Agenda

South Oxfordshire
District Council

Listening Learning Leading

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Date: 27 October 2021
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A MEETING OF THE

Cabinet

WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 6.00 PM
FIRST FLOOR MEETING SPACE, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, OX14 4SB

To watch this virtual meeting, follow this link to the council's [YouTube channel](#).

Members of the Cabinet

Member	Portfolio
David Rouane (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Robin Bennett (Vice-Chair)	Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration, and deputy leader (statutory deputy leader during the following months: May, July, September, November, January and March)
Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Vice-Chair)	Cabinet member for community wellbeing, and deputy leader (statutory deputy leader during the following months: April, June, August, October, December and February)
Pieter-Paul Barker	Cabinet member for partnership and legal and democratic
Sue Cooper	Cabinet member for environment, climate change and nature recovery
Andrea Powell	Cabinet member for corporate services, policy and programmes
Leigh Rawlins	Cabinet member for finance and property assets
Anne-Marie Simpson	Cabinet member for planning

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ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC PRESENT

Reports considered with the public present are available on the council's website.

1   Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2   Minutes (Pages 4 - 8)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30 September 2021.

3   Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4   Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

5   Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

CABINET DECISIONS

6   Recommendations and updates from other committees

To consider any recommendations to Cabinet from other committees.

7   2021/22 Community Infrastructure Levy funding for South Oxfordshire District Council capital projects (Pages 9 - 26)

To consider the interim head of development and corporate landlord's report.

8   Technology strategy (Pages 27 - 43)

To consider the head of corporate services' report.

9   Exclusion of the Public

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of

the Local Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:

(i)   it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 to 7 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and

(ii)   the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC EXCLUDED

The council hereby gives notice that it intends to hold part of this Cabinet meeting in private to consider the following items for the reasons set out in the 'exclusion of the public' item above. These reports are not available on the council's website.

10   Minutes (Pages 44 - 49)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 30 September 2021.

11   Technology strategy (Pages 50 - 71)

To note the exempt appendices of the head of corporate services' report.

12   Property, asset management and technical services IT solution (Pages 72 - 77)

To consider the head of corporate services' report.

Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic

Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE

South Oxfordshire
District Council

Listening Learning Leading

Cabinet

HELD ON THURSDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 6.00 PM
FIRST FLOOR MEETING SPACE, 135 EASTERN AVENUE, MILTON PARK, OX14 4SB

Present in the meeting room:
Cabinet members: Councillors Sue Cooper (Chair), Robin Bennett, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, David Rouane and Anne-Marie Simpson
Officers: OfficersPresentList
Guests: GuestsPresentList

Remote attendance:
Cabinet members: Robin Bennett, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, David Rouane and Anne-Marie Simpson
Officers: Simon Hewings, Patrick Arran, Harry Barrington-Mountford, Jayne Bolton, Pat Connell, Jeremy Lloyd, Suzanne Malcolm, Catrin Mathias, Adrianna Partridge, Chris Traill and Eliot Ward
Guests: GuestsInAttendanceList

23   Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 22 July and 5 August 2021 as correct records and agree that the Chair signs them as such.

24   Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest

None

25   Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

26   Public participation

Linda Collison of the Henley and District Housing Trust made a statement in support of the trust's application for funding towards an affordable housing scheme.

27   Recommendations and updates from other committees

Cabinet received a paper, also published to the council's website, updating on matters discussed at other committees. This also set out recommendations where appropriate. Cabinet noted these.

Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, the chair of the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, updated Cabinet further on the work of the committee.

28   Strategic property review

Cabinet considered the interim head of development and regeneration's report on the strategic property review. This provided an overview of all council assets and the alignment of council business, capital and property asset strategies to ensure that property assets were optimised to meet the council's corporate plan objectives. Underpinning the delivery of the review outcomes was a land and property asset disposal policy to provide a documented process to allow the council to effectively manage its land and property assets.

Cabinet noted that the Joint Scrutiny Committee had considered the strategic property review and highly commended the report and its recommendations to Cabinet.

The Cabinet member reported that the aim of the review was to find the best use for each property owned by the council. The objectives of the corporate plan would influence decisions on the future uses of property the council wished to retain. The disposals policy would provide a transparent process for the asset management group to assess whether the council should sell any property. This would allow the council to maximise property receipts and minimise risk. It would also allow the council to undertake community asset transfers. The report also set out the proposed approach to the transfer of assets from developers to the council, which the Cabinet member supported.

Cabinet welcomed the strategic property review and recognised the volume of work undertaken. The in-sourcing of the property function had allowed the council to take full control of its portfolio and introduce better property asset management processes. It was hoped that the council could also play a role in mediating when assets were transferred from developers to parish councils.

RESOLVED: to

(a)   notes the update on the strategic property review;

(b)   approves the Land and Property Asset Disposal policy;

(c)   approves the council approach to transfer of assets from developers; and

(d)   notes that in line with proposed processes set out in the Land and Property Asset Disposal Policy, an asset management group (an advisory non-decision making group) will be set up to review, check and challenge the recommendations from the strategic property review prior to formal decision being taken on disposals of assets.

29   Tree planting policy

Cabinet considered the interim head of policy and programmes' report on a policy for planting trees on council land. The joint policy outlined how South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils would protect, plant and manage trees on the land they owned, and how the community would be supported with their tree planting initiatives.

The councils had previously sought to increase tree cover and to protect trees on their land and help to achieve their respective carbon neutral targets. The policy set out principles to protect, plant and manage trees on council owned land; these were: planting, caring and maintenance, supporting biodiversity, planning and development, and community. The policy also set out how community groups could apply to plant trees on council land.

The Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee had welcomed the new policy.

Cabinet supported the policy and hoped that the council could provide advice to community groups on the most suitable species to plant and on after care. Cabinet asked that a press release was issued to publicise this policy and that all councillors were informed.

RESOLVED: to approve the policy for planting trees on council land.

30   Procurement strategy

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report, which proposed a new procurement strategy. This set out guidance on how the council should procure goods and services, whilst at the same time supported the council's priorities and strategic themes.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the council had not had a procurement policy to date. The key to the strategy was that it would ensure compliance with the council's contract procedure rules and with the corporate plan objectives. The strategy also included an ethical procurement statement setting out the standards the council would require of contractors and suppliers. This also supported the council's community wealth building policy.

Cabinet welcomed the new strategy and its ethical procurement statement, noting that these documents could be reviewed and updated in future.

RESOLVED: to

(a)   approve the joint procurement strategy and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 1 to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 30 September 2021;

(b)   approve the procurement action plan and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report; and

(c)   approve the ethical procurement statement and the actions within it, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

31   Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021

Cabinet considered the interim head of policy and programmes' report, which set out the first quarterly performance report for the Corporate Plan 2020-2024. The report demonstrated the progress made in the reporting period against the corporate aims as set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Cabinet member reported that following Cabinet's approval of the performance management framework, this was the first quarterly report. Scrutiny Committee had reviewed it and had made suggestions for improvements, which the Cabinet member had accepted were necessary, such as the need for more quantitative metrics. The report would be adapted over time and would include Cabinet members' input. It was also hoped that in future, the quarterly reports could be published earlier, within six weeks of the end of each quarter.

Cabinet thanked officers for their work in producing the first quarterly report. Cabinet recognised that the report publicised the extent of the work carried out by the council. It also demonstrated leadership and raised the council's profile.

RESOLVED: to approve the performance report for quarter 1 of 2021.

32   Treasury outturn 2020/21

Cabinet considered the head of finance's report on the treasury management activities in 2020/21.

The Cabinet member for finance reported that the Joint Audit and Governance Committee was content with the report and was satisfied that the treasury activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy. The Cabinet member concurred. During the year, the council's performance had exceeded most benchmarks and almost achieved its budget target in what was a difficult year during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cabinet agreed and thanked officers for their work.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

(a)   approve the treasury management outturn report for 2020/21; and

(b)   approve the actual 2020/21 prudential indicators within the report.

33   Leader of the council

Councillor Sue Cooper made a statement to report that with effect from the Council meeting on 7 October 2021, she would stand down as leader of the council. Councillor Cooper thanked her fellow Cabinet members and officers for their support.

In response, Cabinet members thanked Councillor Cooper for leading the council for the two and a half years since the district council elections in May 2019.

34   Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Part 1 of Schedule 12A Section 100A(4) of the Local

Government Act 1972 and as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 on the grounds that:
i.   it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1,2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and
ii.   the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

35   Affordable housing project - Henley and District Housing Trust

Cabinet offered a grant to the Henley and District Housing Trust for funding towards the cost of an affordable housing scheme.

36   Inter-authority agreement

Cabinet agreed in principle to enter into an inter-authority agreement with Vale of White Horse District Council to share occupation of the intended council space in the proposed new office building.

37   Office accommodation concept design

Cabinet approved the concept design of the council's new office accommodation at Didcot Gateway and recommended Council to amend the budget accordingly.

38   Revised capital programme 2021/22 to 2025/26

Cabinet made a recommendation to Council to approve a revised capital programme.

39   Berinsfield Garden Village

Cabinet supported a revised community investment scheme at Berinsfield Garden Village.

40   Development at 116-120 Broadway, Didcot - phase one budget setting

Cabinet made a recommendation to Council to allocate section 106 funds toward the development of 116-120 Broadway, Didcot.

Cabinet Report

South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Development & Corporate Landlord

Author: Chris Traill

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Cabinet member responsible: Robin Bennett

Date:4th November 2021

2021/22 Community Infrastructure Levy funding for South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Projects

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

(a)   Agree the proposed structure for identification of projects by a Member Working Group.

(b)   Delegate preparation of terms of reference for the group to the Interim Head of Development and Corporate Landlord and the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Leader and the cabinet member for Economic Development and Regeneration, as part of the budget setting process, to create the necessary budgets to commit funds towards the approved projects.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the use of 2021/22 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Funding for South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Projects and to contextualise CIL spend in light of the council's financial position and CIL regulations.

2. To agree a process and criteria for members to identify and review pipeline projects eligible to be funded by the infrastructure CIL allocation.

3. To agree how this fits with other council strategies, corporate plan delivery, and the council's overarching funding strategy.

4. To agree the next steps for members to determine which projects could be allocated CIL funding and the process for doing so, including the proposal for a CIL Member working group.

Corporate Objectives

5. This report supports the Corporate Plan aim of Building Stable Finances for the council.

Financial Context

6. South's revenue budget, as reflected in the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021, showed that the council is due to receive £4.3 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus). This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. In addition, in funding the council's capital programme the council exhausts all of its capital receipts, which means that any new capital expenditure commitment, unless it is externally financed, will ultimately increase the council's revenue costs.

7. This gap has already been identified by the external auditors, EY, as an area where they need to see evidence that the council is taking steps to address the council's financial sustainability. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years. Recognising that the council is already budgeting to use all of its capital receipts by the end of the current MTFP period (which means capital costs become a revenue impact), we will need to consider using CIL where applicable to maintain our existing infrastructure as this will ultimately support a revenue budget that is already in deficit.

Background

8. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver sustainable infrastructure to support the development of their area and mitigate harm as a result of a development. Development may be liable for a charge under CIL where a local planning authority has chosen to set a charge in its area. New developments that create net additional 'gross internal area' of 100 square metres or more, or create new dwellings, are potentially liable for the levy.

9. Local authorities are required to spend the levy's funds on the infrastructure needed to support the development of their area and they will decide what infrastructure is needed. The levy is intended to focus on new infrastructure and should not be used to remedy pre-existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision unless those deficiencies will be made more severe by new development. The levy can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure, if that is necessary to support development.

10. The following **<u>cannot</u>** be applied for from district CIL:

- Funding feasibility studies and professional fees where there is no infrastructure would be delivered.
- Infrastructure replacement or improvements in areas where there are no major developments and limited new housing growth.
- Where the project does not have clear community or local benefit, does not support new development in the area and is not infrastructure.

- Infrastructure that is not supported by lead statutory bodies, for example, traffic calming or pedestrian crossings if these are not considered required infrastructure by the Highways Authority.
- Ongoing operational or routine maintenance costs
- VAT where this can be reclaimed

CIL eligibility

11. A project must be either **Essential Infrastructure, Desirable Infrastructure or Beneficial Infrastructure**:

- **Essential infrastructure** – planned for in CIL forecasting and considered first in bids, generally infrastructure provided by statutory bodies and critical/essential in the Local Plan or a priority in a neighbourhood plan. It is infrastructure necessary to support allocated or approved development in order that development carried out is sustainable. Is therefore identified as critical or essential in the Infrastructure Delivery Framework of the Local Plan and in the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

- **Desirable infrastructure** – recognised in CIL spend forecasting and considered for bids on a case-by-case basis (generally infrastructure in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan as desirable). The infrastructure addresses current inadequacy and benefits are clear. The infrastructure is identified as 'desirable' in the Infrastructure Delivery Framework of the Local Plan or in the Neighbourhood Plan. It would allow infrastructure to be delivered through collaborative funding with a partner, with district CIL being 'the last piece of the jigsaw'.

- **Beneficial infrastructure** – projects are considered on a case by case basis and must meet one of the following criteria:

  It unlocks *further opportunities* within the District for housing and employment growth e.g. relocation of a community centre mostly funded through the sale / re-use of the land as residential or business use and there are adequate facilities in the area to serve the development. Infrastructure not previously been identified as essential or desirable in the Infrastructure Delivery Framework of the Local Plan or as a priority in the Neighbourhood Plan, but a clear link can be identified in the infrastructure supporting the sustainability of the Local Plan.
  Infrastructure addressing a recent unexpected shortfall in infrastructure or community provision, having an influence on the sustainability of a community in the Local Plan e.*g. closure of a facility and the need for a replacement.*

Infrastructure Funding Statement

12. An Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is an annual report, required by The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2019. The IFS, looks at the monetary and non-monetary contributions sought and received to support development in the District.

13. Transparent and accountable reporting helps local communities and developers understand what has been spent and how future funds will be spent. It should be first

consideration of how essential, desirable and beneficial infrastructure may be funded and when it may be delivered.

Consideration for CIL funding

14. The following compliance points needs to be considered:-

- Compliance with CIL regulations and relevant policy and addressing clear local need for infrastructure
- Clear relation to proposed or allocated development in the Local Plan
- A strong link between the proposed project and development
- Is it required to meet a statutory duty?
- Does it support strategic site delivery / unlock development sites?
- A strong social, environmental or economic justification for the scheme
- Contribution to a corporate priority / community outcome (e.g. Neighbourhood Plan / ward ambitions)
- Included in a departmental service plan
- Does it unlock any match funding (including crowd funding)?
- Does it generate revenue savings / income for the Council?
- Readiness to deliver – how long will it take to start?
  - Up to 12 months (quick wins)
  - 12–24 months / 24+ months

15. Where other districts have spent their CIL:

- Part council funding of Refurbishment of Swanley station with National Rail, including sheltered and secure cycle spaces, bus and taxi drop off/pick up point, improved signage and implementing a one-way system, improved pedestrian and cycling routes from the Town Centre.
- Sevenoaks also redeveloped a Community Centre to improve facilities for local community clubs
- Rural broadband services or new broadband infrastructure supporting communities working from home. Initiatives to reduce car journeys and encourage rural job growth
- DDA compliant outdoor play equipment for disabled use in existing play areas
- Park/Recreation ground enhancement and refurbishment of paths play equipment, provision of outdoor gyms, fitness equipment, benches, litter bins.
- Road safety schemes and street tree planting, flood risk reduction works
- Landscape improvement, Resurfaced footpaths to improve open space access
- Refurbishment of public toilets, new benches / bins at rail stations and bus stops
- Replacement of verge trees and trees in open spaces, greening of villages Installation of buggy shelters at public buildings

South Oxfordshire CIL Spending Strategy

16. Oxfordshire District Council began charging CIL in April 2016 and adopted a spending strategy first approved in November 2018. This was reviewed in December 2020 and an updated spending strategy came into effect on 1 April 2021. The strategy is published on the councils' websites and is attached Appendix 1

17. 15 or 25 % of levy is passed to a relevant town or parish council depending on neighbourhood plan status, and 5 %retained for administration costs. The remaining amount (the infrastructure allocation) for South:

   - 50% to Oxfordshire County Council for transport, education, libraries and household recycling centres
   - 20% for healthcare
   - **30% for district council infrastructure**

18. From commencement of CIL charging to 30 September 2021 sums collected:-

South:

Total Monies Received	Neighbourhood CIL allocation (town and parish councils)	Admin allocation (5% of total CIL)	Infrastructure allocation (total minus Neighbourhood and admin)	OCC Proportion (50%)	Healthcare Proportion (20%)	Internal - District (30%)
£34,347,493.92	£6,417,632.56	£1,717,376.35	£26,212,485.01	£13,106,242.51	£5,242,497.00	£7,863,745.50

South projects will be considered for funding from 30% internal district proportion - £7,863,745.50 minus the spend / allocation highlighted in paragraph 17.

19. Projects already allocated CIL funding from the internal district amount:

   South:
   Greys Road public toilets enhancement: £44,771
   Abingdon moorings (Culham parish on South side): £529
   Chalgrove flood alleviation scheme: £60,000
   Didcot Wave filter replacement: £45,000
   Abbey Sports Centre ATP (Berinsfield): £149,401*
   Park Leisure Centre roof light replacement: £15,346*
   Thame Leisure Centre CHP replacement: £125,801*

   *Already allocated in capital programme

Leaving an available balance as of 30 September 2021: £7,422,897.50

20. Requests to draw down funding from the internal CIL proportion can be done on a project-by-project basis and approved in accordance with the councils' constitution. However, depending on the level of funding required, this method would require individual ICMD's (£20,000 to £100,000) or cabinet and full council approvals (£100,000+) to agree funding for each project. This is resource intensive, subject to delays in the necessary approvals being given due to the committee cycle and also assesses projects in isolation rather than against all other potential uses of funds. The spending strategy indicates funding will be allocated to projects as part of the annual budget setting process so to avoid the issues caused by individual funding requests. This particularly means that larger projects in excess of £100,000, can be approved without the need to go back to full council for budgets to be created.

Criteria for members to determine a CIL spend project list

21. Scoring Criteria is proposed below to prioritise projects on how each project meets the council's corporate priorities, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS).

Strategic Fit

Corporate Plan priority

22. The overriding strategy for the criteria must be the corporate plan.

OxIS Plan Priority

23. In 2022 OxIS will consider new proposals for strategic infrastructure required to meet Oxfordshire's needs in the period to 2050. This will be aligned with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, a forthcoming Joint Statutory Spatial Plan identifying key areas where sustainable housing and employment growth can occur to 2050 and which will underpin the next iteration of Oxfordshire's District Local Plans.

24. CIL funding may be required to support the schemes identified in the OxIS Plan and this will considerably exceed the available funds secured.   Members may decide to either fully fund or partially support some South projects in the Plan for example a new community hub in Berinsfield or the Didcot North East Nature Park and Green Infrastructure Corridor.

IDP Project

25. Projects in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, as part of wider Local Plan process. IDP's are evidence base that fed into identification of schemes in the OxIS report.

Deliverability

26. The current Corporate plan hasn't currently been fully costed against the Council's financial strategy and Capital programme.

27. Unlike s.106, CIL is not time limited spend. However, viability and deliverability of potential projects needs consideration, to demonstrate delivery output and a resultant confidence and reputational impact for the council, but also for audit purposes to show spending appropriately in line with CIL guidance.

28. Consideration needs to be given on spending CIL on projects which may then create a pressure on the revenue budget for the council. The intention in the original CIL spending plan approved by South Council last year, was, where applicable to maintain our existing infrastructure. Ultimately this will support/reduce the pressure on a revenue budget that is already in deficit. It would be useful therefore to identify projects that should be:
    - Externally funded (grant or partner funding- i.e. Homes England or Levelling Up)
    - OXIS plan
    - Council's own capital programme
    - CIL

New or existing projects

29. It is expected that CIL brings additionality, new or expanded services or an amelioration of existing services. The question therefore is whether CIL funding would only be available for existing council buildings for repair or refurbishment if they would be at risk of closure due to substantial deterioration of plant or building fabric. Other than Oxfordshire County Council (50 percent) and organisations responsible for delivering health care (20 percent), spending strategies do not specifically include provision for awarding the infrastructure allocation to third parties. Instead, the remaining 30 percent, is intended to be used by the district councils to deliver infrastructure for which they are responsible for.

Funding other parties – Partnership work

30. The creation of the original spending strategies and subsequent review concluded that offering funds to third parties through grants scheme or similar process would be too onerous and likely to encourage use of funds on very localised schemes that should be funded using the Neighbourhood proportion paid to town and parish councils. Consideration will need to be given to the mechanism for awarding CIL to potential partner projects meeting our corporate objectives, as in some cases they will be better placed to do so.

Emerging Strategic Property Review

31. Last month the Council approved the process for the Strategic Property Review, and it should be noted that projects may also emerge as this work progresses.

32. Other projects, particularly relating to our leisure facilities, include overall project costs which, due to other funding available such as Section 106 and joint use agreements, may not require the full project costs to be funded by CIL. Should any of these projects be approved for CIL funding, work would need to be done to identify the actual CIL demand for each project.

Member Working group

33. Given the need for ongoing member engagement, it will help to create a Member Working Group, with clear Terms of Reference to work with officers on considering potential projects, together with ongoing monitoring of spend. It is intended the Group is informal and advisory and will not be decision making. There is currently an internal officer working group that considers up and coming projects. It is recommended that this officer group continues to meet in between the Member group meetings to investigate viability of potential projects and prepare reports and supporting information and business cases for the Member Working group to consider. It is proposed that a minimum of three members are represented on the group, including the Lead Member for Economic Development & Regeneration, Lead Member for Finance and other nomination (s), as deemed by Cabinet.

34. The Interim Head of Development & Corporate Landlord and Head of Finance will review the officer group to include representation from programme support, to assist the work of the Member Working Group.

Timeline

35. Once agreed, it is intended that the Member Working will be convened during November to agree Terms of Reference and a programme of projects to recommend to Cabinet/ Council. This work must meet the timeline of the budget process setting process to enable budget allocation for the forthcoming year.   Following on from this year, the Member Working Group could meet twice a year to consider and recommend projects to inform the capital programme allocation and spend.

Financial Implications

36. There are no direct financial implications from this report as this is simply proposing the mechanism and structure to allocate CIL.

   Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For South, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that the council is due to receive £4.3 million less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus). This funding gap is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate this funding gap in future years.

Legal Implications

37. The main legal implications are set out in the body of the report. However, it is important to note that there must be compliance within CIL regulations when considering and allocating projects. Any decisions outside of the ambit of the regulations may place the Council at risk of external challenge which in turn may jeopardise the Council's financial planning.

Climate Change Implications

38. A potential project list will need to reflect the Council's approach to Climate Change as a corporate priority.

39. Whilst energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technologies may not be eligible for CIL funding on their own, they are eligible as part of an overall refurbishment package for a CIL compliant project. It is therefore essential that we take the opportunity to rigorously assess each project brought forward for CIL funding for the potential to include energy efficient and renewable technologies as part of the work package. These could include insulation, glazing, efficient lighting and solar energy. Insight & Policy should be consulted on potential CIL projects to ensure all possible carbon reduction opportunities are considered.

Risks

40. The Financial context at the start of this report outlines the risk to the council of CIL expenditure then incurring ongoing revenue pressures. Linked to this risk, it is

important for members to consider the wider capital plan context for the council when allocating CIL, to ensure there is sufficient resource across the council's financial landscape to support its own assets and aspirations. Paragraphs 8-13 highlight compliance within CIL regulations that must apply when allocating projects, as to operate outside the regulations puts the Council at risk of external challenge and may jeopardise the Council's financial planning.

Conclusion

41   The report is intended to set out a path for CIL spend to be allocated. Once the Member Group is established, this can set a critical path for recommended spend of CIL for South Oxfordshire District Council.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

1.   CIL Spending Strategy

South Oxfordshire District Council Community Infrastructure Levy – Spending Strategy – April 2021

Background

1. To support the continued housing growth of South Oxfordshire there is a need to ensure the appropriate infrastructure is in place to support development. To help fund this, developers pay a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on new housing or retail developments to contribute towards the infrastructure supporting such developments.

2. The District proportion of CIL revenue can be used to fund new infrastructure projects as set out in our Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which is updated alongside the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, or for enhancing existing infrastructure providing that this supports development.

3. CIL has not fully replaced Section 106 (S106) planning obligations. These will continue to be used for infrastructure needs such as on-site open space, allotments, play areas, playing pitches, public transport, recycle bins, street naming and securing affordable housing on specified S106 designated developments. Currently these sites are: Didcot North-East, Ladygrove East, and Site B Wallingford, where infrastructure needs will continue to be secured through S106 planning obligations.[1]

4. The council staffing structure splits the collection and spending of S106 and CIL between the planning service (collection) and the infrastructure and development team within the development and regeneration service (spending). The infrastructure and development team will focus on ensuring effective spending and support to town and parishes to ensure infrastructure is delivered, including the possibility of providing parishes with approved projects on which they can support with their allocated CIL funds. CIL income and expenditure is monitored and reported in accordance with statutory CIL regulations and for financial accountability.

5. The CIL Regulations do not set out governance arrangements for the council, however they are clear that we have:
   a) a duty to pass to any town and parish council 25 per cent of the CIL revenues raised in those towns/parishes where there is a made neighbourhood plan, or 15 per cent, subject to a cap of £100 per existing council tax dwelling, where there is no made neighbourhood plan;
   b) a duty to transfer the CIL income to the relevant town or parish council by 28 April and 28 October in any financial year;
   c) the ability to recover administrative expenses incurred in connection with CIL of up to five per cent of the income generated;
   d) to spend the levy on infrastructure, and
   e) a duty to report on CIL income generated and how it is spent.

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[1] Such locations will remain the S106 specific areas until the new Local Plan is finalised, when new locations will be added for the strategic allocation sites.

6. CIL expenditure aims at mitigating the infrastructure impacts of an individual development, as well as the overall cumulative effect of development. However, although CIL spending does not have to be directly spent on the individual development through which it was raised and can be used to support infrastructure expenditure in general.

7. It should be noted that CIL is not meant to pay for all infrastructure items set out in the IDP but will help to reduce the funding gap. Other sources of funding streams will need to be explored.

CIL income

8. In the period from 1 April 2016 (start of CIL collection) to 31 July 2020, the council received CIL payments of £21,129,440.74. The CIL payments only become due once a development has started and for liabilities over £50,000 developers can spread payments over three years. There will always be a gap between the amount demanded and funds received.

9. By July 2020 CIL transfers of £2,621,312.33 were made to town and parish councils.

10. Regarding the maximum five per cent allocation of CIL revenue for administration expenses, £288,677.06 has been utilised to cover expenditures on staff costs and other administrative purposes up to 31 March 2020.

11. Expected CIL income, estimated in 2015, based on the housing trajectory in the Core Strategy Plan period to 2027, was £32.7 million, generating approximately £2.7 million per year. Estimating future CIL incomes annually is difficult as the charging rate although fixed is index linked and will therefore change over time, some developments may be delayed, and some expected developments may never get started. Therefore, the annual amount of funds generated will fluctuate dependent on the amount of new developments started in that year plus the rate of payment of CIL charges that have been carried forward from previous years. Should less than expected be received, a budget pressure may arise.

12. In order to simplify the allocation process, funds available for CIL spending will be based on actual amounts received, less transfers to town and parishes and administrative costs incurred. To meet the council's budget setting requirements the actual amount of funds available as at each December year end will be used as a basis for calculating the percentage allocation.[2]

13. The collection and spending arrangements of existing and new S106 agreements will continue in addition to CIL collection where necessary.

CIL percentage allocation

14. The advantage of allocating a percentage of CIL revenues towards key infrastructure types such as transport, education, libraries and household

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[2] Fiscal year end actuals would arrive too late for budgeting timings.

recycling centres (allocated to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)) and healthcare (OCCG and other organisations, including the council) is that it:

i) provides clarity for OCC so they can plan ahead and meet the transport, education, library and household recycling centre infrastructure needs for which they are responsible;

ii) will give the wider community the confidence that funding is allocated to the necessary infrastructure;

iii) negates the requirement for a bidding process to take place.

15. Once the 15 or 25 per cent allocations for the town or parish councils, and the maximum five per cent for CIL administration costs have been deducted, the balance remains with the council to be utilised. Taking into consideration historical S106 spending, the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Core Strategy, and comments from key council officers, the percentage allocations to OCC and health care, and the remaining allocation for council expenditure, are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Percentage allocation of CIL

Infrastructure type	Percentage of CIL available
OCC:	
Education, transport, libraries and household recycling centres	50%
OCCG / other organisations:	
Community Health Care	20%
SODC:	
Provision of new infrastructure as identified by the IDP and / or corporate priorities and enhancement of existing infrastructure providing that this supports development	30%
TOTAL	**100%**

Oxfordshire County Council

16. A certain percentage of the funding needs to be shared with OCC to ensure the broader provision of infrastructure items, identified as part of general development needs. In this instance restricted to transport, education, libraries and household recycling centres only. As per Table 1, OCC's allocation of CIL has been set at 50 per cent.

17. The funding allocation for OCC will be calculated at 30 September each year and included in the district council's budget for the following financial year. OCC are required to submit their annual application for funding by 31 January of each year. If funds are not applied for by this date, all or part of OCC's allocation, may be redirected to district council or health care projects.

18. A funding agreement between the council and OCC will be outlined in this respect agreeing how CIL funds transferred to OCC will be spent. This will be

revised annually and include the funding allocation available and which project(s) that this will be allocated to. The amount to be transferred will be calculated on an annual basis and should be included in our annual financial budget and released in either a lump sum annual payment or quarterly as per the agreement reached.

19. OCC will complete a request for CIL funding form annually in order to draw down the allocated funding. This request would be subject to set criteria:
    - meet the requirements of CIL Regulations
    - address the needs identified in our Infrastructure Development Plan
    - be fully costed
    - be deliverable within a specified timescale.

Health care

20. A certain percentage of the funding will be apportioned to ensure that the provision of health care can also be increased in line with the demand generated by the increased number of residents in a location. As per Table 1, the health care allocation of CIL revenue for expenditure on such items has been set at 20 per cent. OCCG and other organisations, including the council, will be eligible to apply for this funding to deliver projects allowable under CIL regulations and in such cases, the same procedures as OCC would need to be applied in terms of agreeing a funding agreement and meeting the criteria set out in point 19.

The Council's allocation

21. The council's allocation will be spent on provision of new infrastructure as identified by the IDP and / or corporate priorities and the improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of existing infrastructure providing that this supports development as allowed by CIL regulations. To comply with the council's budget setting process the actual amount of CIL funds available at each September year end will be used as a basis for calculating the allocation amounts that should be included in the council's capital programme and approved as part of the council's budget setting each February. Should this not be done, or the full amount of available funding not be included in the budget, funding can be allocated and approved for projects during the year in line with the council's financial procedure rules.

22. It is important to note that developments liable for S106 planning obligations (Didcot North-East, Ladygrove East, and Site B Wallingford) will continue to secure funding for on-site specific infrastructure needs, as well as an element of offsite infrastructure. Strategic sites will continue to deliver key infrastructure such as new schools, transport improvements, health provision, leisure and community facilities.

Town and Parishes

23. The neighbourhood portion of the levy can be spent on a wider range of things than the rest of the levy, provided that it meets the requirement to 'support the development of the area'. The wider definition means that the neighbourhood

portion can be spent on things other than infrastructure provided it is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the parish's area. For example, the funds could be used to fund affordable housing.

24. It should be noted that a significantly larger proportion of infrastructure monies will be going to town or parishes than historically secured via S106 funding. With this additional funding the town or parishes may therefore be expected to help fund local infrastructure improvements such as items set out in the council's IDP. The council will support town and parishes with advice on how to spend CIL funds when required and facilitate linkages to OCC and other organisations on project possibilities.

25. Should town or parishes wish to support projects at a district or county level or delivered by another organisation, such as OCCG, and should town/parish clerks have the relevant qualifications that enables them to do so (General Powers of Competence), guidance notes are available from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) on how to do so.[3] These will be promoted to the relevant town and parish councils by the infrastructure and development team and support provided where needed.

26. Town and parish councils in receipt of CIL funding are required to report details of their CIL income and spend on an annual basis. These reports should be published on the town or parish council's website (should they have one) and also on the district council's website. Whilst the district council will advocate the use of the town and parish councils' CIL allocations towards projects identified within neighbourhood plans, where there is one, ultimately it is for the town or parish council to decide how they spend their funds providing that this is in line with CIL Regulations .

CIL spending cycle

27. The CIL spending cycle will work as follows:

   i. Identify current and previous years' unspent CIL revenue, as at 30 September.
   ii. Calculate, based on percentage allocations, in time for inclusion in the council's annual budget setting process, CIL monies to be allocated to OCC, and health care (where applied for by a third party), to be transferred once applications for projects are received, approved and funding agreement signed.
   iii. Any funds not included in the council's annual budget can be allocated and approved for spend in line with the council's financial procedure rules.
   iv. For town and parish councils, funds will be released in line with regulations i.e. every six months in April and October, unless otherwise agreed.
   v. By the end of the calendar year all town and parish councils, OCC, organisations in receipt of health care allocation and relevant council departments will submit annual reports to the infrastructure and development team for the previous financial year

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[3] CIL – OALC guide for parish councils, October 2018.

vi. This approach will be monitored alongside the approval of the annual infrastructure funding statement at which point amendments can be identified to the strategy and a review can be triggered if required. This method would also allow the strategy to be agile enough to allow for any future changes in CIL / planning regulations.

Linking CIL Spending Strategy to the capital programme and use of admin allocation

28. CIL is just one funding stream that can be used in conjunction with others to fund infrastructure projects. The allocation of CIL funding should ideally be included in the council's capital programme and approved as part of the council's budget setting each February. The advantage of linking the CIL funded spending estimates to the council's capital programme is to ensure a full overview of the key infrastructure projects supported under various funding streams and the identification of any gaps. However, if CIL funding is not included (or fully included) in the council's annual budget, it can be allocated and spent on projects in line with the council's financial procedure rules.

29. Allocations of CIL funding in the annual budget (approved in February, coming into force in April) will be made to relevant external organisations and internal council projects based on actual CIL figures available at 30 September the previous year. Any funds not allocated in the budget can be approved for spend in line with the council's financial procedure rules during the year or added to if they remain unallocated, to the approved budget the following year.

30. The budgetary allocation of the five per cent administration costs will be split evenly between CIL revenue management i.e. invoicing developers and tracking collection, and CIL spending and monitoring. After the first three years from adopting CIL, any underspend from the five per cent admin allocation at the end of the financial year must be added to the district council proportion for the following financial year.

Can the levy be spent outside South Oxfordshire?

31. CIL regulations allow for funds to be spent in neighbouring authorities but the council will not exercise this option with the exception of:

   i) funds generated in the Didcot Garden Town (DGT) boundary (which covers parishes in both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district areas – see Appendix 2), providing that the project(s) are within that area. CIL funding in relation to projects delivered within DGT should align and/or promote the DGT principles and priorities where possible. This approach will contribute positively to creating a high-quality place across the garden town and districts. This provision will be replicated in the Vale of White Horse District Council CIL spending strategy.
   ii) further geographical flexibility can be considered at the district council's discretion for OCC education projects in exceptional circumstances, such as for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) schools.

Can the CIL funds be spent outside the development area where they were generated?

32. Local CIL funding is covered by the town and parish allocation. The district proportion is not restricted by locality and can be spent across the district. This allows greater flexibility when allocating funding to projects which in turn makes them more deliverable. This is particularly important where there is an identified need for larger infrastructure facilities, that also benefit a wider area and a large proportion of the population.

Reporting of CIL

33. As a result of the September 2019 CIL Regulation amendments, the council is required to prepare an annual infrastructure funding statement that covers both CIL and S106 income and expenditure and publish on its website no later than 31 December each year for the proceeding financial year. Town and parish councils are required to produce an annual report, published on their website (if they have one) and to send a copy of this to the council. We will publish this information on our website. CIL monies passed on to town or parishes, which have not been spent within five years of receipt can be recovered by the council who then must spend such CIL monies to support the development of the area which they have been recovered from.
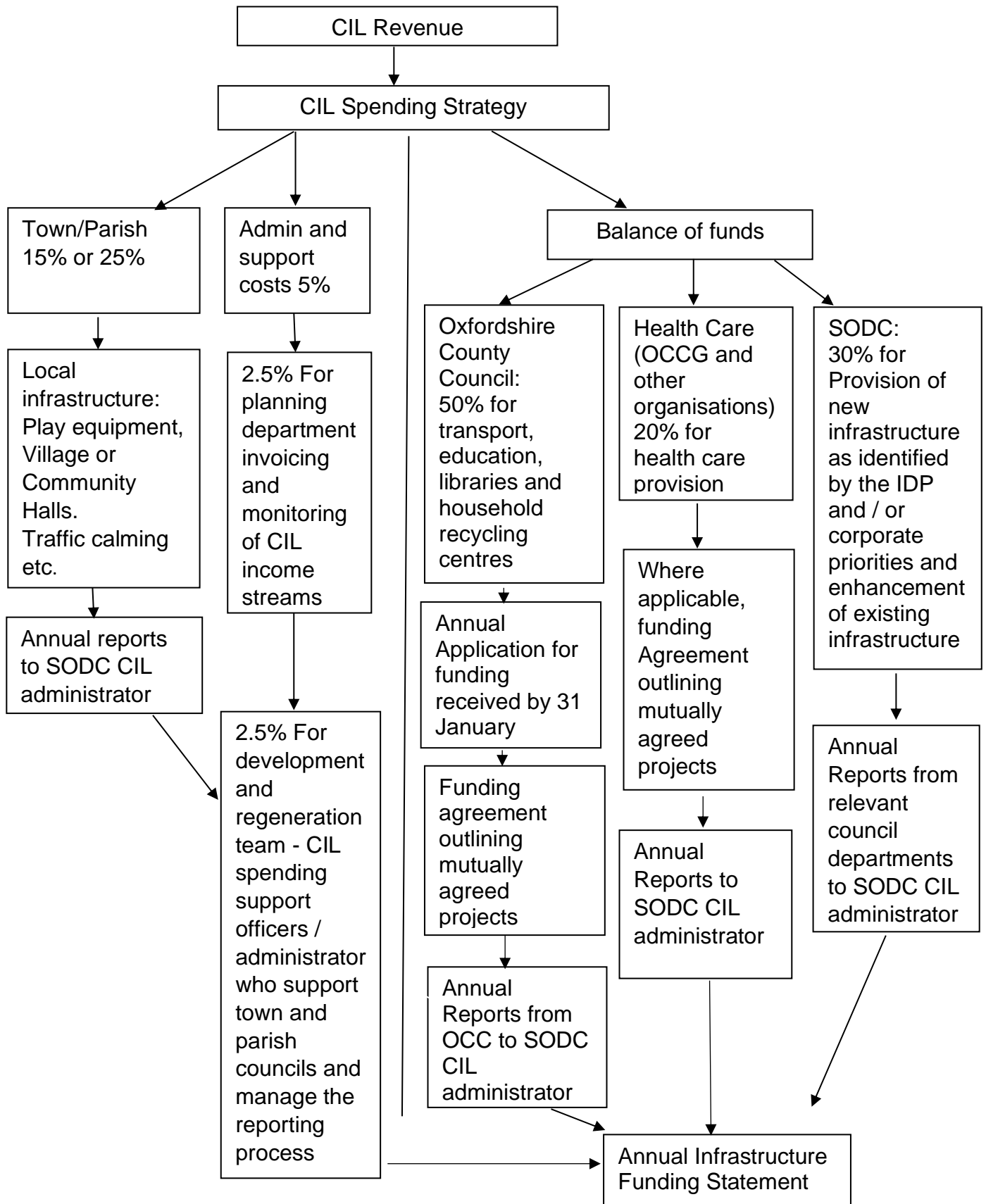
Summary

34. The CIL spending strategy will utilise a percentage allocation approach, apportioning funds on an annual basis, calculated on received funds, once town or parish allocations and council administrative costs have been deducted. The rationale for this is detailed above in paragraphs 14 and 15 where Table 1 details the CIL percentage allocations. This process gives clarity of funding availability for transport, education, libraries and household recycling centres allocated to OCC so that they can plan financially for upcoming infrastructure projects whilst allowing flexibility for use of the health care allocation and for the district council to use its funds to support the demands of new development.

35. Such an approach will be monitored alongside the approval of the annual infrastructure statement at which point amendments can identified to the strategy and a review can be triggered if required. This method would also allow the strategy to be agile enough to allow for any future changes in CIL / planning regulations.

36. A procedural overview of the process for allocating, spending and reporting of CIL is outlined in Appendix 1.
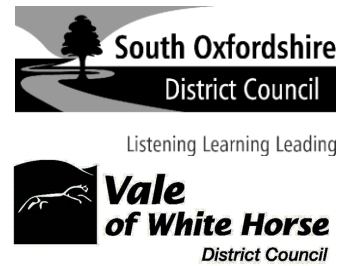
South Oxfordshire
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Appendix 1 – CIL procedural overview

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │     CIL Revenue     │
                          └─────────┬───────────┘
                                    ↓
                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │ CIL Spending Strategy│
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CIL Revenue → **CIL Spending Strategy** branches to:

Town/Parish 15% or 25%
→ Local infrastructure: Play equipment, Village or Community Halls. Traffic calming etc.
→ Annual reports to SODC CIL administrator

Admin and support costs 5%
→ 2.5% For planning department invoicing and monitoring of CIL income streams
→ 2.5% For development and regeneration team - CIL spending support officers / administrator who support town and parish councils and manage the reporting process

Balance of funds branches to:

Oxfordshire County Council: 50% for transport, education, libraries and household recycling centres
→ Annual Application for funding received by 31 January
→ Funding agreement outlining mutually agreed projects
→ Annual Reports from OCC to SODC CIL administrator

Health Care (OCCG and other organisations) 20% for health care provision
→ Where applicable, funding Agreement outlining mutually agreed projects
→ Annual Reports to SODC CIL administrator

SODC: 30% for Provision of new infrastructure as identified by the IDP and / or corporate priorities and enhancement of existing infrastructure
→ Annual Reports from relevant council departments to SODC CIL administrator

All feed into: **Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement**

Appendix 2 – Didcot Garden Town Boundary

Cabinet Report

South Oxfordshire
District Council

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Vale
of White Horse
District Council
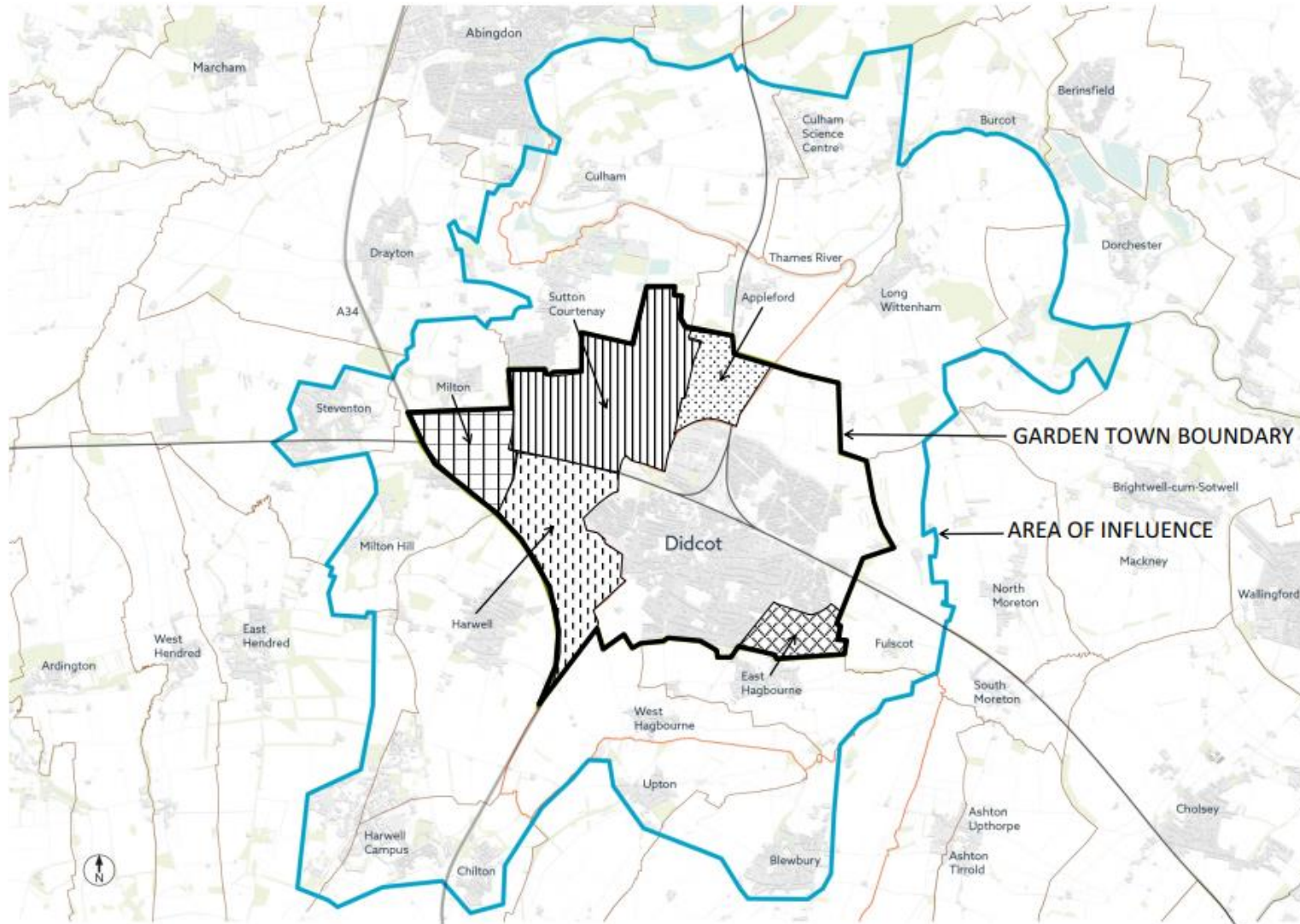
Report of Head of Corporate Services – James Carpenter

Author: David Wilde

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Wards affected: N/A

South Cabinet member responsible: Andrea Powell

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To: CABINET Dates: VALE 29/10/2021 SOUTH 04/11/2021

Joint Technology Strategy update

Recommendation
Cabinet to note the update on the projects incorporated in the Joint Technology Strategy and to support the continuing implementation of the programme.

Purpose of report

1. To enable Cabinet to consider the updates on the projects in the Joint Technology Strategy and support its implementation

Corporate objectives

2. South - Investment and innovation that rebuilds our financial viability

3. Vale – Building Stable Finances

Background

4. The Councils previously agreed a Joint Technology Strategy in October 2018, including a series of projects that formed an implementation programme.

5. We are taking this opportunity, linked to our post COVID operating models, and our future state transition into the new office environment and service delivery to once again share details of the Strategy to ensure clarity and oversight.

6. Members will be aware that the Joint Technology Strategy forms a key tenet of the customer transformation work identified in the corporate plans and puts a clear focus on embracing digital for service excellence.

7. The report attached at Appendix A sets out in detail an overview of the digital and IT landscape, our own IT environment, as well as setting out a series of technological principles and a roadmap to support our business strategy.

8. There are key themes explored within this, including its role in supporting democratic engagement, and supporting a capable and empowered workforce for the digital age.

9. The Joint Technology Strategy facilitates the Councils moving forwards in delivering its corporate plan objectives and the wider delivery of Council services supported by the most appropriate IT solutions and infrastructure.

10. Members will note from the table overleaf (Extract from Annex B) that a number of projects have already completed, and others are at various stages of advancement. The approval of the implementation of the individual projects will come to respective Cabinets in due course.

Programme	Project	Sponsor	Project Manager	Status
Platform	Connectivity	James Carpenter	Simon Turner	Scheduled
	Unified communications	James Carpenter	Simon Turner	Scheduled
	End user environment	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Active
	Follow me print	James Carpenter	Simon Turner	Complete
	End user device	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Active
Corporate systems	Enterprise Resource Planning	Simon Hewings	Simon Turner	Active
	Information management	Adrianna Partridge	Lee Brown	Scheduled
	Business intelligence	Harry Barrington-Mountford	Lee Brown	Scheduled
	Spatial data management	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Active
Customer Systems	Web sites	James Carpenter	Andy Roberts	Active
	Mobile apps	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Scheduled
	Customer relationship mgt	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Active
	Bookings	James Carpenter	Lee Brown	Scheduled
	Consultations	James Carpenter	Shona Ware	Scheduled
	Community grants	James Carpenter	Shona Ware	Active
	Call centre	James Carpenter	Simon Turner	Active
	Lottery	James Carpenter	Simon Turner	Complete
Place and People systems	Regulation	Liz Hayden	TBC	Scheduled
	Revenues	Simon Hewings	Paul Howden	Complete
	Democracy	Patrick Arran	Steve Corrigan	Complete
	Economy	Chris Traill	Melanie Smans	Active
	Place management	Suzanne Malcolm	Lee Brown	Active

11. There is a strong positive message around the work completed to date, examples such as HR and Finance both being back in-house and delivering better services, enabling the councils to have control of the direction of travel now; the ongoing cloud journey has resulted in a number of applications being more resilient, up to date and better supported, but this is an ongoing programme, and we cannot escape the issue of technology debt set out in the financial risks section below.

12. The Technology Strategy is considered to be an essential tenet supporting the move to a more customer centred approach to service delivery.

Climate and ecological impact implications

13. The Joint Technology Strategy enables the Councils to take a positive position, through the use of digital means, in its efforts to tackle the Climate Emergency by improving the efficiency of service provision. This is covered in the attached strategy document and has the ability to help reduce the carbon footprint of the organisation.

Financial implications

14. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the councils' overarching financial position. For both councils, the position reflected in the councils' medium-term financial plans (MTFP) as reported to Full Council in February 2021 showed that they are both due to receive less in revenue funding than they plan to spend in 2021/22 (with the balance coming from reserves including unallocated New Homes Bonus). For South this gap is £4.3 million and at Vale it is £2.6 million.

15. The funding gap at both councils is predicted to increase to over £5 million by 2025/26. As there remains no certainty on future local government funding, following the announcement of a one-year spending review by government, and as the long-term financial consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic remain unknown, this gap could increase further. Every financial decision made needs to be cognisance of the need to eliminate the funding gap in future years.

16. Any further investment beyond the already approved cost envelope will come forwards as a part of the approval process for specific projects, and through existing transformation budgets. It should be recognised by Members that both Councils have a specific issue with technology debt. This is the underinvestment in the business applications over the past decade (Concerto, Abritas and Unit4 are examples).

17. The recent garden waste issue identified clearly the impact of not having a CRM solution, from both a customer service and communications perspective. There is no systems administration capability either in the councils or provided by Capita under the IT contract, at least for some systems. Furthermore, many other systems are on rolling annual contracts, and a degree of consolidation and re-tendering is likely to be needed as we transform services to perform more effectively. Additional cost burdens, or savings can not be quantified at this stage, but there is expected to be a strong invest to save business case for investment.

Legal implications

18. The principal legal implications are by way of the procurement routes that necessarily need to be followed to invest in, for example, consolidating IT systems. Appropriate procurement channels will be followed and legal support sought as required.

Risks

19. Having a clear Joint Technology Strategy in place ensures that the Councils can meet the needs of the newly adopted corporate plans from a technological perspective. A number of the projects in the adopted Joint Technology Strategy are under way and /or completed, additionally time has moved on, and technological advances (such as the advent of the usage of TEAMS) need to be better reflected in our plans.   As drafted,

the Joint Technology Strategy proposed sets out the best estimate of our needs, our required direction, and the projects and investment needed to deliver based upon what we need and what we know. It will remain a document that is under review as we progress.

20. In proceeding, there is a degree of risk that advances in technology progress at a pace that out strips our strategy, ensuring our Joint Technology Strategy is responsive and reviewed regularly will ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

21. There are continued risks associated with cyber security and the Councils IT estate, as set out through appropriate governance mechanisms such as the Corporate Risk register. Whilst risk in these areas by its nature is always likely to be disproportionately high, having an effective Joint Technology Strategy in place enables us to build effectively on the resilience and security measures we have in place.

Other implications

22. No other implications

Conclusion

23. Having an up to date and refreshed Joint Technology Strategy supports the delivery of the corporate plan, and additionally the delivery of services to our residents, businesses and communities. The refreshed Joint Technology Strategy is recommended to Cabinet for agreement.

Appendices

- **Appendix A** – South and Vale Joint Technology Strategy - Embracing digital to deliver service excellence including:

    Annex A - current enterprise architecture and the state of our technology assets in terms of delivery platform, customer systems, corporate systems and people and place-oriented systems.

    Annex B - comprising the four programme plans and the component projects to ensure their success

    Annex C - sets out the target enterprise architecture for our technology platforms following completion of the programmes

Appendix A

Joint technology strategy

Embracing digital to deliver service excellence

Document details:

Status: V1.4 Version submitted to Cabinet

Date: 04/10/2021

1.0   Executive summary

1.1   There can be no doubt the digital revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed our expectations and those of our residents and businesses in terms of how we need to deliver services now and in the future. Our technology environment will need to be able to support how we transform to meet those customer expectations in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

1.2   Within our councils we will need an IT environment that not only supports deep collaboration (software that enables teams to get things done together with minimal friction and with an absolute focus on a joint goal) and which continues to enable our staff to work flexibly but securely, anytime, anywhere and with colleagues from other organisations. Our IT delivery capability will need to support user centred service design from beginning to end in an environment that demands rapid development, implementation and change (Agile) but ensures provision is accessible, secure and robust. It also needs to be delivered in collaboration with and led by our business drivers.

1.3   We cannot do this in isolation. Many of the services we provide are part of a more holistic experience involving other providers: health; housing; welfare; crime prevention and reduction; transport; education; and environment. Collaboration across the technology and information landscapes will be essential if we are to make the transition from institutionally driven service provision to consumer driven digitally enabled provision.

1.4   The enablers to support this transition will require deep collaboration across:

- Information sharing and governance – providing access to data in a transparent and accessible way
- Connectivity – enabling ease of access and connectivity across our domains
- Identity management, authentication and security – to enhance our cyber security approach
- Strategic asset utilisation and management – to deliver best value
- Interoperability – to ensure the effective integration of our technology platforms and solutions to deliver for our customers and end users

1.5   The councils have some excellent foundations on which to build:

- Our longstanding shared service arrangement across the two councils, one of the most successful and sustainable in the UK.
- Our successful partnerships for community support and economic growth with the public, not for profit and private sectors working together to attract significant inward investment and generate jobs growth.
- The core IT platform built on Office 365 and the full deployment of mobile working capability as part of adapting to meet the COVID-19 pandemic, setting the scene for concluding the move to the Cloud and enabling multi-agency end user computing.

- A sharp focus on successful service delivery for our residents and businesses as part of the DNA of our organisations, reflected in our continued positive resident feedback.

1.6 But how we currently deliver services is not designed around the needs of our residents and businesses which means we do not have visibility of how or whether we are operating in the most effective or efficient way, by avoiding repeat activities, being proactive in tackling issues at source or by shaping places and the economy to improve people's lives and prospects and tackling climate change.

1.7 This strategy describes the wider landscape in which we need to evolve and embrace the digital opportunities transforming how we and our residents and businesses live, work, learn and spend our leisure time. It then sets out where the councils' IT environment is today and updates the core technology principles the councils use and reshapes the roadmap for the next 4 years to enable South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils to be at the forefront of digitally enabled public service delivery.

1.8 Lastly, it sets out what we will do to establish a digitally capable workforce fit for the future. It will complement our customer transformation journey putting in place the building blocks to support a more fundamental shift to consumer centred service delivery which meets the expectations of businesses, residents and visitors to our Districts in the digital age.

2.0   Background

2.1   Our councils continue to work well, delivering high quality services to our residents and businesses:

- The councils' are on a journey to a new office environment following the fire of 2015, , continuing to place our services at the heart of our communities, whilst recognising the impact the advances in technology, and the changed behaviours that have evolved out of the COVID-19 pandemic
- The 5 Councils Partnership contract has been reshaped to better suit our needs, resulting in the return to the councils services including Human Resources, Payroll, Finance, Procurement and Customer Services with many of the related systems upgraded so they are fit for the future and Cloud based

2.2   The core technology services provision being delivered through the 5 Councils Partnership contract supports mobile and flexible working, based on the Microsoft 365 platform in the Cloud. It has allowed our councils to operate effectively throughout 2020 whilst our offices were closed, through working from home and connecting and engaging digitally with our delivery partners, residents and businesses.

2.3   We cannot stand still though, we must embed digital in our business plans for the future and that requires our technology strategy to be an enabler and not a blocker, releasing the potential that exists to deliver user centred services better, cheaper and faster than we do today, not constrained by physical assets and open to collaboration with others yet still secure.

2.4   We certainly have the ambition, capable workforce and political drive to move in this direction. Our revenues and benefits service is a long-standing high performer nationally, our community facilities have been essential to the work being done to combat Covid19 in terms of health and wellbeing at a time when our residents and businesses have been under tremendous pressure. Our regulatory and enforcement services are embracing mobile working and demanding greater flexibility to drive up performance and productivity and our economy continues to grow strongly through effective strategic planning and partnerships.

3.0   The IT landscape today and digital disruption

3.1   Our technology platforms are mainly made up of contracted out services across all levels of the enterprise environment, in common with most local authorities and a reflection of the markets from which we source our services. There has also been considerable consolidation across the local government technology marketplace over the last 3 years, coupled with a move to Cloud delivered Software as a Service model. Whilst this has reduced the number of products in the market, it has improved integration and interoperability as well as reducing the need for datacentre and application deployment as separate elements of IT service provision. The infrastructure-free end user experience is now a reality.

3.2   Digital disruption has changed service expectations of residents and businesses who now demand always-on provision, on-line, built around them and not the provider and matching the experience provided by the retail, entertainment and financial sectors.

3.3   Local government and the wider public sector will have to go through the type of whole systems transformation already experienced by other sectors, driven by:

- A very different workforce strategy approach, much more flexible and digitally competent to meet future service demands.
- Service design and delivery built around the customer (and/or consumer) rather than structured service lines and across traditional public service structures, aligned to marketplaces (home based care, leisure, health, lifelong learning, work, lifestyle).
- Connectivity that provides universal high-speed coverage for all residents and businesses.
- Multi-modal (transport) and multi-environmental services (workplaces and home) designed to maximise space, minimise time and energy waste and simplify access.
- Adoption of recognised best practice benchmarking to provide ongoing assurance of best value.

3.4   One reality of the digital age is radical, rapid and ongoing change in crime and exploitation. We need to keep pace with and counter those changes to ensure we continue to support and protect the most vulnerable in society as well as helping to keep our communities safe more generally. Cybercrime has also become much more corporate in terms of targeted attacks at the commercial and government levels, requiring a more dynamic and proactive approach to IT security as well as greater awareness in the workforce about the risks and pitfalls of cyber security.

3.5   Another reality of this age is the Climate Emergency and technology can either contribute to or mitigate against its causes. Mobile and flexible working reduces the need for dedicated office space and can also reduce travel needs, both in turn reducing the Councils' carbon footprint. The same goes for greater self-service, on-line and available as required, better meeting

customer expectations whilst reducing travel needs. On technology itself, the Cloud service providers are pursuing carbon neutral to carbon negative energy programmes, smart building management and asset utilisation for renewable energy generation and the move to intelligent street management all contribute to reducing the demand for carbon-based energy.

3.6   So, what does this mean for the councils' technology provision going forward? Putting services on-line based on how providers expect them to be used and operating proprietary IT systems are no longer sustainable and at odds with what our customers expect. Equally our staff and public services more generally need to be able to take advantage of what digital solutions can provide to meet those expectations and deliver right first time, safely, transparently and when they are needed. The measures for the future are:

- **Delivery** - based on user need and fulfilled on a "once and done" or "right first time" basis
- **Productivity** - A workforce that delivers those services designed around user need, made possible by end user technology that works everywhere, all the time and with the minimum manual involvement
- **Trust** - transparent service delivery with informed consent for the data required and how it's used
- **Access** – services available where and when they are needed by those who need them
- **Energy efficient** – managing our technology and physical estates effectively and driving carbon neutral/negative adoption for our services and Districts.

3.7   Best value will be delivered through these measures, by minimising the failure demand of repeated customer contact, maximising workforce capability and service reach and ensuring effective community and business engagement through trust.

4.0   The councils' IT environment and latest activity

4.1   Our technology platforms today have moved away from our physical corporate estate and those of our delivery partners, although we are still reliant on dedicated network connections in places. Annex A shows the current enterprise architecture and the state of our technology assets in terms of delivery platform, customer systems, corporate systems and people and place-oriented systems.

4.2   Over the last 2 years, there has been a lot of progress in upgrading or retiring the legacy systems across the delivery platform and corporate systems. People and place-based systems however remain largely where we were 5 years ago, having evolved independently from wider technology developments and more in line with specific service delivery plans. We also have several systems being delivered through rolling contracts. These need to be tested in the market to ensure we are securing best value.

4.3   The recent implementation of the new finance IT system has also highlighted the technology deficit we have around customer-based IT systems. This has driven the creation of several bespoke solutions using the finance system as a delivery vehicle. In parallel, the in-sourcing of some place-based services have exposed duplication of some systems and a wider need to consolidate property and place-based data and systems to provide a more complete view of our assets. The current position with all these is not sustainable in the short term and requires urgent action:

- Acquisition and implementation of a customer relationship management solution
- Consolidation of place and asset-based systems
- Consolidation of housing related services into the main housing and rents management system

4.4   In the medium term, the platform, corporate systems, customer systems and people and place roadmaps will review our current systems against future business need in line with the Councils' Corporate Plans and with that identify the future technology demand.

4.5   Together these will inform the establishment of the four delivery programmes needed to realise this strategy.

- a)   IT Platform (end user computing, networks and unified communications)
- b)   Customer services platform
- c)   Corporate systems delivery
- d)   People and place systems delivery

5.0 Technology principles and roadmap to support our business strategy to 2025

5.1 Our drive towards resident centric service provision requires a fundamentally different technology approach to the one we have today, underpinned by the following six principles for technology investment, design, delivery and use:

	Principle	Why	Benefits
1	**Cloud first for new and cloud migration for legacy**	The marketplace for the provision of secure, resilient and legally compliant cloud services is mature and gathering pace as the standard platform for IT services as they are renewed across public services. Affordability and value for money over the life of a service is also tipping in favour of cloud thanks to increased competition. Suppliers are also withdrawing legacy on site services and only offering cloud models and newer entrants only offer cloud. As legacy proprietary platforms diminish, they become more expensive and there is a point at which it becomes financially viable to accelerate migration to the cloud.	Cost efficiencies will be realised through cloud based collaborative systems rather than organisation specific localised systems, especially across multiple agencies. Cloud will avoid the need for future capital investment in on-site technology provision. Cloud will support tackling the Climate emergency through energy reduction
2	**Ubiquitous connectivity, superfast as a minimum**	Proprietary network provision remains a significant blocker and cost for individual organisations, yet the technology, infrastructure and security required has evolved to allow ubiquitous connectivity whilst retaining security through role and device-based security models. On network speeds and coverage, the investments in superfast broadband for non-commercially viable geographies and the growth in fibre provision and competition means connectivity is much more widely available and we are not so dependent on corporate site provision.	Significant cost efficiencies through economies of scale on provision in terms of coverage and delivery method (voice, video, data, wired, wireless and mobile). More efficient estate use by removing limitations on buildings driven by the ability (or not) to connect to IT systems so staff can work anywhere.
3	**Lightweight devices, always on and work anywhere**	The end user computing (EUC) experience continues to be one of the greatest opportunities for increased productivity by supporting the ability to work anywhere and at any time. Superfast connectivity spans geographies meaning the need for dedicated office locations will diminish.	Speed and ease of access in an "always on" environment where people need to complete tasks drives out lost time through travel, waiting for technology to respond.
4	**Role based security, works with partners and meets UK govt standards**	Multi-agency working is a reality now and is only set to grow in future years. Role based security and federation with corporate environments offer the potential to make this experience seamless, especially as systems become more interoperable and data sharing matures into business intelligence around places and people.	Staff will be able to carry out their work across agency boundaries securely and legally. Information integrity and access will not be compromised when

	Principle	Why	Benefits
		UK government standards are progressing well across these areas and we must adopt them rather than duplicate or compete with them.	sharing, supporting GDPR compliance.
5	**Line of business systems designed around the user, interoperable and compliant with recognised standards**	Housing, transport, health, spatial development and social care integration will drive this agenda aggressively over the next 3 years as NHS digital and Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) move into delivery and the ongoing financial pressures on local government services continue to bite. Again, we must adopt agreed international and national standards and not look to create proprietary solutions. In the economic and environmental arenas Internet of Things based technologies are establishing new standards for interoperability for new data sources to turn the ambitions around smart places into reality. On systems design and build, we will use the Agile project methodology and strengthen our digital skillsets around centres of excellence in IT, business intelligence and communications, following the Government Digital Service principles for service design and digital delivery.	Integrated services for vulnerable people will be developed across agencies, improving quality of provision and safeguarding. Whole systems solutions will be applied to spatial and economic development around geographies, working across delivery partners in all market sectors (private, public, not for profit). User centred design of services will make effective use of the potential that digital offers in delivering services faster, better and cheaper whilst reducing the need for carbon-based energy
6	**Information governance across partners through cross agency governance structures**	Information governance through strong partnership will be a powerful enabler for advanced analytics supporting better decision making. We must develop a focal point for multi-agency information sharing and to be the first point for developing joint analytics projects.	Provides a single repository for information sharing protocols across agencies, supporting compliance with legislation. Offers a platform for multi-agency analytics services to support better decision making and more fundamental service design based on places and people.

5.2   To turn these principles into practice, we will establish a four-year roadmap **(Annex A)** to be delivered through four programmes with a high-level assessment of investment needs (existing and new), priorities, dependencies and risks:

   a)   IT Platform (end user computing, networks and unified communications) (1 to 4)
   b)   Customer services platform (5)
   c)   Corporate systems delivery (5 and 6)
   d)   People and place systems delivery (5 and 6)

5.3   **Annex B** comprises the four programme plans and the component projects to ensure their success. **Annex C** sets out the target enterprise architecture for our technology platforms following completion of the programmes. These will be used as a reference point for programme progress and support the development of collaboration opportunities with our public service delivery partners.

6.0   Supporting democratic engagement in a digital world

6.1   Technology has fundamentally reshaped democratic accountability and engagement in recent years through the demands for transparency around decision making, the use of social media to discuss and debate the issues of the day and access to democratic meetings via video and other web-based delivery methods. The Covid19 pandemic has accelerated the change journey and there is considerable resistance to returning to the "old" ways of democratic engagement.

6.2   Our technology and digital services programme will unlock the potential it has to offer in enabling greater engagement with our residents and businesses:

- Our IT platform will continue to enable councillors to engage with their residents and conduct council business virtually, enhanced by improved end user computing capabilities and connectivity
- The customer services programme will deliver a customer relationship management solution which enables residents and businesses to access multiple services digitally and based around their profile, also allowing the council to view them at the centre of services (with consent)
- Corporate systems delivery will increase transparency around our finances as well as how decisions are made as well as automating much of the financial processing work between the councils and their residents, suppliers and businesses
- People and places delivery will enable the councils to engage through digital consultation, virtual access to meetings and other democratic activities, increasing community involvement and again increasing transparency around how we do business

6.3   We will ensure our technology solutions are fit for the digital age and will support councillors and our staff in ensuring they are able to maximise their potential through training and effective user centred design of the solutions provided.

7.0   A capable and empowered workforce for the digital age

7.1   Technology is an integral part of our lives and work, impacting on every employee, resident and business in our districts. It is our responsibility to ensure there are sufficient resources, skills and knowledge to meet business needs driven by our communities. We expect staff to have a minimum level of competence in using technology, through end user devices, web based and mobile applications and specialist operational equipment to be able to do their jobs effectively and productively. Training for technology is often delivered on-line interactively in the working environment. This expectation reflects the impact of digital on our personal lives and the expectations it sets for business systems to be as easy to use as consumer-based services.

7.2   Historically corporate technology has lagged consumer provision and usability, often due to the cost of replacing or changing legacy systems and design principles focussed on processing times, closed infrastructure and security and operational models rather than end user experience and interoperability based on open standards. The roadmaps for our IT going forward will tackle the legacy and with it we need to ensure our workforce and our service users take full advantage of the opportunities they'll unlock. They will be part of the transformation from concept right through to live operations: user centred design, build, testing and implementation as a flexible (Agile) delivery model.

7.3   Our technology services will not be working in isolation but as part of whole systems project delivery led by our Corporate Plan, with digital as an integral part of them. Whilst delivery is mainly outsourced, our strong intelligent client function will ensure our:

a)   Core technology platforms are run by effective, well trained and competent technical teams covering connectivity, data storage, security and integrity including "always on".

b)   End user computing experience is customer centric, responsive and minimises staff downtime through technology faults.

c)   Digital services are designed around the end user and meet the expectations of our residents and businesses, deployed through applications that operate seamlessly across services within and outside our organisation.

d)   Analytics capabilities support better decision making and service fulfilment by maximising the potential digital offers to exploit our information assets and those we share with others.

7.4   We will unlock the digital capability of the rest of our workforce through:

a)   Establishing an effective Digital intelligent client function, including Systems Administration, to manage the multiple commercial and technical relationships across the IT Enterprise

b)   Establishment of super user networks designed to include people in technology projects and digital development.

c) Embedding digital by default into our service and business plans, working with teams to ensure user centred digital design is applied to how services should be delivered.

d) The use of recognised project methodologies as part of whole systems change.

e) Provision of high quality digitally enabled and deployed learning platforms to allow our staff to learn when and where they choose (e-learning).

f) An enhanced and interactive social media environment for staff to collaborate and develop thinking and opportunities on how we can do things better, faster and cheaper.

g) Active inclusion of staff and professionals who will challenge and validate that what we build and run is a positive force for tackling inequality rather than creating a digital divide.

7.5 To bring user centred design and build to life we will engage with our service delivery partners and users from the outset of a project and include them throughout the process.

7.6 Digital needs to be an integral part of the way our organisation works in the future. It is not something you do to services nor is just about technology. The reality is that most of our society is already digitally capable and that continues to grow, it is all too often our organisational structures that hold us back from unlocking its potential.

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