

# Digital by design? Lessons from our digital strategy review across councils in Wales

August 2024



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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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# Introduction

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## **Designing digital transformation presents massive opportunities, but also significant value for money risks**

- 1 Councils deliver hundreds of different services to over three million people living across Wales. Within this wide array of services and functions, there are a plethora of digital opportunities, from online access to services, to supporting independent living, to automating back-office processes. Digital solutions offer the potential to enhance citizens' experience of services and increase efficiency.
- 2 Importantly, digital has come to mean more than just the application of technology. It conveys a broader emphasis on progress and transformation. Digital is likely to play a pivotal role in councils' change programmes, as they seek to exploit its possibilities and deliver modern public services that are data-driven and meet the needs and expectations of their citizens.
- 3 The prevailing financial and demand pressures mean that councils need to look for new ways of delivering more for less. It is also possible that, coming out of the pandemic, citizens' expectations of how and where they receive services have changed. Technology continues to change, influencing expectations and creating new opportunities. We therefore anticipate an acceleration in councils' application of digital technologies in coming years.
- 4 This presents opportunities, but also significant value for money risks. While digital solutions can increase the cost-effectiveness of services and functions, new technology can often require significant up-front investment. In Wales, the Auditor General has already highlighted that we are not always seeing clear evidence that significant investment in new systems is reaping the intended rewards across public services<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Auditor General for Wales [From firefighting to future-proofing – the challenge for Welsh public services, 2024](#)

- 5 It will be important for councils to define what they want to achieve over the long term, to guide investment decisions. It will also be important for them to respond to emerging risks, changes in demand and advancements in technology. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principle provides a framework to help them do this<sup>2</sup>.
- 6 If they get it right, digital is also a means of aiding progress towards their well-being objectives and enhancing working practices. It could accelerate progress towards carbon reduction targets or promote regeneration and economic growth. It is also central to hybrid working, with its consequent impacts on staff well-being, recruitment and retention. Digital technology has the potential to enhance access to services for certain groups and improve outcomes. At the same time, there are risks that changes exclude some, notably older people, who are more likely to suffer the negative consequences of poor quality or non-existent offline alternatives<sup>3</sup>. This underlines the importance of involving a diversity of citizens in development and design processes.
- 7 Putting value for money and the sustainable development principle at the heart of their work on digital will help councils deliver the most value, both now and in the future. It will be important for them to put these considerations at the forefront of their planning and delivery as they move forward with digital transformation.

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2 Section 5 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the meaning of the sustainable development principle and the associated ways of working, which can be summarised as long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and prevention. Further information can be found in [statutory guidance](#) on the Act.

3 Older People's Commissioner for Wales, [online article](#), 2024



# Our review

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- 8 In 2022-23, we undertook a digital strategy review. We looked at councils' strategic approaches to digital, undertaking individual reviews at each of the 22 principal councils across Wales. We focused on the extent to which their digital strategies:
- had been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle; and
  - would help to secure value for money in the use of councils' resources<sup>4</sup>.
- 9 The review built on our previous 'Springing Forward' reviews of assets and workforce, which we carried out between 2021 and 2023<sup>5</sup>.
- 10 We carried out this review for the following reasons:
- To provide assurance that councils' digital strategies will help to deliver their well-being objectives in a way that secures value for money in the use of resources.
  - To provide assurance that councils are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principal in the design of their digital strategies.
  - To explain how councils are using/planning to use digital technology to meet people's needs and deliver better outcomes.
  - To inspire and empower councils and other public sector bodies by identifying and sharing examples of notable practice/approaches where relevant.

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4 We carried out this review under duties contained within section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) to help enable the Auditor General to be satisfied (or not) that the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to help enable the Auditor General to assess the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.

5 The reports for each council are available on our website. You can also find our national summary report, Springing Forward: Lessons from our work on assets and workforce, on our website.

- 11 Our focus on councils' 'strategic approaches' to digital, was about more than just a strategy document. What we mean by a strategic approach to digital is set out below:

<b>A strategic approach to digital is...</b>	<b>A strategic approach to digital is not...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• supported by a clear vision, that is commonly understood within the council</li><li>• a whole-organisation approach, that recognises there are opportunities and implications across services and functions</li><li>• a key component of transformation, which is focused on improving outcomes and value for money</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a single document</li><li>• a strategy for the ICT department</li><li>• focused exclusively on internal practices and infrastructure</li></ul>

- 12 Our reviews did not assess the quality of digital projects outlined in strategies or the value for money that has been achieved by specific digital projects.
- 13 You can find links to the reports for individual councils in the map in **Appendix 1**.
- 14 The questions and audit criteria we used for this review are included in **Appendix 2**. The audit criteria essentially set out what good looks like and what we would expect to find.



# What we found

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**Overall, we found that, while many councils recognise the role digital can play in delivering their longer-term ambitions, weaknesses in their arrangements pose value for money risks**

**Councils were, to varying extents, thinking about how they could use digital to deliver better outcomes and achieve their strategic ambitions over the long term**

- 15 At the time of our review, half the councils in Wales had an up-to-date digital strategy. The remaining half were at varying stages of refreshing their digital strategies. However, councils were, to varying extents, thinking about how they could use digital to deliver better outcomes and achieve their strategic ambitions over the long term.
- 16 Most councils were planning over a medium-term horizon, at 3-5 years ahead. They generally considered this to be the most appropriate timeframe to balance the need to respond to rapidly changing technology while focusing on longer-term outcomes. We acknowledge this point. We have always been clear that there is more to long term planning than the date on a strategy. It was positive to see councils defining digital objectives that extended beyond the lifetime of the strategy and developing projects that lay the foundation for future development, such as investing in Artificial Intelligence, improving digital skills or infrastructure. This should help councils focus on their longer-term ambitions and avoid reliance on short-term interventions that may provide less value for money.
- 17 Linked to this, we found councils were often drawing on future trends and a broad evidence base, covering, for example, service demand and risk, digital skills and access to technology. However, many could go further. Importantly, the evidence bases often did not draw on direct citizen involvement. Not involving citizens in developing the strategic approach, or the delivery of it, risks designing approaches that do not meet their needs, and risks excluding different groups. The consequences are potentially worse outcomes and could lead to councils having to adapt and redesign services, with associated resource implications. Involving citizens means councils have a better chance of getting it right the first time.



- 18 Some councils were setting longer term digital ambitions, in the context of their wider strategic aims, and often aligning them to other key strategies and plans. The digital priorities we saw across councils covered a variety of themes, which can broadly be summarised as:
- Improving services and access to them
  - Supporting growth and regeneration
  - Supporting council functions and ways of working
  - Facilitating transformation
  - Better use of data
- 19 In some instances, there were opportunities for councils to strengthen and expand joint working across services and functions. Furthermore, while we found some councils were delivering with a broad range of partners, most could do more to identify the full range of external partners they need to work with to get the most out of their digital strategies. Where councils were working in partnership to deliver elements of their digital strategies, there was scope to improve how they monitor the effectiveness of partnership work and learn from it.

**However, we identified consistent weaknesses in resourcing and monitoring that pose value for money risks**

- 20 We found that digital strategies were not, in most cases, underpinned by resourcing information. Where financial information was set out, it was often incomplete, or the basis of the sums identified was unclear.
- 21 There were also weaknesses in arrangements to monitor the impact and value for money of digital projects. Most councils did not have a means of monitoring the achievement of benefits, including financial savings, for individual projects. Where this was in place, we found that it was not done consistently. Furthermore, councils did not generally have systematic arrangements to monitor and evaluate the impact of their digital strategies as a whole.
- 22 Councils' ability to ensure they were delivering value for money through their work on digital was further limited by the lack of systematic or consistent approaches to learning. There is value in councils seeking to learn from individual digital projects, as well as evaluating their overall approach. The learning will have broader applicability across their work and is likely to be particularly relevant to their change programmes. There are also further opportunities to share learning across councils.

**Fundamentally, councils did not appear to have an explicit focus on value for money or the sustainable development principle in developing their digital strategies**

- 23 Councils did not appear to be explicitly and intentionally applying the sustainable development principle to their work on digital. This is in common with the findings from our Springing Forward reviews on workforce planning and asset management. This suggests councils may be less likely to recognise the sustainable development principle is applicable to their corporate functions and enablers, than to their corporate planning and service delivery.
- 24 Similarly, they did not generally appear to have an explicit focus on value for money in developing their strategies. While, in most cases, elements of the necessary arrangements were in place, councils could do more to ensure they are geared towards securing value for money in the short, medium and longer term.

**We identified five key lessons relating to evidence, collaboration, resourcing, impact and learning**

- 25 We identified some common areas for improvement across the 22 councils. They help describe the position across Wales. They are lessons from our work that represent the main opportunities for councils to strengthen their application of the sustainable development principle and arrangements for securing value for money. However, these lessons will apply to each council differently and are not intended as an additional set of recommendations. We would encourage councils to consider them in the context of their own reports and note the practice examples included.



## 1. Councils could draw on a broader evidence base to inform a long term, citizen-centred approach to digital

### Where councils can improve

Considering changes in the external environment that might impact their digital strategies

Drawing on the citizen perspective

### What councils can do to improve

- Councils could give further consideration to future trends to help develop well-informed long-term visions and objectives. This could include drawing on local and national sources of data such as their own local Well-being Assessments and the Welsh Government's Future Trends Report. They could also use futures techniques, such as horizon scanning, to identify emerging risks and opportunities. For example, those relating to advancements in, or new applications of, technology.
- Councils will need to review their strategies periodically to ensure they take account of new intelligence. Annual reviews would provide the flexibility to be responsive. This could help give councils assurance that their medium-term strategies remain up-to-date.
- If councils are to ensure their digital strategies and projects are designed around citizens, they will need to understand what those citizens want and need.
- This could include drawing on existing insights, gathered through other consultation and engagement exercises.
- However, there is value in directly involving the diversity of people who are likely to be impacted. Not doing so could result in the wrong solutions, which could lead to or compound the digital exclusion of certain groups and reduce value for money.

## Practice examples

### **Powys Council: Drawing on a broad evidence base**

The Council has drawn on a broad range of information, both internally and externally, to develop a thorough understanding of the current situation to inform its digital strategy. This included:

- a range of policies, national strategies, and collaborative fora;
- a consideration of demographic trends, financial pressures, and service reviews;
- a review of the key digital issues in Powys, Wales, and the UK;
- the series of business cases which were developed after consultation with officers, a consideration of possible risks, and the identification of critical success factors to deliver the programme;
- a scoping exercise looking at which digital services were most accessed by residents;
- a process mapping exercise of demand issues in service areas to identify priorities for the Digital Team;
- consultation with Council employees, local businesses, and residents; and
- a Social Services workshop to understand issues faced and identify possible digital solutions.

The Council identifies the long-term factors that may impact its digital strategy. It used the Wellbeing Assessment to identify the future needs of the population. It has collaborated with the Public Services Board to produce a Wellbeing Information Bank which provides automated insight and intelligence from Council data sets, as well as the Office of National Statistics and StatsWales. The digital strategy business cases identify possible future trends and comment on possible future risks and opportunities. The Council's Digital Services Team works closely with services to understand their future direction, needs, and challenges. They hold regular away days to horizon scan and investigate how the Council could use digital technology and data to improve the customer experience.

### **Neath Port Talbot: Understanding the current position on digital**

The Council has a good understanding of its digital provision, which has shaped and informed its strategy. In 2021, the Council commissioned an external provider to conduct a wide-ranging review of its digital services. The review included extensive staff consultation to understand digital capacity and capability in the Council. The Council drew on extensive internal data and used external evidence sources to gain a broader view of the current situation in the County such as digital exclusion rates, the digital infrastructure and regional and national digital priorities.

**Newport Council: Seeking views through different channels**

The Council engaged its communities through a range of channels in developing its digital strategy. The Council carried out consultation through various methods of engagement. This included a survey through the local bus Wi-Fi, and public consultation surveys through its libraries and five community hubs. The Council also engaged groups such as Newport's Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST), its Diversity and Pride staff networks and members of Newport's Business Improvement District.

**Torfaen Council: Using customer personas to shape service design**

The Council is using 'Customer Personas', aligned to the digital strategy to help inform future service redesign work. These personas were developed using teams across the Council and were informed by internal and external data sources, including National Survey for Wales 2018-20, Residents Survey 2021, Census data and Call Torfaen 2021-22 data. The intention is that the personas would help analyse the typical customer journey and reflect the typical needs of customers who would access services, providing the Council with useful insight to help it understand the service user experience and perspective. In this way, they could be used to help shape future service design and delivery.



## 2. Councils could go further in working across internal boundaries and with external partners to deliver maximum value from their digital strategies

### Where councils can improve

### What councils can do to improve

Making the connections to the full range of related strategies and plans

- Councils could maximise the value of their digital strategies by working across services and functions. There are opportunities to make connections to a range of key strategies and plans, including but not limited to:
  - the corporate plan
  - annual budget and medium-term financial plan
  - asset management plan
  - change programme
  - smarter worker/ hybrid working strategy
  - workforce plan
  - carbon reduction plan
  - customer engagement plan/ participation strategy
  - cyber resilience plan
- Taking an integrated approach could help reduce duplication and identify opportunities to deliver multiple benefits.

Identifying and setting out who they can work with and how

- Councils will need to consider partners’ digital strategies if they are to identify the full range of opportunities for alignment and collaboration.
- These opportunities could include joint commissioning, procurement or other sharing or pooling of resources. Collaborative procurement can enable partners to pool their resources and leverage their collective buying power to achieve better deals from suppliers while reducing costs and improving value for money.
- Working in partnership can result in a sharing of knowledge, expertise and/or resources that can lead to better outcomes whilst also improving value for money. Undertaking stakeholder analysis would help give councils assurance that they have identified all appropriate opportunities to collaborate.
- Where councils have entered into partnerships, including with each other, they should ensure they routinely monitor their effectiveness and the extent to which they are helping achieve value for money.

## Practice examples

### **Neath Port Talbot: An integrated digital strategy**

There is close alignment between the Council's corporate plan which states its digital intentions in 5 years and in 20 years, the Strategic Change Programme, the Decarbonisation and Renewable Energy Strategy and 'The Future of Work – Strategic Workforce Plan'. The Council's vision for digital aligns with the Public Services Board. All mention the importance of digital in becoming a smart and connected Council and as a place. The Council established a Digital Transformation Board to drive the prioritisation of activities, ensuring alignment to corporate priorities. The Board consists of digital service officers and representatives from each directorate. Representation across Council services can reduce the risk of duplication of efforts, it can identify opportunities for different services to collaborate to deliver multiple benefits and ensure a common understanding of the Council's digital priorities.

The Council also works in partnership to deliver its digital strategic ambitions. For example, it identified a need to modernise how it manages and feeds data, research and analysis into its decision-making. To achieve this, the Council identified working with partners from academia, public health, statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and the community. This should help the Council access evidence to inform future policies and strategies.

### **Ceredigion Council: Aligning the digital strategy with partners**

In developing its next digital strategy, the Council is ensuring it aligns with its strategic objectives and the priorities of its partners. At the time of our review, the Council and the Local Health Board were consulting each other on their emerging digital ambitions with a view to ensuring integration between the two public bodies.



**Cardiff Council: Integration and collaboration on digital**

The Council's digital strategy is integrated with its key strategic priorities. For example, its hybrid working policy and One Planet Cardiff strategy, by assisting staff to adopt agile working to help reduce the carbon impact of its staff commute. It is also aligned with the Council's well-being objectives, with digital seen as key to supporting their delivery.

The Council is also working with a wide range of partners. For example, on agile workstations with emergency services, a joint housing allocation scheme with registered social landlords and several initiatives with higher education.

**Swansea: Delivering in partnership**

The Council is undertaking many different collaborative activities with other councils in the region, the private sector and the third sector to improve digital connectivity, digital infrastructure, digital inclusion, and digital skills. Its digital strategy refers to partnership working, for example, through the City Deal and with education partners. The Council also has a constructive collaboration with a Business Improvement District. This partnership recognises each organisation's skills and expertise and is working together to develop a product that it hopes will jointly benefit both businesses and the public.

The Council has also considered how the digital strategy can contribute to the national well-being goals and developed critical success factors for digital projects based on the sustainable development principle's five ways of working.



### 3. Councils could do more to identify the benefits that could be achieved and the resources required to help them turn ambition into reality

#### Where councils can improve

#### What councils can do to improve

Allocating the necessary resources to deliver the strategies

- It will be important for councils to understand the short- and longer- term financial implications of their digital strategies.
- To do this, they will need to identify the full costs of their proposed digital projects, as well as the intended benefits, including financial savings. This information is crucial to help determine which projects should be taken forward. Without it, councils will not be assured that they are selecting the most cost-effective projects that can deliver the best results. Neither will they be able to identify the resources required to deliver the strategy as a whole.
- While we do not necessarily expect digital strategies to include detailed cost information, we would expect to see such information set out in the business cases, service plans or other relevant documents that underpin the strategy.

Building the necessary capacity and capability to support their strategies

- Councils will need to understand digital capacity and capability across their organisations to support effective and timely delivery.
- Many councils face challenges with recruiting and retaining specialist staff, including ICT staff. ICT services would benefit from workforce plans to ensure they have the right people, with the right skills, at the right time.
- Councils will also need to identify the wider skills they need to support their digital strategies, such as business analysts and data analysts. Without taking such steps, councils will not be assured that they will be able to deliver their digital strategies.

## Practice examples

### **Powys Council: Resourcing the delivery of the digital strategy to deliver long-term benefits**

The Council invests in its strategic digital approach, balancing short-term and long-term investments, and allocating resources to deliver better outcomes in the long term. It views digital as pivotal for driving transformational improvement to all services. The Council's digital strategy is supported by a series of three business cases, which set out funding over three phases. The first two business cases allocated over £5.2 million for 2019 to 2025 and the third has secured £3.9 million for the next four years. In addition to the amounts of money the Council is investing, the business cases itemise the amounts of savings the Council aims to generate by implementing the strategy. The business cases also clearly set out the risks, as well as possible mitigating action. By allocating such funding to support the digital strategy and assessing resourcing risks, the Council is increasing the likelihood that it will deliver its intended outcomes.

### **Neath Port Talbot Council: Investing in digital capacity and capability**

The Council understands the enabling role of digital and its importance in supporting the workforce to deliver more efficient and effective services. The Council completed a restructure of its former IT service and created a Digital Service and allocated £100k towards the restructure. The Digital Service, alongside its HR and Organisational Development service, is intended to support the workforce in improving digital capacity and capability as well as providing improved career development, progression and succession planning. This approach has the potential to provide the Council with additional digital support and stability in delivering its digital transformation.

### **Carmarthenshire Council: Investing to save**

The Council has allocated significant annual funds to support digital transformation. A key condition of receiving capital funding is the relevant service must commit to and budget for the ongoing revenue costs for a sustainable transformation. To secure funding, project proposals must outline the expected savings and benefits the project will deliver. A number of services have also funded dedicated digital staff posts to help them implement digital transformation. These services consider this as an invest-to save opportunity. They recognise the need to invest in a dedicated resource to facilitate digital transformation without competing with other services for a finite corporate resource.



#### 4. Councils need to make sure they can assess the impact of their digital strategies and individual projects

##### Where councils can improve

##### What councils can do to improve

Evaluating the impact and value for money of digital projects

- If they are to consistently evaluate impact and value for money, councils will need a methodology for projects teams to apply to their digital projects.
- This should include identifying the likely costs and intended benefits of digital projects up front. These benefits could be in the form of financial savings or improvements in services and outcomes, linked to councils' wider strategic objectives. Non-financial benefits could, for example, include the impact on different groups or carbon reduction.
- Having identified the intended benefits, it will be crucial for councils to monitor their realisation. They will need to ensure this is done routinely.

Evaluating the impact and value for money of digital strategies

- Councils will need measures that enable them to understand the impact and value for money of their digital strategies.
- These measures could relate to savings targets or improvements in services and outcomes, linked to their wider strategic objectives. In some cases, these measures might need to reflect collaboration, via the impact on partners' or shared objectives.
- Having arrangements in place for individual projects (as described above) will help councils assess impact across the strategy as a whole.

Ensuring there is appropriate oversight and accountability for delivering strategic ambitions

- Elements of councils' work on digital will inevitably involve significant resources and associated risks. It is, therefore, important that councils put the right governance in place to:
  - Monitor progress of the project
  - Monitor the collective benefit of projects and progress towards the overall ambition.

## Practice examples

### **Swansea Council: Arrangements to monitor value for money of digital projects**

The Council set up a Digital Transformation Board to oversee the digital strategy and individual digital projects. The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation chairs the Digital Transformation Board. Each directorate is represented on the Board as well as officers from corporate functions such as HR, finance, and the digital team. The Digital Transformation Board will monitor progress and risks for all digital projects regardless of funding source. At the time of our fieldwork, the Council was developing a 'benefits' tracker to support this.

The Council has information at an individual digital project level to be able to determine progress and value for money in the future. Services that submit digital project ideas to the Digital Transformation Board need to demonstrate alignment with the sustainable development principle and Council's digital strategy, as well as:

- medium term financial plan saving (with amount and by when);
- identifying other funding opportunities;
- non cashable benefits; and
- whether the project directly improves customer service.

The Council has developed a robust scoring criteria to assess the merits of the individual proposed digital projects based on the above detail provided by services. By requesting that services stipulate the costs and benefits of individual projects when requesting financial support, the Council has the information at the outset to assess and monitor the costs and benefits when monitoring progress.



## 5. Councils could take a more systematic approach to learning, so they can adapt and improve their work on digital

### Where councils can improve

### What councils can do to improve

Learning from digital projects

- To make sure they take every opportunity to learn from experience, councils could undertake routine post-implementation reviews of their digital projects. Every digital project will be different, and there will be potential to draw out valuable learning from each to support future improvements. This could include learning lessons about the effectiveness of:
  - the application of the sustainable development principle, including:
    - collaboration – how the project has helped the council achieve better results and value for money, including sharing resources, improving resilience and avoiding duplication; and
    - involvement – the quality and effectiveness of its involvement activity.
  - arrangements for securing value for money.

Learning from the strategic approach to digital

- Similarly, undertaking periodic reviews of the effectiveness of their strategies, will help councils refine and improve their overall approach to digital. This could, for example, include reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements to support and deliver the strategy.
- Having the right arrangements in place for individual projects will help them do this.

Sharing their learning

- Councils should routinely share the learning from their work on digital to effectively support future digital strategies, other digital projects and wider transformation projects.
- We found there are further opportunities to share the learning with, as well as learn from, partners to support wider improvements across the public sector.

## Practice examples

### **Powys Council: A systematic approach to learning from work on digital**

The Council has a process in place for reviewing its digital strategy. The business cases for the digital strategy include a review of what the strategy has achieved so far and identify lessons learned. These reviews have seen the original digital strategy adapted, with some workstreams ending and a brand-new one starting.

The Council has reflected on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the delivery of its digital strategy. These lessons have been captured formally in the Council's business cases as well as with the PSB via recovery planning workshops. The Council has applied this learning to the future direction of its digital strategy, for example by identifying the need to be wary of digital exclusion. The Council records lessons learned through a range of official logs, such as business cases and project closure reports. The Council's Transformation Approach clearly states lessons learned must be captured and recorded in formal logs on all projects to help evaluate programmes. These logs enable the Council to identify areas of good practice and areas of opportunity to work upon.

The Council has shared key lessons learned with a range of partners using a variety of methods. For example, the Council presented a 'show and tell' event at the WLGA on its Information Excellence workstream. The Council maintains a log of shared learning which lists what it shared, with whom, and how. The Council's positive approach to sharing lessons learned provides opportunities for the Council to share good practice and to learn from others.

### **Carmarthenshire Council: Learning from COVID**

The Council has also formally reviewed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of its digital plan and has applied this learning to its future direction. This includes making use of the advances in the use of technology to widen access to services as well as automating back-office processes.



## Appendix 1: Council reports across Wales



## Appendix 2: Our audit questions and criteria

### Our main audit question was:

'In developing its digital strategy has the Council acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle and put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources?'

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
1. Is the Council's digital strategy informed by a good understanding of current and future trends?	<p>1.1 Is there is a thorough understanding of the 'as is' (i.e. current demand/ issues to be addressed) and the reasons why/ underlying causes?</p> <p>1.2 Is there a thorough understanding of the long-term factors that will impact and the challenges and opportunities that may result (e.g. risks and opportunities)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Council has drawn on a broad range of information from internal and external sources to develop a thorough understanding of the 'as is' and how it is likely to change. This includes information (including data) relating to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- service sustainability/ resilience and resourcing challenges.</li><li>- the needs of citizens and communities.</li><li>- the underlying causes of current demand/issues to be addressed.</li><li>- analysis of future trends and how they might impact, eg social, economic/political; environmental, cultural or technological. They might include known trends eg ageing population, depleting natural resources and particularly technological advances They might also include those with a higher level of uncertainty e.g. jobs and skills needed in the future.</li></ul></li><li>• The analysis of the 'as is' and how it is likely to change is well informed by involvement activity, as appropriate, that reflects recognised good practice (e.g. <a href="#">National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales</a>, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales advice and guidance).</li><li>• The Council uses its evidence base effectively to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Identify actions in its strategic approach to digital that are likely to be most effective and why, including how they could address the root causes of problems.</li><li>- Inform decisions around its use of digital technology that seek to balance the need to meet short- and longer-term objectives.</li></ul></li></ul>

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
2. Does the Council have a clear vision of what it wants to achieve through the use of digital technology?	2.1 Is the council planning over an appropriate timescale?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has considered what long term means in planning its approach to digital – i.e. how far ahead it can/should plan and why (at least 10 years with consideration of longer-term trends as appropriate)</li> <li>• The Council has considered how actions can deliver the best impact over that timeframe in terms of outcomes and most effective use of resources. This could include consideration of appropriate intervention points linked to the Commissioner’s definition of prevention. (click on the following link for details: Taking account of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the budget process – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales)</li> <li>• The Council has set out measures for its digital strategy that reflect short and long-term impacts and value for money, with milestones that reflect progress as appropriate</li> <li>• The Council has set out how its digital strategy will be resourced over the longer term as far as is practical (See also criteria relating to integration)</li> </ul>
	<p>2.2 Has the Council thought about the wider impacts its digital strategy could have, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how it could contribute to each of the seven national well-being goals?</li> <li>• how delivery will impact on the other things it is trying to achieve (i.e. its well-being objectives and wider priorities)?</li> <li>• how delivery will impact on other what other public bodies are trying to achieve (i.e. their well-being objectives)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has considered how its digital strategy can make a contribution across the well-being goals.</li> <li>• Staff developing the digital strategy understand what colleagues and partners do and how their work relates, and have sought to integrate their work with that of their colleagues from across the Council and with partner organisations</li> <li>• Integration is evident in the alignment of the digital strategy with other key corporate strategies and service plans. For example medium term financial plan, workforce plan, asset management strategies, well-being statement and carbon reduction plans.</li> <li>• The digital strategy is aligned with other strategic intents such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- customer experience,</li> <li>- management of demand/ reductions in demand failure and prevention</li> <li>- design and implementation of new service delivery models.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The council’s digital strategy aligns with the plans/strategies of local and national partners including the Welsh Government’s Digital Strategy for Wales <a href="#">Digital strategy   GOV.WALES</a> and well-being plans.</li> </ul>

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
3. Is the council working effectively with the right people and partners to design and deliver its digital strategy	2.3 Is there a wide and common understanding of what the council is trying to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors and senior officers responsible for implementing the digital strategy have a common and clear understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve and the intended impact on service delivery</li> <li>• The Council’s digital strategy is clearly communicated to staff and partners who may help deliver it</li> </ul>
	3.1 Has the Council identified who it needs to involve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has a good understanding of who will be directly and indirectly affected by its digital strategy and who it needs to involve.</li> <li>• The Council has effectively involved the full diversity of views in developing its digital strategy, including from non-traditional sources and from those it may have previously failed to reach.</li> </ul>
	3.2 Is the council effectively involving the full diversity of people affected by its digital strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has provided genuine opportunities for people to influence design and delivery of its digital strategy from an early stage, including representatives of groups who share protected characteristics.</li> <li>• The Council has used the results of involvement to shape the design and delivery of its digital strategy</li> </ul>
3.3 Is the Council collaborating effectively with the right partners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council is collaborating to ensure it delivers better outcomes and value for money through its digital strategy and has put appropriate arrangements in place to support this, for example for; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sharing or pooling expertise and resources</li> <li>- sharing information</li> <li>- ensuring effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability including consideration of value for money</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
<p>4. Has the council resourced delivery of its digital strategy so it can deliver long-term/ preventative benefits?</p>	<p>4.1 Does the Council understand long-term resource implications?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council has assessed the costs and benefits of using digital technology to invest in long-term, preventative approaches and the cost (both financial and in terms of outcomes) of not doing so.</li> <li>• The Council has thought about the resources it will need to deliver its digital strategy over the medium and longer term (whole life costs) and how it could manage risks/ meet those costs including for example planned ‘invest to save’ initiatives and managed reductions in technical debt.</li> <li>• The Council has calculated and set out any savings it intends to make through implementing its digital strategy</li> </ul>
	<p>4.2 Does the Council allocate resources to deliver better outcomes over the long-term?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action (inc. preventative action) that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and/or use of resources over the longer term is promoted and supported, even:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs; and</li> <li>- where the benefits are likely to be accrued by or attributed to another organisation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>5. Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress?</p>	<p>5.1 Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress towards, short, medium- and longer-term objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council monitors the costs and benefits of delivering its digital strategy from a value for money perspective.</li> <li>• The Council is measuring the wider contribution the digital strategy is making across its own/ partnership objectives.</li> <li>• Progress is measured against short, medium and long-term objectives.</li> </ul>

Level 2 questions	Level 3 questions	Criteria
6. Is the Council learning lessons from how it works?	6.1 Does the Council review the effectiveness of its digital strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of its digital strategy including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- effectiveness of its collaborative activity;</li> <li>- effectiveness of its involvement activity, including the impact of the strategy on service users including those who are digitally excluded;</li> <li>- the impact of the strategy on those who share protected characteristics; and</li> <li>- the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the digital strategy overall in helping the council to achieve its strategic objectives.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Council has reviewed lessons learned from its response to the pandemic and is applying this learning to its digital strategy</li> <li>• The Council shares and applies any lessons learned from the development and delivery of its digital strategy widely across the organisation, and with partners where relevant.</li> </ul>
	6.2 Does the Council share lessons learned from its approach to its digital strategy?	



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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.