces inconsistency which can lead to siloed decision making, wasted effort and costly errors as well as inconveniencing our service users.
33. Central Government has encouraged this approach through the Local Digital Declaration, which Enfield is committed to.
34. The CTO has reviewed and reinforced our technical standards to encourage the procurement of software that aligns with the long-term preferred approach.
35. Digital Services is exploring the use of the Microsoft Power Platform, which supports industry standards and is interoperable with other software and has successfully replaced one proprietary platform and developed one utility in house on the Microsoft Power Platform.
36. In the medium term the CTO and Digital Services need to develop capabilities on the collection, management, and use of data within Digital Services and across the Council and promote a Council-wide data strategy.
37. Digital Services also needs to realign its resources to increase its capacity to support and develop modern platforms.

Current and future use of AI

38. The Council is an early adopter of Microsoft Copilot, initiating a trial with 300 licences, and now committing to licences for the next three years and embedding their use in our processes.
39. All Copilot users are asked to complete a regular survey on what they are using the technology for and the benefits they see from its use.
40. The results of our internal survey mirror external research carried out by Microsoft, which indicates the most common uses are automating note taking from meetings, summarising large documents, drafting documents and research, with users saving three to four hours a week.
41. The Digital Services change adoption team are now working to expand the use of Copilot where it has the most potential to save time and improve services.
42. There are 200 colleagues on a waiting list for Copilot and Digital Services is exploring sustainable ways to fund additional licences.
43. Digital Services are also exploring specialist use of Microsoft Copilot and considering the use of other specialist AI tools to respond to specific use cases.
44. Digital Services are currently using Copilot to write scripts to automate mundane activities, freeing up colleagues to concentrate on more advanced work, and reducing our need for temporary resources.

45. Digital Services are also exploring the potential for AI translation and interpretation to reduce costs and improve services to residents. The sensitive nature of this work will require careful consideration of the legality and ethics of the work as well as the technical feasibility.

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