



## **Agenda Item 9**

## **Digital Falkirk**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Digital Falkirk  
**Meeting:** Emergency Executive  
**Date:** 17 September 2020  
**Submitted By:** Director of Corporate & Housing Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Digital Falkirk strategic plan for the Council and to provide information on the resources which will be required to deliver on the ambitions set out in the document.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 The Emergency Executive is asked to:**

- (1) Agree the Digital Falkirk strategic plan set out in Appendix One
- (2) Note the importance of Digital Falkirk to deliver on our Council Priorities
- (3) Note that implementation of the Digital Falkirk plan requires significant capital investment in our digital infrastructure as detailed in section 6.1, and this will be presented to Members as part of the Capital Programme on 30.09.20

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Our previous Digital Strategy was approved by the Executive in May 2019. Since then, significant work has been undertaken to fully capture the Council wide ambitions for Digital. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of digital technology in maintaining and improving service delivery and meeting the needs of our service users during these challenging times.
- 3.2 This refreshed Digital Falkirk strategic plan as attached as Appendix 1, responds to these challenges and sets out in more detail our digital priorities and specific ambitions that will allow us to deliver flexible, responsive, and accessible services to the people of Falkirk.
- 3.3 During lockdown, the crucial importance of digital services has been highlighted. Many services have moved to an online delivery model through necessity, and a significant proportion of our employees have been digitally enabled to maintain service delivery by working from home. Prior to the school holidays, c3,200 employees were self-reporting to be working from home to varying degrees. This ambitious plan builds on the momentum that we have gathered and lessons that we have learned from this period to define a vision of what our Digital Falkirk will look like in a post pandemic world.

## 4. Considerations

### Supporting our Council Priorities

- 4.1 Our vision for Falkirk is “the place to be”, where everyone can fulfil their potential - and our Digital Falkirk strategic plan will play a key role in making this vision reality. Digital inclusion in its widest sense, was a dominant issue raised by Elected Members, communities and employees in the recent consultation exercise on our priorities. Our three are all underpinned and supported by the ambitions set out in Digital Falkirk.

### Communities

- 4.2 With digitally enhanced services, people can more easily access information and services, engage with the council, and do things for themselves at a time most convenient to them. Our communities expect that the council will work the same way as other service providers who deliver their services mainly online. Moving routine and non-critical face-to-face and phone transactions online allows us to focus our resources on the highest value interactions that support the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 4.3 We will support our communities to be more digitally enabled. As service provision is increasingly online, we will work to ensure that these are accessible to all. Digital skills training and support will be provided to those who need it in communities, and we will ensure that robust high-speed connectivity is available to all in our communities.
- 4.4 The current and future developments in digital health and care will also offer new ways to deliver health care and to support more people to remain independently in their homes. This will improve access to health care and support innovation for people to self-manage long term conditions as well as extend the range of digital supports for independent living.
- 4.5 Our digital strategy will also contribute towards sustainable communities. Mobile and flexible working and service delivery reduces the environmental impact of transport and carbon emissions, in line with our climate change commitments and green travel plan. It is also a key enabler for reduction of the Council’s property estate as the need for office space is reduced.

### Enterprise

- 4.6 Digital Falkirk will also assist with our priority to help businesses thrive and make Falkirk more prosperous. By making digital learning and teaching a key priority, our school leavers will be equipped with the digital skills that are essential to employers. Digital technology also plays a key role in our Investment Zone vision to create centres of excellence that will support research and development and commercialisation of new technology.

## Innovation

- 4.7 A key Business Plan priority is for us to become an innovative council. Innovation is at the heart of the Digital Falkirk plan. Digital tools have enabled our employees to work seamlessly across different locations during the pandemic to better serve our customers. Flexible working is now the default, and we are committed to continuing automation of our internal processes to become as flexible and efficient as possible. Going forward we will have an open approach to civic innovation, making our data accessible where appropriate to encourage community development of smart solutions.

## Digital Connectivity

- 4.8 Reliable high-speed internet connectivity has never been more important to our communities than during the coronavirus pandemic. It is keeping us connected to friends and family, allowing us to learn, work, shop, access council services, health information and other public services. However, if people do not have the confidence, kit, or connectivity to access these benefits, they risk being digitally excluded.
- 4.9 Our Digital Falkirk plan recognises this by placing inclusive connectivity at the heart of our ambitions. Our Digital Learning and Teaching priority sets out how we will provide personal mobile learning devices to pupils to support learning through the Connected Falkirk project. Our Digital Place priority emphasises digital inclusion for all. Digital Falkirk provides a commitment to expanding our provision of free high-speed connectivity and digital support at public buildings, schools, care homes and other locations.
- 4.10 At a national level we are working with the Connecting Scotland initiative to provide devices, connectivity, and support for people who are digitally excluded and on low incomes. To date, we have been successfully awarded a grant of c£652k to address digital exclusion for pupils. This enables the roll out of c.1,500 tablet devices to children and young people across the Falkirk Council area who cannot access a suitable digital device, and mobile internet data to 750 families to support access to learning. We will continue to take advantage of external funding that may be available to improve connectivity.
- 4.11 Our Digital Place ambitions as outlined in the strategic plan also include provision of public space Wi-Fi, smart sensors, CCTV, and a digital alarms hub. Going forward we will consider how improvements to our underlying network infrastructure may enable these services to be delivered in a more consolidated, robust, and resilient manner.
- 4.12 Our ambition is for ultrafast broadband to be available to every community in the Falkirk Council area, including remote and rural communities. Further significant investment will be required to implement this vision. We will consider the best method of connectivity for particular “hard to reach” areas. This is essential to ensure that no communities, businesses, or individuals are excluded from vital digital services. It also helps us to respond to digital exclusion as a result of poverty.

## **5. Consultation**

### Engagement with Services

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with all services across the council to ensure that Digital Falkirk captures the ambitions of the entire organisation. This collaborative development of the plan was essential to ensure that all opportunities for digital transformation are captured at this pivotal time for the Council. Consequently, the six priorities outlined in the plan encompass the broad range of services that the Council delivers.

### Feedback from employees – pulse survey

- 5.2 The results of the pulse survey of employees carried out this summer were taken into consideration in development of the plan. Working from home is currently the norm for those Council employees who can deliver their job in this way. Ensuring access to the tools and information to work from home was identified by employees as a key priority. This is reflected in the Digital Foundations priority of our strategic plan, where we commit to providing seamless and secure access to council applications from any device, anytime anywhere. As we move past the lockdown phase, working from home will continue to be the default for our desk-based employees with an appropriate balance of being in the office to ensure well-being.

### Community engagement survey

- 5.3 In our recent community engagement survey, 73% of respondents felt that “making our communities more digitally enabled” was “important” or “very important”. The Council having more digital and online services was ranked as “important” or “very important” by 77% of respondents. These survey results demonstrate that there is a clear appetite for digital service delivery from the public at this time, and that digitally enabling communities should be viewed as a key priority.

## **6. Implications**

### **Financial/Resources**

- 6.1 The ambitions outlined in Digital Falkirk will only be realised with significant capital investment in our digital projects. Without this, we will be unable to fulfil our ambitions of being a digitally focused council which responds to the feedback from our communities. Capital investment is required to drive transformation, improve efficiency and deliver revenue savings. It has been very clear over the period of the lockdown that digital ways of working are essential and provide a resilient way to deliver services to our communities. Digital has kept our services working over the Covid-19 period. The restrictions placed on us to ensure the safety of our communities and our workforce as we go forward are likely to be with us for some time. It is essential that we learn from the experience during the lockdown, build and this and do not lose any of the momentum we have gained during this period.

The following capital bids have been submitted and are included in the Capital Programme report which will be considered by Council on 30 September 2020:

**6.1.1 Mobile and Flexible Working** (*Capital programme bid £1m*)

This investment is required to deploy further laptop devices to all desk-based employees on a one-to-one basis, removing the need for desktop computers. It will also be used to ensure our systems can be adapted to work in a mobile and flexible way. In addition, we will ensure our front line employees have IT equipment, as appropriate, to undertake their role in 'real time' and to ensure such work is done as efficiently as possible. This shift to "anytime anywhere" working is essential to ensure business continuity and resilience. This project will also be a key enabler for savings to be realised through a reduction in our requirements for office space.

**6.1.2 Automation and Artificial Intelligence** (*Capital programme bid £1m*)

Ensuring that our back-office processes are as efficient as possible and designed with our customers is key to realising savings while continuing to improve service delivery. This investment in automated solutions will reduce the time that employees spend performing manual repetitive tasks, simplify our workflow, eliminate data entry errors, and allow employees to focus on high value tasks. The investment will also enable us to improve the on-line service and response that customers receive.

**6.1.3 Connectivity: Digital Communities** (*Future Capital programme bid £13m*)

As outlined at paragraphs 4.5 – 4.10 above, ensuring that we have inclusive digital connectivity for our communities is essential to our recovery planning and future service delivery. It ensures that communities across the Falkirk area get the same level of access to our online services. It also helps us to focus those face-to-face services that we deliver, on the most vulnerable in our communities.

6.1.4 Investment will also ensure that we have superfast full connectivity to key council buildings such as schools and care homes. This is also required to ensure that our connected digital services such as CCTV, alarms, and smart sensors are as robust, resilient, and as efficient as possible. Efficiency savings will be realised through consolidation of existing contracts for these disparate systems. As other projects develop, it is likely that further capital bids may be submitted to ensure the full benefits of digital across Falkirk are provided to our communities.

## **Legal**

6.2 No legal implications arise from the report recommendations.

## **Risk**

6.3 The financial recovery of the council from the present crisis is highly dependent on realising the efficiency and improved service delivery that are outlined in our Digital Falkirk ambitions. Failure to digitally transform will jeopardise the necessary financial savings that are required to be achieved.

## **Equalities**

- 6.4 An increasing proportion of non-internet users are over the age of 65 years. This means that older people are at a higher risk of digital exclusion. The ambitions set out in the plan to provide digital skills training and increase access to connectivity can help to tackle this inequality.
- 6.5 Those on lower incomes may be less likely to have access to broadband. Our Digital Place priority sets out how we plan to expand direct provision of digital services at Council buildings, provide more town centre Wi-Fi and seek to provide connectivity at home for those on low incomes. Our Connected Falkirk project will also play a key role by providing learning devices and connectivity to families.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 6.6 A key priority of the Digital Falkirk strategic plan is sustainable green technology. The plan reaffirms our commitment to sustainable technology, to reduce energy use, carbon emissions and the amount of waste generated. The plan sets out the specific detail of our green ambitions. In particular, the facilitation of remote working will continue to reduce the environmental impact of transport and carbon emissions. The associated reduction in our property estate will also result in a reduction of carbon emissions associated with heating and maintaining those buildings. This positive environmental impact will only be achieved if commitment is given at all levels to realising the ambitions set out in the plan.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 Our drive to become an ambitious Digital Council has been accelerated and recalibrated by the Covid-19 crisis. Achieving the digital ambitions has never been more important for tackling poverty and inequality, improving our environmental sustainability and enabling our economic recovery. A commitment to achieving these ambitions is required to ensure that we continue to successfully transform and adapt in these challenging times.

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Director of Corporate and Housing Services

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**List of Background Papers:**

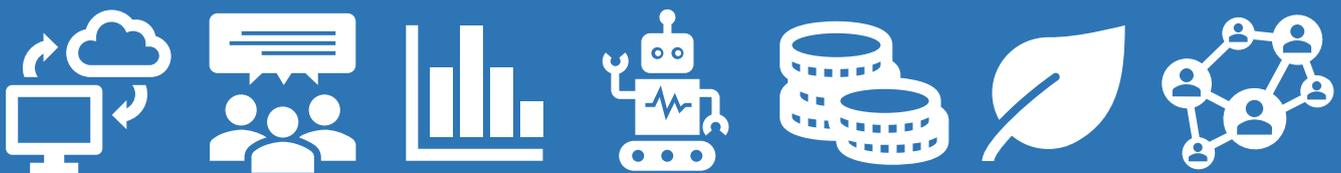
[Digital Strategy – Principles and Resources, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2019](#)

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973: None



# Digital Falkirk

2020 - 2025



## Introduction

In May 2019, our first digital strategy was approved. It laid down the digital ambition of the Council and highlighted digital transformation would only happen if we had the collective vision, culture and commitment to see it through. Little did we realise COVID-19 would fast-track our thinking. Now, as we start to look to the future, our follow-up strategy takes into account what we have learnt during the crisis and lays down how we can digitally enhance services to better meet the needs of our communities in a post-pandemic world.

## Digital Falkirk

One thing is certain, COVID-19 has cemented the importance of digital tools. During lockdown many of our services were only able to support communities because they were available online, and a significant proportion of our employees were only able to work because they've been digitally enabled to.

Our drive to be an ambitious digital council was accelerated by the pandemic. We cannot afford to lose the momentum we've built up, nor can we look back, because our digital transformation is no longer an option but a necessity.

Demand for flexible, responsive and accessible digital services is only going to increase as the long-term effects of COVID-19 begin to be felt. That is why the innovative thinking, collaborative working and quick decision-making that helped us through lockdown need to continue as we look to radically redesign how we operate and deliver services moving forward.

By using technology to improve our offering, engage more effectively with our communities, and reduce operational costs at a time when our budgets are under severe pressure, Digital Falkirk highlights how we can successfully transform as we step into an uncertain future.

## Our Digital Priorities

Our digital ambitions focus on six priority areas:

1. Digital Leadership & Skills
2. Digital Health & Care
3. Digital Learning & Teaching
4. Digital Place
5. Digital Council
6. Digital Foundations

Digitally enhancing these priority areas will help:

- Citizens to easily access information and services, engage with the Council, and do things for themselves at a time most convenient to them.
- Us become more efficient, responsive and consistent.
- Savings be realised through more efficient processes, moving face-to-face and phone interactions online.
- Review and streamline bureaucratic processes that underpin services.
- Services be designed around citizens, based on evidence and data.
- Our workforce work mobile and flexibly - and we will have fewer buildings.
- Improve access to our data which will empower our communities.

# 1. Digital Leadership and Skills



To truly become a digital council, we need to use data and collaborative tools to make decisions quickly. We must also ensure our leaders and the wider workforce have the skills needed to make that happen.

To do that, we will help leaders and employees develop new skillsets and create new roles across the organisation that are digitally focused. We will also ensure new ways of working take root by changing our culture.

Work is already underway to realise these ambitions, with lockdown highlighting the benefits working in a different way can bring to many employees. But we need everyone to be onboard, and our network of digital champions has a significant role to play in this.

Using their enthusiasm and motivation to help others, our digital champions will share their expertise and help embed digital skills – and we aim to develop and expand this network to reach all areas of the Council.

Our digital champions will also pilot new council systems and provide informal help, support and encouragement to colleagues, as well as share best practice.

Our elected members and senior leaders will continue to embrace digital democracy and digital interactions, increasing transparency and complimenting traditional communication channels.

## Projects supporting Digital Leadership and Skills

*Anytime Anywhere, Delivering Modern and Digital Services*

### Ambitions

- We will find new ways to deliver services to our communities and address the issues that are important to them - digital will help us achieve this
- Our people, citizens, employees and leaders will have the skills to embrace and drive a digital culture
- Our council will have the capacity and capability to deliver digital transformation
- Elected members will champion our ambitions and embrace digital opportunities e.g. webcasting committee meetings and using online surgeries
- Support for our digital ambitions will be embedded in our Services, which will understand and use data to drive service redesign and improvement
- We will develop a flexible skills programme for our employees to meet our emerging needs

## 2. Digital Health and Care



Making better use of technology to support the delivery of health and social care services is a strategic priority of Falkirk Council and the Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership.

Service transformation and digital technology has the potential to reshape and improve services, support person centred care and improve outcomes.

Technology Enabled Care and Telehealth are important areas of development. These incorporate the range of equipment, devices and infrastructure used to enhance service provision. This includes mobile devices to enable people to access clinical and non-clinical support remotely.

Emerging technologies such as virtual assistants can offer day-to-day help for people in their homes. These can provide help such as reminders to take medication and automation of heating and lighting. There are also a range of specialist devices such as GPS trackers, movement sensors, sleep trackers and alarms that can alert caregivers to anything out of the ordinary. These can help people to remain at home safely and live independent lives.

### Projects supporting Digital Health and Care

*Analogue to Digital, Rock Solid Technology (SWIS Replacement)*

### Ambitions

- We will migrate 100% of our telecare service users to digital technology in advance of the switch-off of the analogue network, providing a digital telecare service that helps people to live independent lives
- We will implement a fully integrated social care management system
- We will expand our use of technology in Care at Home to automate monitoring, scheduling and financial management
- We will use digital tools to enable people to engage with health and care professionals such as video calls and conferencing for consultations and assessments

## 3. Digital Learning and Teaching



We are committed to enhancing learning and teaching using digital technology, in line with the national strategy for Scotland.

Our ambitious [Connected Falkirk](#) programme will transform teaching and learning for the benefit of all teachers, children and young people. Learning experiences will be redefined to use the power of technology to reach every learner, with greater engagement and better outcomes.

We have an urgency to ensure that all our young people are equipped with a level of general and specialist digital skills that they will need to thrive in an increasingly digital world. Deeper learning experiences will be enabled by using digital tools to help young people capture, analyse, draft, review, collaborate, create and reflect on their work. We will nurture our young people's ability and confidence to excel both online and offline.

We are also developing new ways for parents and carers to engage with schools using digital technology, ensuring easy access to things important to them and their child's learning experience.

### Projects supporting Digital Learning & Teaching

*Succeed Today, Excel Tomorrow (Connected Falkirk)*

### Ambitions

- We will provide personal mobile learning devices to pupils to support learning
- We will continue to develop digital channels to engage with parents and carers to implement online parental feedback at every school
- We will use appropriate digital tools to support pupils with Additional Support Needs and English as an Additional Language
- We will improve digital connectivity to schools including robust Wi-Fi at every school
- We will ensure schools have the right digital technology including audio visual equipment to help them deliver high quality learning and teaching
- Support digital inclusion by seeking to improve the percentage of families in the Falkirk area with access to reliable connectivity

## 4. Digital Place



Digital technology plays a key role in helping us become a sustainable, smarter, greener, and more resilient and inclusive place - 'a dynamic and distinctive

area at the heart of Central Scotland'. Our Investment Zone and Enabled Communities initiatives will deliver transformational change and inclusive growth, creating great places to live, learn and work. They will also leverage emerging technologies, such as carbon capture, to meet the challenges of the future.

We will make our placed-based data open and accessible to encourage civic innovation by allowing communities and other organisations to use our data for the development of smart solutions.

We will explore the possibility of building a public service network to enhance our area including public space Wi-Fi, smart sensors and digital CCTV. We are investing in a central digital alarms hub to make the most of new technology to improve resilience and public safety.

Ensuring digital inclusion for all is a key priority. To do this we will expand our provision of free high-speed connectivity and digital support at public buildings, schools, care homes and other locations.

### Projects supporting Digital Place

*Investing for Inclusive Growth, CCTV, Closer to Communities, Digital Communities*

### Ambitions

- Widen access to digital services and tackle digital exclusion
- Implement a digital hub for community alarms, CCTV and to expand the co-ordination of services
- Make more data available to our communities
- Explore smart sensors such as smart pavements, smart parking, smart benches, digital signage, intelligent street lighting and interactive experiences
- Establish Centres for Excellence and Innovation through our Investment Zone initiative that will operate as 'shared knowledge' resources supporting research and development, incubators, 'proof of concept' and commercialisation of new technology
- Encourage digital engagement and participation to help bring communities closer to decision making, including online participatory budgeting

# 5. Digital Council



## Online Services

We must have a consistent approach to service design and ensure the services we provide meet the needs of our citizens. To do this we must radically rethink our services, moving away from a traditional model based on buildings.

[My Falkirk](#) already provides online access to over 80 council services, fully integrated into back office systems. We will continue to build and develop the platform until 100% of services that can be delivered online are.

Our online services give our customers a more cohesive engagement experience, provide us with the data we need to make better and more informed decisions, and improve the speed and quality of services. Digital services are also a fundamental part of our Advice Hub model, allowing us to focus our face-to-face services where they add most value.

## Digital Workplace - Anytime Anywhere



Our Anytime Anywhere project aims to change the culture of the Council and ensure employees have the skills, technology and space to work in flexible, smart and efficient ways. We will provide the right tools and equipment to support and empower our employees to reach their full potential.

Our employees will work seamlessly across different locations at times that suit them and the customer. Flexible working from any location, including working from home, is now the default for all desk-based tasks.

Our internal processes will be digital by default - this will be enabled by underlying technologies such as Falkirk Cloud and Microsoft 365. Our flexible digital workplace will enable a change in culture to focus on outputs rather than micro-management of presence.

### Projects supporting Digital Council

*Anytime Anywhere, Delivering Modern and Digital Services, Next Generation Contact Centre, Digital Communities*

## Ambitions

- We will identify and remove barriers that prevent people from using our digital services, and establish digital as our primary service delivery channel
- We will support digital inclusion by providing digital support for those who need it
- We will take a consistent approach to redesigning services by using the Scottish approach to service design and the national Service Design Standards
- We will use our analytics platform that provides real-time reporting of uptake and usage of digital services to inform service delivery and service transformation.

## Ambitions

- We will complete the rollout of flexible working to all employees – enabling Anytime Anywhere working for 100% of our desk-based workforce
- We will review our internal processes to automate where possible
- We will eliminate paper from all internal processes, improving efficiency, reducing cost and supporting our climate change commitments
- We will introduce technology to help us manage our data, information and records more consistently and effectively

# 6. Digital Foundations

## Cloud

**We will use cloud services when appropriate to enhance our network capabilities**



The cloud will allow us to seamlessly scale up, or down our computing needs in a secure way, gaining flexibility

while retaining the option to manage business-critical systems and data in our data centre, where appropriate.

Using the cloud in some situations is more cost effective and provides us the opportunity to scale computing resources to business demands and needs.

### Ambitions

- Taking in to account the various advantages of public and private cloud, we will determine the best configuration and location for each application, cutting costs by matching the task with the resource best suited to it
- When migrating our core applications to the cloud we will ensure that new applications can integrate with the rest of our IT architecture
- Modern workflows will be designed and implemented to reduce duplication of effort as we rationalise our application data

## Cyber Security

***Ensuring that the Council infrastructure is secure and resilient***



Our robust approach to Cyber Security ensures continuity of our services is maintained to protect our network and the data we hold in our systems.

The cyber security challenges we face are increasing and ever changing.

The introduction of an information risk management framework will help to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for scrutiny of cyber security risk.

### Ambitions

- Ensure that vendors meet or exceed the security requirements mandated by the National Cyber Security Centre and can provide us with evidence of their compliance
- Achieve the enhanced Cyber Essentials Plus security accreditation
- Review and ensure we have a single device management system that will allow us to better manage all our devices
- Implement actions to respond to Scottish Government's Public Sector Action Plan Cyber Resilience Framework

## End User Computing



**Seamless access to council applications from any device**

The Council has invested in mobile and flexible technology. This has allowed officers to access their desktops, tablets or laptops remotely to enable Anytime Anywhere working.

We will develop sustainable solutions that enable council employees to access their systems seamlessly, quickly and securely from multiple devices, including provision for 'bring your own device'. This will be a key enabler for rationalising our property portfolio as working from home becomes the default for our desk-based employees and "home to work" becomes the default for our front-line employees.

### Ambitions

- We will deploy laptop devices to all office workers on a one-to-one basis, removing the need for desktops and thin-client-desktops
- We will review our approach to end user computing - this will take into account advances in cloud services such as Microsoft 365

## Collaboration and Unified Communications



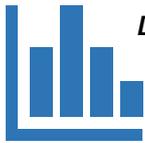
***Integrated forms of communication to support the work we do***

Our investment in Microsoft 365 will allow us to transform the way we collaborate and communicate. Using these applications will allow us to increase productivity by making all conversations, chats, meetings, shared files and tasks available through a single interface. This will help us develop a more open, transparent and collaborative culture.

### Ambitions

- We will ensure that we consolidate our communication channels so that they are integrated and unified in a single software platform and available from multiple devices
- Our integrated platform will include VOIP telephony (desk phones), mobile telephony, voicemail, instant messaging, email, calendar, file collaboration, and video calling/conferencing

## Data Analytics



*Developing a cross council single solution for our data and information*

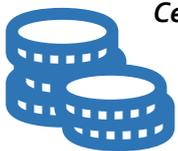
We will procure and implement a standardised, data analysis solution across the Council. New skills will be developed to unlock service data and business intelligence. The solution will allow self-serve reporting, giving our disparate services the ability to define measures of success relevant to them. Hundreds of different data sources will be brought together in a meaningful way through visual and real time dashboards and reports.

The solution will allow us to be more transparent and open, enabling community empowerment and help us identify opportunities for early intervention and prevention.

## Ambitions

- We will develop a data warehouse to pull together service and customer data from different sources
- We will procure and implement a Business Intelligence platform to enable meaningful data analysis across the council
- We will explore opportunities to proactively publish open datasets and to use this to empower communities
- We will investigate opportunities for commercialisation of our service data

## One Council procurement for IT



*Centralised IT budgets will ensure that all technology procurement supports the principles of the Digital Strategy*

We plan to centralise all technology spend across the Council to ensure we have a joined-up approach and benefit from economies of scale. We will consolidate our systems around a smaller number of core platforms. Integration to our systems will be a key consideration for all software procurement where required.

We will continue to procure software systems rather than develop bespoke solutions in-house. In the very limited circumstances where we cannot, our first preference will be to develop these in our existing core platforms such as Microsoft 365 and My Falkirk.

## Ambitions

- We will centralise all technology spend through single budgets for both revenue and capital spending
- We will maximise the use of our core platforms such as Microsoft 365 and MyFalkirk
- We will review our systems architecture and procure systems which have cross council benefits and are not unique to one service area unless there is a specialist need for service delivery.



## Automation

*Improving services through process automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning*

As we continue to design our internal processes to be as efficient and simple as possible, we will explore the possibilities of using automation and artificial intelligence (AI). These technologies can assist in reducing the time employees spend performing manual repetitive tasks. This can help to simplify our workflow, eliminate data entry errors, and allow employees to focus on high value tasks.

We will also explore the possibility of using automation when providing direct services to customers. This may include the use of chat bots and virtual assistants to not only provide a speedy response to customers, but allow them to interact with the Council across a range of platforms including social media. This will also help improve service delivery for our customers, making processes less bureaucratic.

### Ambitions

- Implement robotic process automation for back office processes where appropriate
- Implement an ambitious plan for the introduction of AI technology across our customer service interactions



## Sustainability – Green Technology

*Our commitment to sustainable technology*

The Council is committed to sustainable technology using it to reduce energy use, carbon emissions and the amount of waste generated. We implement virtualisation of servers where possible to promote better value, save energy and reduce heat output.

Hardware is disposed of responsibly and recycled where possible. Mobile and flexible working and service delivery reduces the environmental impact of transport and the Council's property estate through reduction and improvement of buildings.

### Ambitions

- Ensure that greater significance is placed on choosing energy saving devices when picking new equipment
- Choose cloud-based solutions where appropriate and when they demonstrate best practice in sustainability to increase reliability and resilience of digital resources
- Choose products that are designed to be easily repaired and set minimum requirements for product longevity
- Facilitate, support and promote mobile and flexible working to reduce our carbon footprint
- Promote electronic records keeping to minimise unnecessary printing
- Investigate the potential to use green labelled data centres



## Digital Communities

*Ensuring our communities are digitally connected*

Inclusive connectivity is at the heart of our Digital Falkirk plan. Access to the internet has never been more important for staying connected to friends, family, learning, work and accessing vital council services. That is why we will ensure that no one is left behind or digitally excluded.

We will be ambitious in seeking investment in our underlying infrastructure to ensure availability of ultrafast broadband, including in “hard to reach” rural areas. For those who are vulnerable and financially precluded from getting online, we will explore means of direct provision of connectivity.

Working with our community partners, we will provide digital skills support and training to those who need help in accessing digital services.

By taking these measures we can ensure that digital connectivity and digital services are inclusive and available to all in the Falkirk Council area.

### Projects supporting Rock Solid Technology

*Rock Solid Technology, Digital Communities, Automation, Integrated Resource Management System*

## Ambitions

- Ensure that all homes and businesses in the Falkirk Council area have access to ultrafast broadband
- Maximise opportunities for consolidation and improvement of our corporate network to ensure that we have robust and resilient connectivity that meets our needs
- Provide digital skills support to communities where it is needed
- Identify and pursue sources of funding for direct provision of connectivity to those who otherwise may be financially excluded
- Ensure our services are accessible online and that support is available to those who require it