Report to	Partnerships Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	12th September 2024
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Julie Matthews (Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities and Deputy Leader) / Markeus Woodworth (Interim Chief Digital Officer)
Head of Service	Helen Vaughan-Evans (Head of Corporate Support Performance, Digital and Assets)
Report author	Markeus Woodworth (Interim Chief Digital Officer)
Title	Update Report on Audit Wales "Digital Strategy Review"

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report relates to the Audit Wales report "Digital Strategy Review" which is based on fieldwork conducted during May to November 2023 and reported to us in February 2024. This report provides an update on the progress made against the recommendations contained within the Audit Wales report. A copy of the Audit Wales report is attached in Appendix 1. In addition to providing an update on the delivery of our existing Digital Strategy (Appendix 2) as we enter the final year of its life as it runs to the end of 2025.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To consider the progress made to date in addressing the four recommendations made by Audit Wales in its February 2024 report, the delivery of the existing Digital Strategy and considers the Council's future plans for the development of new Digital Strategy which will be live 2026 onwards.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. That the Committee considers the progress made against the four Audit Wales recommendations and note that this will help shape the approach taken to develop a new Digital Strategy for 2026 onwards.

3.2. That the Committee considers and comments on the progress made in the delivery of our existing Digital Strategy 2019 – 2025.

4. Report details

4.1. The Audit Wales review examined the Council's current Digital Strategy 2019 – 2025 (Appendix 2) along with conducting interviews with a sample of cabinet Members and senior officers and looked at the extent to which the Council's strategic approach to digital has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and that it will help to secure value for money in the use of the Council's resources.

4.2. The review found that:

- The Council has a clearly articulated strategy which is understood by officers and Members. The strategy informs the development of digital projects within service areas. The strategy also aligns with the Council's other strategic plans.
- The strategy was not informed by the views of residents or other data sources that could improve the Council's understanding of current and future issues that may impact on its strategic approach.
- Whilst the Council works with some partners to deliver its strategic approach to digital, it has not considered all potential opportunities for partnership working.
- The Council has not fully costed or identified all of the funding required to deliver its digital strategy.
- The Council does not consistently assess the impact or value for money of digital projects or the digital strategy as a whole.

4.3. The Audit report made four recommendations. A copy of the Council's original Management Response is included in Appendix 3 which was considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on the 6th March 2024.

4.4. Recommendation 1 relates to the evidence base used to devise our current Digital Strategy. These recommendations will be acted upon in the development of the new

Digital Strategy for the Council running from 2026 onwards. The focus of this will be 'Digital for the Council' and with this in mind our customers will primarily be internal service areas. To understand their needs and barriers, a survey or workshop will be conducted.

4.5. Recommendation 2 relates to partnership working. The Council have identified and are already active in relevant and positive partnership arrangements. The Council will continue to be open to any new partnership opportunities and actively consider this when developing the new Digital Strategy once the existing comes to an end in 2025.

4.6. Recommendation 3 relates to the costing and resourcing of the strategy and recommends that the Council should fully cost the activity needed to deliver it. High level costings will be provided in next strategy with these costings finessed further as part of the business case development on a project-by-project basis during the delivery phase of the next strategy term.

4.7. Recommendation 4 relates to arrangements for monitoring value for money and impact including having a framework to support this in its digital projects. Actions around updating the relevant parts of our project management approach to include more specific documentation requirements around these points have been completed which further detail provided in Appendix 3.

4.8. The scope of Local Government Digital Strategies vary across Wales. The Council's current strategy is predominately inward looking and covers seven key areas. An update on the delivery of the strategy against the seven key areas is provided in appendix 4. As outlined in section 4.4 the next strategy will be similar in its focus, i.e. 'Digital in the Council'.

4.9. Please note any work being undertaken with regard to 'Digital in the Community' is now the responsibility area of the Community Resilience Team under Housing and Communities Service. An update on the work of that team with regard to internet connectivity across the County was provided to Performance Scrutiny Committee on 18th April 2024.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. Having a strategy which sets out the strategic direction for Denbighshire County Council's ICT provision and concentrates further on the Digital aspirations of the Council contributes to the Council being a well-run, high performing Council by providing the technical infrastructure and direction for digital enabled change to continue to deliver well for our staff and residents. The current strategy has had a positive contribution to the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030 in so much that it has supported the shift towards agile working and staff being able to work and connect remotely without need for commuting and/or business travel.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 There are no cost implications associated with this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A Well-being impact assessment is not required as this report does not require a decision or proposal for change.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. The Audit Wales review report has been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee on the 6th March 2024. As part of undertaking the audit, various officers of the Council would have inputted into the audit and agreed the final report, recommendations and actions.

8.2. An update on the work of the Community Resilience Team with regard to internet connectivity across the County was provided to Performance Scrutiny Committee on 18th April 2024.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 A Chief Finance Officer statement is not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 There are no risks associated with the recommendations contained in point 3 above.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.