Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting	Cabinet
Portfolio Area	Resources and Performance
Date	10th December 2025

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2025/6-27/28

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To present the Digital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 which covers the development of online services ensuring the Council delivers improvements to help residents access digital services quickly and easily.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025/6 -27/28 (Appendix A).

2.2 That Members note the four key priorities to: develop digital solutions, improve the website and intranet, adopt AI, and drive the use of digital services.

2.3 That Members note the Digital Strategy strengthens resilience, standardisation, and digital capability to ensure the Council is 'fighting fit' for Local Government Reorganisation and supports the Corporate Plan priority of Balancing the Budget.

2.4 That Members note that significant opportunities have been identified to further utilise digital services in high priority services, to continue to provide non-digital support and service access for vulnerable people who require it, and that lessons have been learned from digital development work already completed.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Council's Digital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 sets out a clear vision for how technology will be used to improve services, support residents and businesses, to make the organisation more efficient and resilient. It builds on the progress made through previous digital initiatives, including the introduction of self-service options, improved online transactions (such as the digital reporting of missed bin collections and garage lettings), and greater use of data and automation to enhance service delivery.

3.2   The Strategy has been developed in alignment with the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027, particularly its priorities around balancing the budget, improving customer experience, optimising technology and enabling innovation. It also reflects national frameworks such as the Local Government Association's Digitalisation Framework and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's Blueprint for a Modern Digital Government.

3.3   The Council's digital ambitions are also informed by the changing national and local landscape. The Government's plans for Local Government Reform (LGR) and increasing expectations for online services present both challenges and opportunities. Stevenage Borough Council is well placed to respond, with strong digital foundations, a skilled workforce, and partnerships across the sector.

3.4   The Strategy outlines four key priorities around how the Council will:

- Develop modern digital solutions and increase automation

- Continue to improve the website and intranet

- Adopt artificial intelligence responsibly to improve efficiency and accessibility

- Encourage the use of online services whilst promoting digital inclusion for all residents

3.5   The previous Transformation report published 20th September 2023 (BD1) affirmed that telephone and face-to-face support will remain crucial, ensuring that no one is excluded from accessing help particularly if they are vulnerable or need extra help.

4   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1   Adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025/6-27/28 will provide a clear and coordinated framework for how the Council will continue to modernise, deliver value for money, and improve outcomes for residents, businesses, and staff.

4.2   The Strategy sets out how technology will be used to achieve the ambitions of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027, in particular by improving efficiency, enhancing the customer experience, and enabling innovation across all services. It provides the foundation for future

investment decisions, supports good governance and accountability, and ensures that digital activity is targeted where it can have the greatest impact.

4.3   Residents, businesses, and partners increasingly expect public services to be as straightforward and responsive as those in other sectors. The Strategy focuses on making every interaction with the Council easy, intuitive, and accessible—whether online or in person. By simplifying customer journeys, improving the website, and expanding online self-service options, the Council can meet demand more efficiently and consistently.

4.4   Inclusive design, adherence to accessibility standards, and a continued focus on assisted digital support will ensure that all residents—regardless of age, ability, or digital confidence—can benefit from modern, high-quality services. The Council recognises that some residents' needs cannot be met through digital channels alone and will continue to provide non-digital support and service access for vulnerable people who require it.

4.5   Digital change is central to the Council's commitment to Balancing the Budget and using resources effectively. By expanding automation, improving integration between systems, and promoting digital-first processes, services can reduce manual tasks, minimise duplication, and release staff capacity to focus on complex or high-value work or reduce costs.

4.6   The period covered by the Strategy includes Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) which potentially could see a new Unitary Council in 2028/29 up to that point the Strategy will help ensure Stevenage Borough Council remains agile, adaptable, and able to respond to changes.

4.7   A coordinated approach to digital delivery —aligned with ICT (Information and Communications Technology), Business Change, and other services — will reduce operational risk, improve cyber resilience, and ensure that the Council's systems and workforce are ready for any future reorganisation or shared service models.

4.8   The Digital and ICT Strategies are designed to operate in tandem, delivering secure, efficient, and customer-oriented digital services whilst ensuring that technology investments yield optimal results. The revised ICT Strategy is dedicated to establishing reliable and secure technological foundations, whereas the Digital Strategy leverages these foundations to provide modern and effective services for both staff and residents. A new AI policy will establish clear guidelines to define acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI, aiming to protect residents, staff, and maintain the integrity of Council services.

4.9   The Digital Strategy enables the Council to explore and adopt new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, intelligent telephony, and data-driven decision tools, in a measured and responsible way. The use of piloting and evaluation will be used to test innovations safely, ensuring that new tools genuinely improve outcomes for customers and staff. Customer experience continues to be a key focus in digital development. Data derived from online analytics, surveys, and feedback will drive the ongoing enhancement of services.

4.10 Strong governance and adherence to data protection, transparency, and ethical standards will underpin all activity. This ensures innovation enhances, rather than replaces, the human interaction that residents value.

4.11 Whilst digital modernisation offers great potential, it must work for everyone. The Strategy commits the Council to supporting residents who face barriers to digital participation, whether due to skills, confidence, or access, and will ensure that non-digital support for residents remains for the people who need it most. This will be delivered through face-to-face assistance in Customer Services and utilising opportunities for digital inclusion projects, potentially through grant funding.

4.12 This approach aligns with the Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan (2025) and strengthens the Council's role as a trusted community leader in promoting inclusion and opportunity.

4.13 The success of digital change depends on people. The Strategy places emphasis on supporting staff and Members to develop the digital skills, tools, and confidence needed to deliver efficient, modern, and customer-centred services.

4.14 By embedding digital awareness and ownership across teams, the Council can maintain a "One Team" culture—encouraging collaboration, learning, and innovation at every level. This approach will enhance job satisfaction, improve productivity, and strengthen the organisation's overall capacity to deliver.

4.15 The Strategy complements both local and national agendas for digital government, including the Local Government Association Digitalisation Framework and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's Blueprint for Modern Digital Government. It positions Stevenage Borough Council as a proactive, forward-thinking authority, ready to contribute to regional collaboration and innovation across Hertfordshire and beyond.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 Investment in digital technology and AI will be made following the approval of detailed business cases that consider a range of implications, including financial and ethical. The impact of the new technology on residents will also be evaluated through comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments. Delivering digital improvement is a shared effort. Some changes are driven directly by the team, and others are delivered as part of wider improvement plans. The expertise of external technical specialists and partners is harnessed where needed, ensuring the Council can respond to the wider environment and evolving context. By combining what can be delivered internally with what can be commissioned, impact is maximised and this ensures that digital services remain robust, innovative, and fit for the future.

5.1.2 The Council has a Business Change reserve which can be utilised to fund pilots and digital investment, any business case needs to address the funding of any future on-going costs.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any projects taken forward under the Strategy will need to comply with relevant legislation, including data protection. The government has indicated its intention to bring forward a more comprehensive regulation of AI in due course, and the Council is developing an AI Policy.

5.3 Risk Implications

5.3.1 Implementation carries some inherent risks, including data protection, cyber security, system reliability, and change-management challenges. These will be mitigated through established information governance arrangements, compliance with the IT Security Policy, and oversight by the Business Change and Digital Board.

5.4 Climate Change Implications

5.4.1 While AI increases computing demand, it can also reduce carbon impact through smarter scheduling, automation, and reduced paper use and travel.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

5.5.1 The Strategy supports workforce development by strengthening digital skills and confidence, influencing future training needs and role design. This increased skillset will be beneficial for staff when transitioning into a new structure as part of LGR.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.6.1 The Strategy promotes inclusion by ensuring digital services meet accessibility standards and by maintaining alternative channels for those unable to access services online. Projects will use Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) to support implementation where required.

5.7 Service Delivery Implications

5.7.1 The Digital Strategy will support services to be more efficient. The automation of simple tasks will allow staff to focus on more complex activities whilst providing a better service for residents.

5.8 Information Technology Implications

5.8.1 The ICT service will play a vital role in driving the organisation's modernisation and fostering a culture of continuous improvement by leveraging its technical skills and leading the development of an AI policy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1.1 **All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

BD1 [Future Council 2025 Transformation Programme Savings Update, Sept 2023](#)

BD2 [Local government digitalisation framework: Missions, principles and enablers | Local Government Association](#)

BD3 [Digital Inclusion Action Plan - GOV.UK](#)

APPENDICES

A   Digital Strategy 2025-28