Slough Borough Council

Report To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	18 November 2024
Subject:	Digital, Data and Technology Update
Lead Member:	Mabu Shaik - IT, Customer Services, Revenue & Benefits, Procurement and Performance
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Martin Chalmers, Director of Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT)
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	Appendix A – Modernisation Programme Update Appendix B – Digital, Data and Technology Principles Appendix C – Digital Strategy – Implementation Appendix D - Progress Against Recommendations made in LGA Digital 360 Report Presented to Cabinet in May 2024

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report:

- sets out the progress made on the ICT Modernisation Programme agreed in March 2022;
- describes the strategic principles and approach that are being applied to the digital enablement of business transformation, on which Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) is working in close collaboration with the Strategy and Change team.

Recommendations:

1.2 Cabinet is recommended to:

- **note** the progress made on the ICT Modernisation Programme as set out in Appendix A, and the refocusing of work on digital strategy to be fully joined up with the development of the Target Operating Model (TOM);
- **approve** the Digital, Data and Technology Strategic Principles at Appendix B;
- **note** the high-level strategic action plan at Appendix C and that a further report will be brought back to Cabinet in March 2025 providing a further updated action plan aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and TOM routemap;

- **note** the progress made on the LGA Digital 360 Review recommendations, which were the subject of the update provided in May 2024, and the alignment between the forward plan and those recommendations.

Reason:

1.3 As indicated by the Commissioners' fifth update of 7 September 2024 and Commissioner comments on the Cabinet report in May 2024, it is imperative that progress is accelerated on strategic digitally enabled business transformation in recognition of the underpinning role that technology plays in sustaining and improving services. Any refreshed strategy must align with the Council's new operating model with sufficient revenue and capital implementation costs aligned with the MTFS. This report updates on progress in assuring this alignment. Firstly, it describes how work on the ICT Modernisation Programme is being focused on the completion of its most critical elements. Secondly, it describes how the strategic digital work to cover processes and people, working closely with those developing the TOM. This includes picking up on learning from issues with implementation of previous technological changes (such as the change management issues documented by Grant Thornton in their supplementary report to the audit of the 2018/19 accounts presented to the November 2023 Audit and Corporate Governance Committee).

Options considered

1.4 The "do nothing" option would be to continue the development of a digital strategy as a stream of work independent from the development of the TOM. This is not recommended as it would fail to address the need to ensure that all aspects – people, process and facilities as well as digital, data and technology – are addressed in a coherent manner in strategic planning. In turn this risks technology implementation failing, as has happened in the past (the technology change issues documented by Grant Thornton in their supplementary report to the audit of the 2018/19 accounts being an example).

1.5 The option set out in the report – of adopting the strategic principles set out in Appendix 2, which can then be applied in the taking forward of the delivery of the TOM, and with a further report on delivery and forward plan, fitting within the financial envelope of the MTFS, to be brought forward in March 2025 – addresses that need for strategic coherence, and is therefore recommended. The recommended approach is also in line with the recommendations of the LGA 360 review (Appendix D refers).

Commissioner Review

The Commissioners have reviewed the report and have no specific comments to add to the report.

2. Report

Background

2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 recognises the need to deliver change and improvement at pace. This set out a need for a new approach which was more resident focused, financially sustainable, enabling for residents and communities, strengthened partnerships and built trust and confidence in the Council. Digital, data

and technology are key enablers to delivering cost effective services and providing high quality data to inform future decisions.

2.2 The directions issued on the 1st of December 2021 to Slough under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 stated the need for "An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority's IT." The Modernisation Programme, approved in the Cabinet meeting of March 2022, was established to meet this need. The last update to Cabinet on the progress of that programme was in November 2023. This report provides an update on the progress made on that programme since that date and describes how the programme will be driven to completion by mid-2025/26.

2.3 The Commissioners' update report of 7 September 2024 notes that while, "some improvements to the infrastructure of IT have been delivered" – through the Modernisation Programme – "further work is needed to develop an appropriately resourced […] digital strategy that supports effective business operations and links to the Council's future operating model".

2.4 This critical linkage between digital strategy and wider business change – notably the definition of the TOM – is repeatedly asserted in the LGA Digital 360 Review, which was reported to Cabinet in May 2024. The Cabinet requested that a revised digital strategy be brought forward. This report responds to that request by setting out strategic principles for digitally enabled transformation, and a plan for translating those principles into reality through a combination of joint work on the design and delivery of the TOM, and enabling work to address fundamental capability gaps, particularly in respect of data.

2.5 This plan is currently in its launch stage – Stage 0 – which could not begin until the fundamental principles of the TOM had been established. It is intended that the outputs of this stage will be reported to Cabinet in March 2025, in tandem with the TOM routemap and following the MTFS, to demonstrate that strategic intent is being translated into concrete action that fits within the MTFS.

Modernisation Programme Update

2.6 A more detailed report on the progress of the Modernisation Programme is given at Appendix A. The programme was launched in March 2022 with the objective of remediating and modernising the Council's ICT service.

2.7 The programme's scope has expanded significantly since then. In December 2022, following its mobilisation stage, it was reported to Cabinet that the programme comprised 40 projects, which were to be delivered in two years. As of September 2024, the total size of the portfolio pipeline, as reported to the Recovery Board, had increased to 141 projects. 75 of these have been delivered. However, five projects from 2022 critical to security and stability still remain to be delivered.

2.8 Recognising the risk associated with the size of the remaining pipeline of projects, and in line with a recommendation of the LGA Digital 360 report, the need for a prioritisation review has been agreed by CLT. It is already clear that, in order to remain within the programme budget, it will be necessary to remove some projects from the pipeline. The following are being prioritised for delivery:

- the outstanding projects from the original programme scope agreed by Cabinet;

- projects critical to the security and continuing availability of the ICT service, in line with the original objective of the programme;

- with any remaining budget, the highest priority projects remaining in the pipeline. Prioritisation will be focused on savings enablement and will be agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).

2.9 The process of preparing that plan for agreement by CLT has already identified that some projects within the rescoped programme cannot complete until mid-2025/26. Because of the robustness of the replanning and prioritisation exercise that is being carried out, there is a high level of confidence that the programme will complete in that revised timeframe. It is important that it does so because of the need to shift focus – as emphasised in the Commissioners' fifth report – from the internally focused infrastructure improvements that characterise the Modernisation Programme, to strategic, digitally-enabled business transformation, the topic to which this report now turns.

Digital Strategy - Introduction

2.10 This report does not present a complete and self-contained "digital transformation strategy". This is because digital is just one aspect – albeit a critical one – of wider business transformation. Indeed, for this reason, the report refers to "digitally enabled transformation". Furthermore, the future vision for DDaT for the Council cannot be decoupled from the Council's TOM, which is still in development. The focus of the DDaT team is on working with colleagues across the council to ensure that the Target Operating Model makes optimal use of digital.

2.11 The report does, however, set out:

- for approval, the strategic principles that are being applied to digitally-enabled transformation, which frame both what that transformation will deliver and how it will be delivered;

- to be noted, the high-level plan to turn those principles into reality, involving close collaboration with the TOM design and delivery workstreams, and the putting in place of core enabling capabilities.

Digital Strategy – Digital, Data and Technology Strategic Principles

2.12 Cabinet is recommended to approve the following five Digital, Data and Technology Strategic Principles:

- Digitally enabled services are user-centred, holistic and joined up.

- Sound data informs decisions.

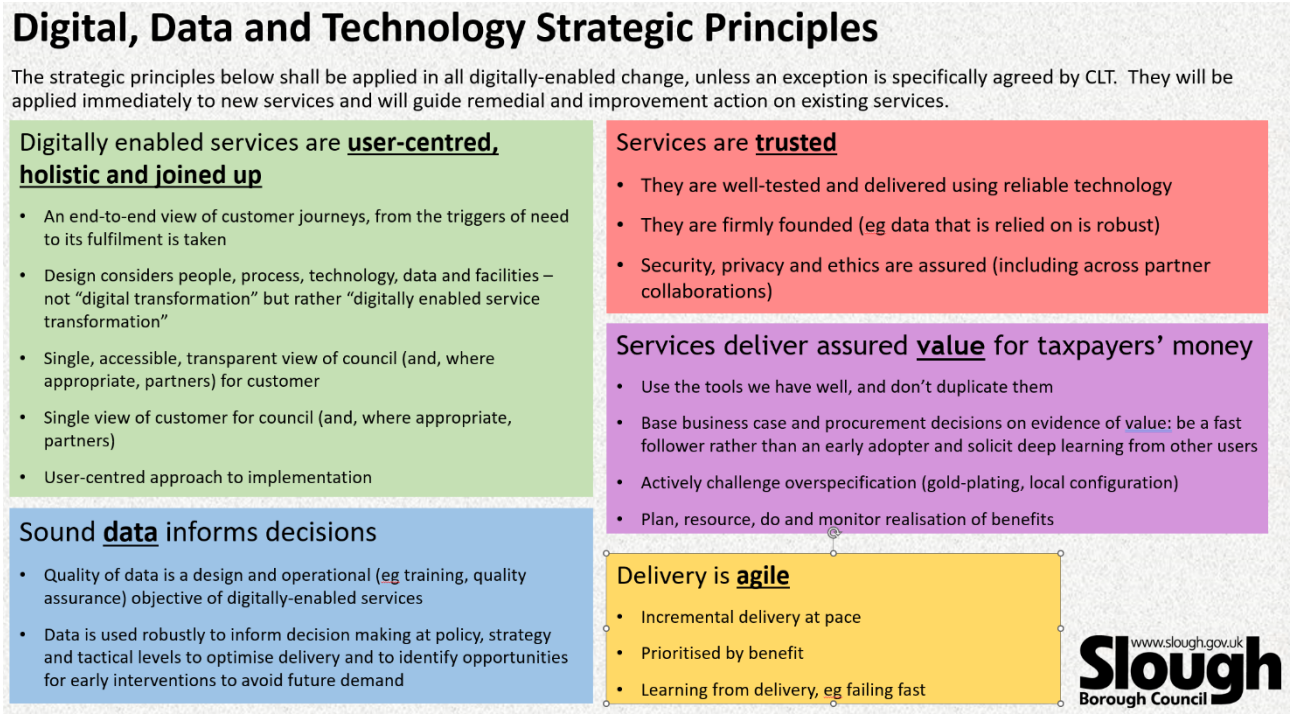
- Services are trusted.

- Services deliver assured value for taxpayers' money.

- Delivery is agile.

2.13 The detail underlying these principles is summarised in figure 1 and expanded on in full in Appendix B.

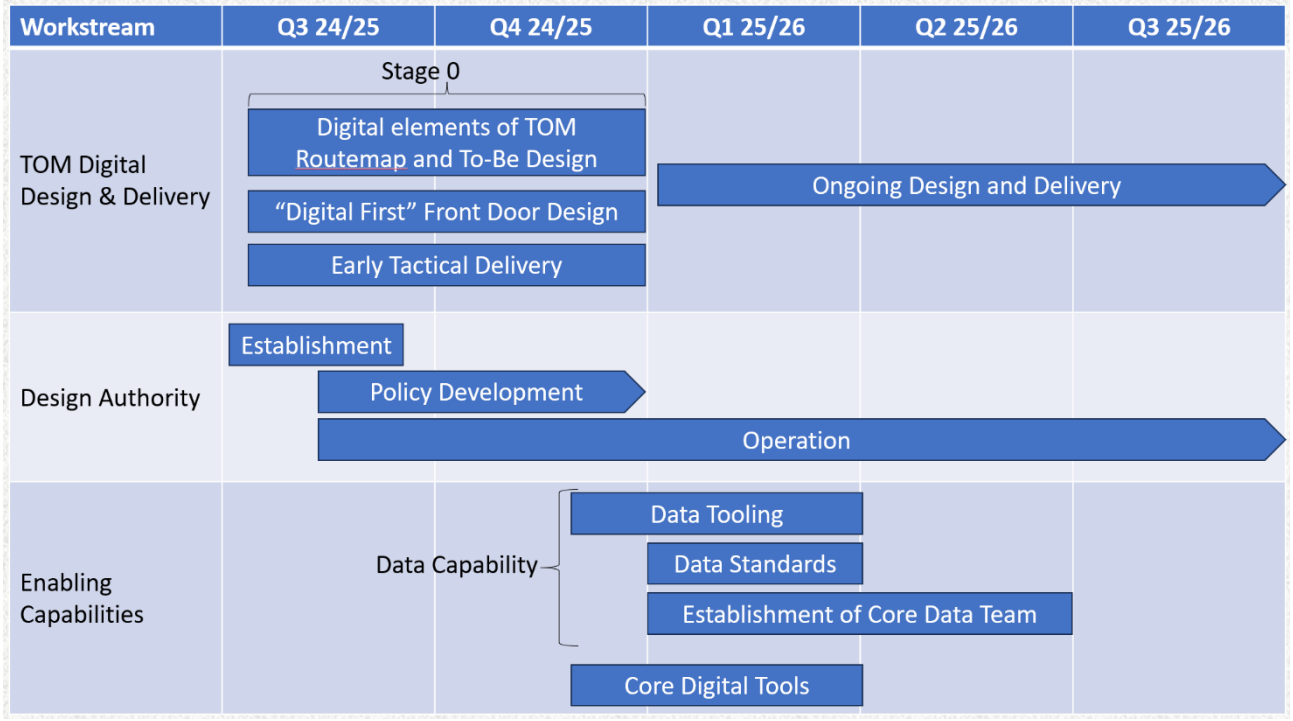
Figure 1 – Strategic Principles



Digital Strategy – Implementation

2.14 Figure 2 provides a high-level overview and timeline of the work in train to turn the strategic principles above into reality. These workstreams are summarised below, with further description provided at Appendix C.

Figure 2 – Strategy Implementation – Current High-level Plan



Workstream 1 – TOM Digital Design and Delivery

2.15 The **TOM Digital Design & Delivery** workstream covers work in collaboration with the TOM team to ensure that digital opportunities are being fully incorporated into the

design and implementation of the TOM. The workstream is also delivering immediate tactical digital improvements, addressing issues identified by the recent internal deep-dive ("Project Room") work undertaken across the organisation on priority areas including Temporary Accommodation.

2.16 The **Design Authority** workstream covers joint work with other services on the establishment of a Design Authority mechanism which will confirm that service strategically aligned, fully thought through and coherent, affordable and achievable. This forum will confirm that service designs are adhering to the strategic principles set out at Appendix A. This workstream involves setting up the processes for DDaT engagement in the Design Authority and also putting in place appropriate policies.

2.17 While much of the work required to realise the strategic benefits of digital will be defined through the collaborative design work set out above, there are obvious gaps in digital capabilities where work can be planned now. These are the subject of the **Enabling Capabilities** workstream. Proposals for this are being brought forward as part of the MTFS. A follow-up digital report is to be brought forward, also in March 2025, setting out an action plan for the delivery of digitally enabled transformation, aligned with the TOM routemap as defined at that point and with the MTFS.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 The anticipated efficiencies and savings from completing the ICT Modernisation Programme and implementing the Digital Strategy are expected to align with the Council's broader budget objectives by enhancing service efficiency, reducing long-term operational costs, and improving data-driven decision-making. These efficiencies should contribute to achieving a sustainable financial position over the medium to long term, supporting Council priorities.

3.1.2 There are dependencies on the MTFS for funding approval for future phases, and this poses a risk if the required budget is not secured. Additionally, cost projections for ongoing digital and ICT enhancements may be subject to increases due to inflation, resource shortages, or scope changes. To mitigate these risks, a structured review of funding needs is planned, with contingency measures and phased prioritisation of critical projects to manage any potential funding shortfalls.

3.1.3 In respect of the Modernisation Programme, £4.600m funding was approved in March 2022. As at the beginning of 2024/25, £0.998m remained unspent and was carried forward from 2023/24. It is forecast that the full amount will be spent. A proportion of this will need to be carried over to 2025/26, but the programme will complete in the middle of that year.

3.1.4 In respect of the **Digital Strategy**, CLT has agreed the release of £0.200m from corporate contingency to fund initial work on Stage 0. The MTFS will include budget for the remaining aspects of the plan set out above. Confirmation of that work is therefore subject to the agreement of that budget.

3.1.5 Funding for future aspects of the plan is the subject of business cases which are being reviewed as part of the MTFS. The results of this process will inform the updated action plan which will be brought back to Cabinet in March 2025, with clear funding for its delivery in place.

3.1.6 For information, a summary of the financial implications of the draft MTFS proposals (which are currently in internal review) relating to Digital, Data and Technology is presented in the table below. They proposals divide between those relating to Digital Transformation and those relating to ongoing investment – primarily technology refresh – to maintain the security and stability of ICT services.

	One-off Expenditure (One-off revenue or Capital)	**Recurring Revenue Expenditure**
Digital enablement of transformation	£1.6m primarily in 2025/26	£0.2m
Rolling technology refresh (and other critical ongoing costs associated with maintaining the ICT security and stability that have been established)	£0.9m in 2025/26 £0.5m in 2026/27 £0.5m in 2027/28 £0.4m in 2028/29	Saving of £0.1m

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Council has a duty to secure best value under the Local Government Act 1999. The Government has published guidance on the best value standards and intervention. Under the theme of continuous improvement, characteristics of a well-functioning authority include having an organisational wide approach to continuous improvement driven by an established transformation function or programme with frequent updating of corporate and improvement plans. Under use of resources, characteristics of a well-functioning authority include financial strategy and budgets being aligned with strategic priorities, workforce and fixed assets being managed efficiently and effectively with strategies demonstrating how services will be delivered in the future and sustainable corporate functions including IT which deliver value for money. Under service delivery, a characteristic of a well-functioning authority is one which takes an innovative approach when considering how services will be designed and delivered in the future.

3.2.2 The Council remains under statutory intervention of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In their latest update letter of September 2024, the appointed commissioners stated that service standards are variable, data gathering is inconsistent and data and evidence is not systemically used. They also flag that there is not yet a clear strategy to capitalise on advances in information technology.

3.2.3 The principles and plan set out in this paper are required in order fully to address these legal requirements.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 The following risks are associated with the recommendations set out in this paper:

Status	Description	Mitigation
Amber	There is insufficient resource to undertake the work set out in the implementation plan	Funding approval has been given for early work in 2024/25, which is expected to form the basis for a robust case for the release of Transformation Fund resource.
Amber	There is insufficient resource and/or organisational capacity to implement the digital plans developed in Stage 0.	Integration of the digital planning process with the TOM programme, coupled with the establishment of the Design Authority (2.16 refers), will mitigate this risk

3.3.2 It should also be noted that the delivery of the final projects from the original scope of the Modernisation Programme, set out at Appendix A, plays a critical role in managing risks the on the corporate risk register relating to cyber security, ICT service availability and information governance. In particular, completion of the outstanding Modernisation Programme work is an important mitigation action for these.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1. There are no specific environmental implications from this report, but environmental implications, including the consumption of cloud-based computing power, will be factored into the evaluation of design options and reviewed by the Design Authority.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The Council must ensure compliance with its Equality Act duties. This includes having access to good quality data and information, systems that are able to record data in a legally compliant and ethical manner and appropriate consideration given to the risk of bias in data leading to decisions that do not take account of the needs of the local population. The principles of the Digital Strategy aim to improve services for all user groups. However, it is recognised that some groups may have higher levels of digital exclusion. Whilst anyone could be digitally excluded it is more likely to disproportionately impact older people, those with disabilities and those on low incomes. The council will ensure that support to use digital services is available as well as alternative access options. This is reflected in the first digital principle (see B.8 in particular).

3.8 Workforce implications

3.8.1 The cost of technology is partly dependent on the size of the Council's workforce and its operating model. The Council needs to ensure investment in corporate functions such as DDaT to avoid poorly implemented IT projects and a lack of opportunity to consider service transformation by utilising technology in innovative service delivery.

3.9 Property implications

3.9.1 This report recognises and seeks alignment to the emerging Asset Management Strategy to be considered by Cabinet, the Council's future Asset Management Strategy in terms of office accommodation and service delivery points is relevant to the Council's digital, data and technology approach. Given the expectation is to reduce the overall number of assets the Council operates from the number and nature of service delivery

points (eg any new physical “front door”) service will be impacted., This strategy will enableda digital and technology approach and as the Councils reduces it Property Portfolio over time, will lead to additional savings across DDaT.4.

Background Papers

None

APPENDIX A

MODERNISATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

A.1 The Modernisation Programme was launched in March 2022. In December 2022, following its mobilisation stage, it was reported to Cabinet that the programme comprised 40 projects, across four workstreams:

- Cloud migration of line of business applications
- Cyber security and resilience
- End user computing
- Replacing aged infrastructure

A.2 By November 2023, it was reported to Cabinet that the programme had delivered 32 projects but that 56 further projects were in the pipeline: a total of 88: more than twice the number of projects in the original programme. A new workstream – "Professional and sustainable service" had been added.

A.3 As of September 2024 (when the current Director of DDaT joined), 43 further projects had been completed (making a total of 75 completed since inception), but a further 53 projects had been added to the portfolio pipeline, as reported to the Recovery Board, bringing the total portfolio size to 141.

A.4 As is evident from those figures, much has been delivered. To give just four examples from the past year of delivery:

- The corporate data centre was migrated from a Slough location to a Crown Commercial Services hosting site in Hampshire, reducing organisational vulnerability (because of geographical distance) and saving £80k pa.

- A migration to new Wide Area Network technology (SD-WAN) has saved £140k pa and provides greater performance and resilience for access to many cloud-based applications (by avoiding the need for connections to pass via the data centre).

- Work on translation capability and on the accessibility of our website has moved Slough from being in 250th place for accessibility amongst UK councils in September 2023 too 19th place in October 2024 (source: Slough Borough Council - Silktide Index).

- The Astro Hub physical support centre, coupled with wider Astro branding, has improved staff satisfaction, as reported via a number of staff fora.

A.5 However, five important projects from the original programme have not yet been completed:

- Procurement and implementation of Disaster Recovery as a Service and Backup as a Service – critical for Council resilience

- Procurement and Implementation of a Security Incident and Event Monitoring service – a key cyber countermeasure relevant for both detecting and rapidly responding to attack

- Migration of one of our most important line of business systems which is currently hosted on servers with an end-of-life operating system, with a cloud-based SaaS solution being preferred

- Obtaining Public Sector Network security certification (primarily dependent on the preceding point)

- Completion of Microsoft 365 deployment, with migration of data from file servers to SharePoint being the principal outstanding matter, coupled with the need to drive adoption and effective use of collaborative technologies such as SharePoint. The communications and training programme required for this will do much to bolster the digital skills, awareness and engagement of staff.

A.6 On review of the resource requirements of the outstanding pipeline of 66 open projects, it has become clear that delivery of them all within the programme's budget will not be possible. Accordingly, it has been agreed that detailed planning, resource scheduling and prioritisation exercise should be carried out (as was also recommended by the LGA report) to agree an affordable delivery scope. This work is underway. The intention is to prioritise the following for completion:

- the outstanding projects from the original programme scope agreed by Cabinet, as listed above;

- projects critical to the security and continuing availability of the ICT service;

- with any remaining budget, the highest priority projects remaining in the pipeline. Prioritisation will be focused on savings enablement and will be agreed with CLT.

A.7 Planning has already identified that the completion of some critical projects will, because of procurement and implementation lead times, not be possible until mid-2025/26. Because of the robustness of the replanning and prioritisation exercise that is being carried out, there is a high level of confidence that the programme will complete in that timeframe. There will, however, be a need to carry forward some residual programme budget from 2024/25 to 2025/26 to enable this.

APPENDIX B

DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES

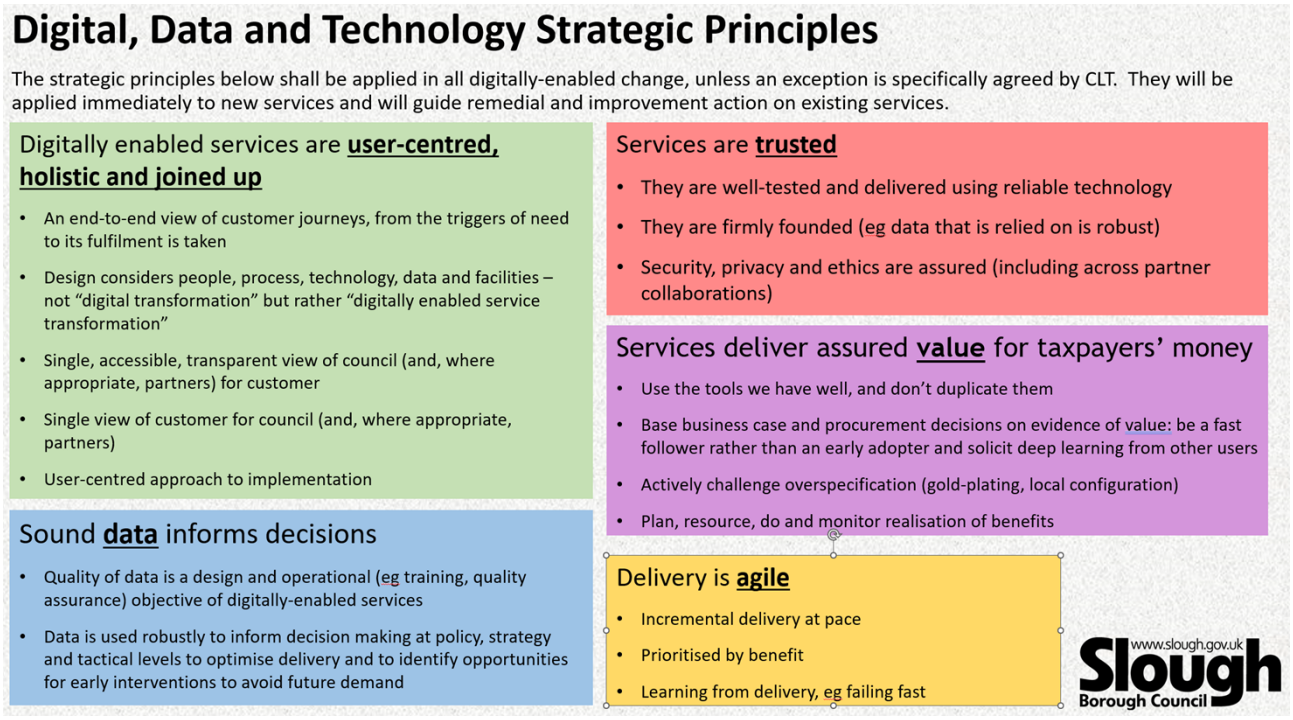


Figure B.1 – Strategic Principles

*Principle 1: Digitally enabled services are **user-centred, holistic and joined up***

B.1 A user-centred approach is taken to the design of services: they are focused on meeting the needs of residents, businesses, members and other stakeholders of the organisation.

B.2 Design takes an end-to-end perspective. For example, the journey of a homeless individual does not begin with their applying for temporary accommodation and (if eligible) being placed in it. Rather, it begins with the onset of the conditions (eg debt) leading to their becoming homeless and ends with their moving on from temporary accommodation to a permanent solution. Taking that end-to-end view maximises the possibilities of identifying opportunities to reduce need through early intervention, and minimises the risk of implementing improvements that merely move a problem or backlog to a different part of the end-to-end system.

B.3 Design considers all aspects of a service: people (including organisation, skills and culture), process, technology, data and facilities. If these elements are not considered together, there is a high risk of failure. For example, poor management information can result not only from technology issues but from training, skills or practice issues, or from poor working processes or data definitions/standards.

B.4 Customers have a single view of the Council. Even if they are accessing multiple portals or systems, the experience should be seamless: all portals should use a common style (the Government Digital Service standard) and users should not have to provide the same information more than once.

B.5 Similarly, Council staff should have a single view of the customer, subject to the need/right-to-know constraints of privacy so that they have all relevant information available to them.

B.6 In forming relationships with partner organisations (eg in the voluntary and community sectors) the value of extending both types of single view is considered.

B.7 Customers' view of the council is transparent: they should be able to see the current status of requests they have made (analogous to the ability to track the progress of package delivery from a courier).

B.8 Services are accessible for people with disabilities and for those whose first language is not English. They are accessible across the types of device most commonly used by residents (notably smartphones) and reachable routes to access for those without their own devices are provided.

B.9 Implementation of services, as well as design, is user-centred, with both residents and other customers, and staff, being engaged through focused communications and involved in design and testing. Training is an integral element of implementation.

*Principle 2: Sound **data** informs decisions*

B.10 Quality of data is a design and operational objective of digitally enabled services. The causes of poor data should be designed out as far as is reasonably possible and the residual risk managed through such mechanisms as training and quality assurance.

B.11 Data is used robustly to inform decision making at policy, strategy and tactical levels to optimise delivery and to identify opportunities for early interventions to avoid future demand. This principle informs the whole delivery lifecycle from design (who is making what decisions; what information could help them be made more effectively) to development (how that information is brought together into an actionable form) to implementation (ensuring people are willing and able to use the information and monitoring whether it is, indeed, leading to better decisions).

*Principle 3 – Services are **trusted***

B.12 Services are trusted to work because they have been well tested and are implemented using reliable platforms underpinned by robust service management.

B.13 Services can be relied on because they are built on firm foundations. For example, if one were to deploy a tool that used generative artificial intelligence to generate answers to questions asked by users, based on information about Slough's policies and procedures held on our website, this principle would demand that the assurance quality and ongoing accuracy of that website data would be a prerequisite.

B.14 Security, privacy and ethics are assured, including consideration of sustainability. It will be necessary to ensure that policies in these areas address the full range of demands of the TOM. For example:

- Security and data policies will need to encompass the Council's future relationships with delivery partners, eg community and voluntary sector partners.

- Specific ethics policies may be required for new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence also has sustainability implications. While much of the carbon impact of AI stems from the training of large language models, and is therefore not influenced by consumption, certain actions – eg the use of generative AI to generate images – do have significant per-transaction carbon impact.

*Principle 4 – Services delver assured **value** for taxpayers' money*

B.15 The Council uses the DDaT tools it already has effectively: they are robustly and appropriately configured and used correctly by people equipped with the right skills. (Remedial action over time will be required to realise this principle across all retained legacy systems).

B.16 Tools are not duplicated – if the Council already has an application that can meet a requirement, then that application should be used rather than a new one being procured.

B.17 Decisions are based on evidence of value. When new propositions are being considered, they are validated by examining the experience of others; the organisation is a fast follower rather than an early adopter of new technologies. (This is particularly relevant for nascent technologies such as generative artificial intelligence.) Where there is uncertainty but high potential, value is tested by controlled experiment. Similarly, procurement processes take into account as far as possible independent evidence of supplier or product performance rather than being based solely on the content of supplier proposals.

B.18 Overspecification is actively challenged, particularly where the addition of requirements or of bespoke configuration inhibits the use of off-the-shelf products in a common practice way.

B.19 The realisation of benefits is planned into service delivery from the outset.

*Principle 5 – Delivery is **agile***

B.20 The implementation of services is incremental rather than "big bang" wherever possible, and with delivery following a cadence that is as rapid as is reasonably possible for the change in question, ie delivery is at pace. This both allows benefits to be delivered more rapidly and allows lessons to be identified and actioned early.

B.21 Delivery of new services is rigorously prioritised based on business benefit so that scarce resources are optimally focused.

B.22 The organisation actively learns from experience during delivery. Where delivery is failing, this is recognised rapidly and appropriate action taken. For example, if a technology is experimentally piloted and fails (as per **Error! Reference source not found.**), this is not perceived as failure of the pilot project, but rather as success in avoiding a wasted larger investment.

Alignment with LGA Digitalisation Outcomes

B.23 The LGA Digital 360 Report made reference to the LGA's 12 digitalisation outcomes, and these have also been referenced in subsequent discussions of digital with members. The principles set out above define how the Council will make digitally enabled transformation happen and, in so doing, enable achievement

of the outcomes. A summary of how the principles relate to the outcomes is given in the table below.

LGA Digitalisation Outcome	**Alignment with Digital, Data and Technology Principles**
Connectivity - The council supports residents, businesses and its staff to access the internet and council services wherever they are in the community.	Aligns with principle 1 of user-centricity (B.8 specifically refers)
Data - The council's data practices use a set of standards focused on improving services and informing policy.	Aligns with principle 2
Democracy and participation - The council makes maximum use of digital technology to support councillor attendance, improve transparency, optimise democratic decision-making, and increase community engagement and collaboration.	Principle 1 is focused on ensuring that – as set out at B.1 and also B.6 – our digital services are designed with the needs of all stakeholders, including businesses, members and delivery partners alongside residents. The sequencing of delivery to meet these outcomes will be prioritised by benefit as per principle 5.
Economic productivity and Growth - The council supports the use of digital technology by local businesses, partners and third sector organisations.	
Ethics and sustainability - The council uses digital technology in pursuit of the common good and does no harm; it protects human agency, fairness, transparency, and the environment	Addressed by principle 3
Inclusion - The council promotes the benefits of the internet, digital technology and digital services in ways that are available and accessible to everyone	Addressed by principle 1; paragraph B.8 refers
Leadership - The leadership of the council drives the use of digital technology to achieve strategic and operational goals, and facilitates organisational transformation	The holistic approach to transformation set out in principle 1 addresses this. More importantly however, it will be the adoption of these principles by Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team, and their integration into the delivery of the Target Operating Model that will realise the outcome.
Organisational capability - The council puts digital technology at the heart of the way it works and trains its workforce, and has talent pipelines to benefit	The holistic approach of principle 1, in which people – including their training needs – are considered as an integral part of digitally enabled change addresses this outcome.

retention and relieve pressure on recruitment.	Workstream 3 of the Target Operating Model programme (Workforce and Workplace Development) will also be central to the outcome's achievement.
Partnership - The council works with public, private and third sector partners to ensure an integrated, cohesive and resident-focused approach to public sector digital transformation and service provision.	Addressed in principles 1, which refers to engagement with partners (and also 3 which requires the privacy implications of such access to be considered.
Security and resilience - The council's networks, infrastructure, data and services are as secure as possible, and the council is resilient to cyber attacks	Directly addressed by principle 3
Services - The council's services are designed around the needs of residents and users, and are guided by government design principles and standards.	Directly addressed by principle 1
Value - The council allocates its resources effectively by harnessing the opportunities of digital technology.	Directly addressed by principle 4

APPENDIX C

DIGITAL STRATEGY – IMPLEMENTATION

C.1. Figure 2 provides a high-level overview and timeline of the work in train to turn the strategic principles above into reality. These workstreams are summarised below, with further description provided at Appendix C.

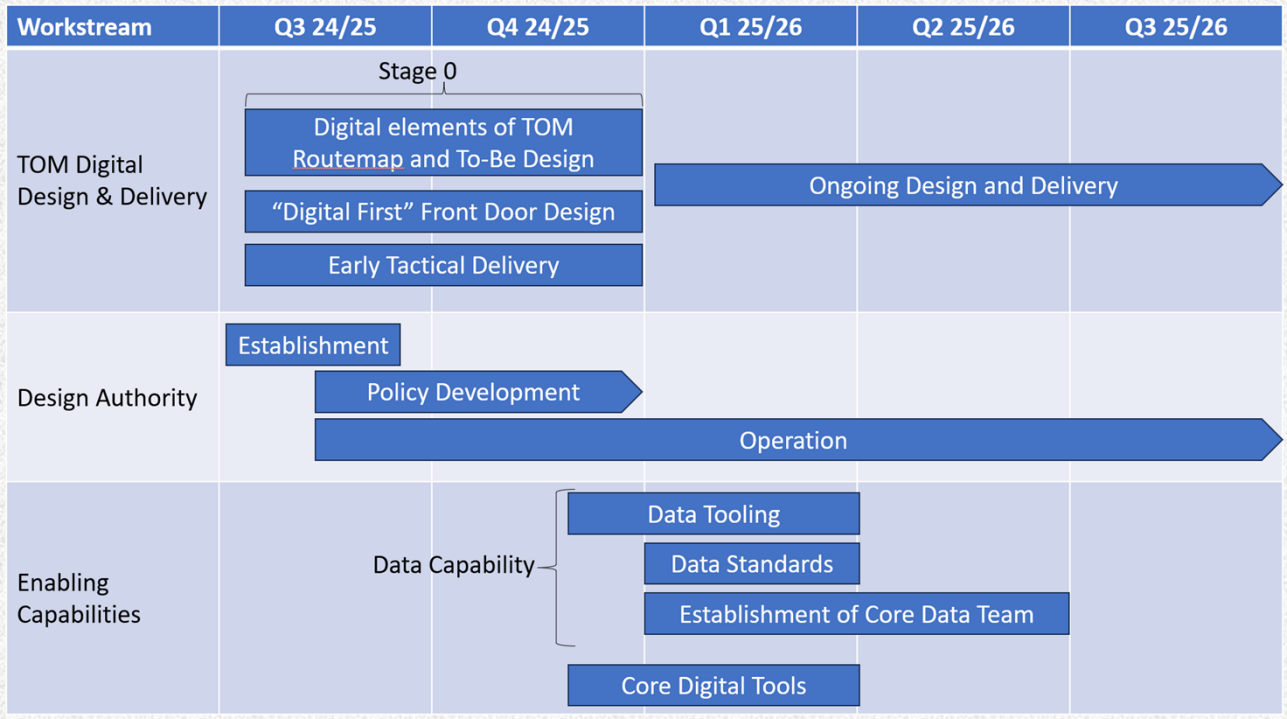


Figure 2 – Strategy Implementation – Current High-level Plan

Workstream 1 – TOM Digital Design and Delivery

C.2. The companion report *Target Operating Model – Direction of Travel update* sets out the workstreams established to design and deliver the TOM. The DDaT team is engaged in all of these but two are of particular relevance here:

- Workstream 1: Council Service Review and Design – This workstream is developing the routemap for implementation of the TOM and conducting end-to-end service reviews across all Council services. The DDaT role is to work with that team to incorporate the identification of digital, data and technology opportunities into the service design and ensure that these are reflected in the routemap.

- Workstream 2: Resident Contact and Digital First – Self-evidently, the role of DDaT is to ensure that the design of resident contact realises the TOM's "Digital First" principle of "making our digital channels so good that you prefer to use them". The team will also be working to ensure that physical front doors to the organisation provide staff with the right digital equipment and services to meet their needs.

C.3. In both workstreams, the DDaT role is to identify where digital, data or technology can address issues or opportunities in the design of the service, whether at the detailed level of individual service designs or at the strategic level of the Council's

operating model as a whole. Generally, such opportunities are expected to fall into three broad categories:

- *Improving information flow* – Digital technologies can remove friction in information flow, caused by factors such as channel capacity, distance and language. The benefits include reductions in need and demand, through the provision of advice, guidance and signposting to residents; self-service for commonplace transactions, reducing wait times and freeing staff to focus on complex cases; and faster processing of cases internally. Examples of such technologies include:

  – high quality, accessible, easily navigable website content, providing advice, guidance and signposting;

  – use of customer portals (such as the Council's core customer portal, which is implemented in Jadu) to capture demand in structured form;

  – automated conversational technologies, such as chatbots (an example of which is currently being piloted) or voice automation to divert enquiries from the contact centre;

  – use of workflow or robotic process automation tools to avoid the need for double-keying of information into systems;

  – potentially, the use of generative AI tools to facilitate information flow, for example creating formal records of meetings or service user interactions from recorded transcripts, or answering questions asked of a chatbot by generating conversational responses based on website content or other Council documentation.

- *Filling information gaps* – Digital and "internet of things" technologies can rapidly fill gaps in knowledge or situational awareness that would otherwise be time-consuming or impossible to fill. The benefits include faster processing of cases, improved decision making and the ability to take pre-emptive action. Examples of possible applications include:

  – the use of sensors to determine information that would otherwise require an in-person visit to determine, eg damp/mould detection in housing stock, sensing road temperature (to avoid unnecessary gritting), movement/environment monitoring in homes of elderly/vulnerable to enable independent living;

  – use of camera and image analysis technologies to identify issues such as flytipping or for moving traffic offence enforcement;

  – AI-based tools can speed the identification of external knowledge relevant to a case, eg the identification of relevant precedents when considering a legal or planning case.

- *Enabling better decision making* – Data analysis tools, from straightforward management information dashboards to more sophisticated predictive analytics tools, can enable better, evidence-based decisions at policy/strategic, operational and tactical levels. Examples of possible applications include:

- the presentation of management information in easily assimilable form that allows operational decisions to me made over the focusing of resources and action, for example to reduce a backlog, address areas where supply costs are above the norm;

- the fusing of information from various council services about a family in need, to allow the most appropriate tactical decisions on support to be made;

- analysis of historic cases to determine the factors most likely to lead to children in need becoming looked after children, so that strategic and policy decisions can be made to address those factors and so that individual cases where risk is high can be identified earlier and action taken to reduce the risk.

C.4. It is planned that a small number of design teams, staffed from across both the Strategy and Change team and the DDaT team, will be established to work across the two workstreams identified above. In Stage 0, their focus will be on the areas of resident engagement, overall routemap development and on two specific areas where service design is being prioritised to address particularly large cost pressures: temporary accommodation and adult social care.

C.5. The latter two areas were each the focus of recent "Project Room" activity to identify savings, in response to budgetary pressures. Those Project Rooms identified opportunities for immediate action to achieve savings. In parallel with the design work above, and as a pathfinder for the broader digitally enabled change, early digital work is being carried out to enable the realisation of those savings. For example, for temporary accommodation:

- Website content is being redesigned to signpost those at risk of homelessness to appropriate sources of help to avoid having a need for Council services, and to provide them with clear guidance as to what is available (and is not) from the Council and explain clearly the relevant processes.

- Requests for help are received via unstructured emails sent to over fifty email addresses. Work is in hand to identify and implement digital alternatives that can enable the requests to be captured through structured forms (so that cases can be more easily actioned and caseload makeup understood) and tracked through an appropriate casework system.

Workstream 2 – Design Authority

C.6. A Design Authority has already been to review MTFS business cases. It is planned that this will become a standing function with responsibility for reviewing proposals for service changes to ensure that they are strategically aligned, fully thought through and coherent, affordable and achievable.

C.7. This forum, supported by specialist governance mechanisms such as the existing Technical Design Authority and the Information Governance Board, will be the key mechanism through which it can be confirmed that service designs are adhering to the strategic principles set out from **Error! Reference source not found.** onwards. For example, it will assure that proposals are joined up, assure data quality, comply with security, privacy and ethics requirements, are firmly founded, robustly demonstrate value for money and have an appropriately agile implementation plan.

C.8. This workstream involves setting up the processes for DDaT engagement in the Design Authority and also putting in place appropriate policies, for example to support any approaches to partnership working established through the TOM.

Workstream 3 – Enabling Capabilities

C.9. While much of the work required to realise the strategic benefits of digital will be defined through the collaborative design work set out above, there are obvious gaps in digital capabilities where work can be planned now. These are the subject of MTFS business cases.

Data Capability

C.10. The council has a performance and insights team within its Strategy, Change and Resident Engagement function, and also has data analysts within individual business areas. However, it lacks fundamental enablers that enable these capabilities to deliver reliable management information and data insight that enables action.

C.11. The consequences are that data sets needed to inform decisions are incomplete, inconsistent or non-existent. This was highlighted by the recent Project Room work, where intense manual effort was required to generate data to enable savings to be identified, and where prompt and regular availability of that data could have enabled some of the financial pressures in question to have been avoided.

C.12. Specific aspects of the current arrangements that lead to the issues described are:

- The Council does not use standard tools or approaches for data processing and analytics, and has also been dependent in some areas on interim staff who have not documented their work. The result is that much historical data analytics work is neither usable nor maintainable.

- The Council does not have a data infrastructure that allows data from operational systems to be brought into a single store to be manipulated and analysed. Instead, analysis happens across disparate systems. In some cases, analysis is carried out on live – and therefore changing – data, which can lead to inconsistent and misleading results.

- A lack of standards and documentation of data has led to an overreliance on individuals.

- There is a lack of consistent corporate skills in both data analytics and reporting (eg dashboard development) and data engineering (eg “ETL”: extraction, transformation and load).

C.13. This workstream therefore includes the following actions:

- Acquisition of basic technology to enable the creation of shared data warehouse(s) that can serve as the basis for dashboard reporting using PowerBI (a dashboard tool the organisation already possesses through its Microsoft subscription)

- Establishment of a small central data team. The role of these staff would be not only to respond to requests from the business but to support the training of wider

staff in data analysis (including maximising the benefit of the announced data apprenticeship scheme that the Council has recently launched).

- Temporary engagement of a data architect to oversee setup of the new tools, map how existing data can best be brought together and define standards tor data work.

Core Digital Tools

C.14. Certain basic tools will be required to underpin any digitally-enabled transformation and comply with the principle of services being user-centred, holistic and joined up. These are:

- Website accessibility checker, enabling us to ensure, without intensive manual effort, compliance with standards for website accessibility, in line with the strategic principles

- Website usage analysis tool, to enable us to understand how users are interacting with the website, so that the right improvements can be made to content and forms

- Single sign-on capability for the Council's core customer and case management system (Jadu), essential if we are to enable customers to have a single logon for all online council services in line with principle

APPENDIX D

PROGRESS AGAINST RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN LGA DIGITAL 360 REPORT PRESENTED TO CABINET IN MAY 2024

Item	Recommendation	Status
R1.1	Slough should urgently seek to appoint a strategic Digital, Data and Technology director to focus on continuity for the ICT service and grow the digital transformation agenda.	Director took up post in September 2024
R1.2	Given the extent to which there is a need for digitally enabled change to underpin efficient service delivery and workforce enablement, we recommend that this post reports directly to the Chief Executive, ensuring digital opportunities are considered as part of the organisation's strategic dialogue.	Initial reporting line is to Chief Executive but it has been agreed by full council that this will change to the Executive Director for Resources.
R2.1	Slough should conduct a review of its Council-wide change portfolio to inform the priorities for ICT, digital and other strategies and should create a single prioritisation framework to use ongoing in the management of organisational change. This should include, but should not be limited to, a review of the 70+ ICT projects - prioritise, start or stop projects dependent on biggest impact for staff, residents and /or support the financial recovery. We recommend that you continue the good foundational work already started within ICT to build core processes, capabilities and governance – these provide a necessary foundation for operational stability. Projects which signal visible change should be considered as enablers alongside larger transformation initiatives to maintain momentum and buy in. Projects which signal visible change should be considered as enablers alongside larger transformation initiatives to maintain momentum and buy in.	Prioritisation of the portfolio is in progress as set out at paragraph 2.8 and Appendix B
R3.1	Greater consideration should be given to the opportunities for digital transformation at scale, to support improved resident and employee experience and to release cashable savings and support cost avoidance.	This is being taken forward in work on TOM implementation, particularly through the Digital First front door
R3.2	Greater consideration should be given to participation, service design, data, partnership and digital inclusion.	Reflected in digital principles and in the agreed user-centred service design approach to the TOM.
Item	**Recommendation (edited)**	**Status**

R3.3	Slough should explore the significant opportunity for a single programme improving resident experience which brings together service design, multi-channel delivery and enables end to end integration of service delivery, delivering benefits to residents and efficiency to the organisation as well as enabling greater transparency in processes and performance, rebuilding trust with communities.	This is being pursued through the TOM workstream.
R3.4	Slough should place greater emphasis on the capabilities and focus required to bring the data strategy to life, including modern data skillsets.	This is being actioned both through the TOM workstream and through the data aspects of the Enabling Capability workstream. A data apprenticeship scheme has been launched (Multiverse is the provider) and the students on this are being linked into the future plan.
R4.1	To create the successful conditions for success for digital enablement, Slough must begin to systematically change and model positive behaviours at every level. Colleagues need to be enabled to make best use of the available technology, by being involved at every stage of design, testing and supported by appropriate training as required. To reinforce the necessity for collaboration and customer focus, it would be helpful to consider creating a set of organisation behaviours collaboratively with colleagues across the organisation as part of a new workforce strategy. These should be part of performance management, recruitment, recognition and should actively encourage colleagues to embrace change.	The need for a user-centred approach to implementation is covered in the strategic principles. The broader need for cultural change is being addressed through the Culture Change workstream of the TOM programme.
R4.2	Slough should maximise the value of all available resources and capacity for technology, digital and data in the Council. Budget, teams and individuals relating to technology, digital and data are currently distributed around the Council, which results in reduced efficiency, resilience and missed opportunities to deliver corporate wide improvements. Consideration should be given to aligning all of these resources more consistently, whether through structural change or through more collaborative and less siloed decision-making and approaches	A report on this recommendation will be provided in the March 2025 update.