![Exeter City Council logo]

EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday 1 April 2025
Time: 5.30 pm
Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Mark Devin, Democratic Services Manager on 01392 265477.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -
Councillors Bialyk (Chair), Wright (Deputy Chair), Asvachin, Foale, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

1   **Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence from Committee members.

2   **Minutes**

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025.   (Pages 3 - 6)

3   **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests that relate to business on the agenda and which have not already been included in the register of interests, before any discussion takes place on the item. Unless the interest is sensitive, you must also disclose the nature of the interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, you must then leave the room and must not participate in any further discussion of the item. Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

4   **Local Government Act 1972 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during consideration of any of the items on the agenda, but if it should wish to do so, the following resolution should be passed:-

RECOMMENDED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act

1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the particular item(s) on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of the Act.

5   **Questions from the Public Under Standing order No. 19**

To receive questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and responses thereto.

Details of questions should be notified to the Democratic Services Manager by 10.00am at least three working days prior to the meeting. Further information about speaking at a committee can be found here: Speaking at a Committee

6   **Review of Corporate Risk Register**

To consider the report of the Strategic Director of Corporate Resources.   (Pages 7 - 38)

7   **Update on the Digital Customer Strategy**

To consider the report of the Strategic Director for People and Communities.   (Pages 39 - 62)

8   **Data Strategy**

To consider the report of the Strategic Director for People and Communities.   (Pages 63 - 72)

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Executive will be held on **Tuesday 20 May 2025** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

A statement of the executive decisions taken at this meeting will be produced and published on the Council website as soon as reasonably practicable.

Find out more about Exeter City Council services by looking at our web site *http://www.exeter.gov.uk.* This will give you the dates of all future Committee meetings and tell you how you can ask a question at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. Alternatively, contact Democratic Services at committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Democratic Services **committee.services@exeter.gov.uk**

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday 4 March 2025

Present:
Councillor Bialyk (Chair)
Councillors Wright, Asvachin, Foale, Vizard, Williams, R and Wood

Also Present:
Councillor Jobson (as an opposition group Leader);
Councillor Moore (as an opposition group Leader); and
Councillor M. Mitchell (as an opposition group Leader)

In attendance:
Councillor Williams, M.

Also present:
Chief Executive, Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Strategic Director of Operations, Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero and Democratic Services Manager

24   **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25   **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

26   **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 19**

No questions from members of the public were received.

27   **LORD MAYORALTY**

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and City Centre seconded, that Councillor Anne Jobson be nominated as Lord Mayor Elect for the 2025/26 Municipal Council year, and that Councillor Gemma Rolstone be nominated as the Deputy Lord Mayor Elect for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that Councillor Jobson be nominated as Lord Mayor Elect for the 2025/26 Municipal Year and that Councillor Rolstone be nominated as the Deputy Lord Mayor Elect for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

28   **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2023/24**

The Executive received the report which provided an annual update of the scrutiny work achieved during the year 2023/24. The report had been presented to both the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee and the minute extracts of those meetings were attached to the report.

Councillor M. Williams as Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board was in attendance to present the report and made the following points:-

- the report was a part of the work to align the Scrutiny Programme with the municipal year rather than the calendar year to avoid discrepancies;
- there had been an improvement to the scrutiny process through cross party working, with ongoing improvements being addressed;
- the annual report was being developed to focus on the impact of scrutiny rather than just listing items; and
- thanks were made to the officers and Members involved with preparing the report and the suggestions made to improve it.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and questions:-

- the collaborative cross-party nature of the scrutiny process was praised;
- the chance for the Executive to also feedback to scrutiny was welcomed;
- the clarity on timing issues and improvements made to the scrutiny process was welcomed; and
- what sort of measures were considered for the impact of work, notably to leisure services?

An opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- Scrutiny was an important function which provided a great opportunity for discussion and improvement;
- continued improvement in the collaboration between Scrutiny and the Executive was welcomed; and
- the idea of broadcasting scrutiny meetings would be a great opportunity for further discussion.

In response to questions and points raised by Members, the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board advised:-

- the thanks of the Executive was welcomed and further thanks were made to the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny for their hard work in improving scrutiny; and
- metrics and measures were still being worked through as part of the work of the Scrutiny Programme Board, but it was a goal to reflect on the impacts of scrutiny.

The Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and City Centre addressed the question of filming scrutiny meetings, and advised there were ongoing efforts to integrate new AV technology and how this would be resourced by relevant teams.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RECOMMENDED that Council receive the Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24.

29   **PARKING TARIFFS 2024**

The Executive received the report which provided the outcome of the public consultation for the 2024 Parking Places Order. Particular reference was made to:-

- the main change from the original proposal was no increase in parking charges for the 2024 Parking Places Order;
- the proposals focussed on addressing difficult trading conditions within the city centre;
- the proposals looked at reducing Sunday parking charges by 25% in central zone 1, and zone 2 car parks to encourage visitors and shoppers on Sundays, to reduce congestion and peak usage on a Saturday;
- re-introducing one-hour parking in zone 2 city centre car parks, following strong support from the public consultation and supported the business community;
- the John Lewis Multi-Storey car park opening and closing hours were proposed to be amended to 8am-midnight, following strong feedback to support the evening and night-time economy;
- two new car parks would be added to the Parking Places Order – the Riverside Leisure Centre and a temporary city centre car park. This introduction would ensure the Riverside Leisure Centre car park was used by its intended customers and to support parking transition following the closure of Mary Archer's car park; and
- changes to seasonal residential and business would take approximately six weeks, with more significant works for the Riverside Leisure Centre and a temporary bus station car park taking longer.

During the discussion, Executive Members raised the following points and questions:-

- there were concerns about the misuse of Pinhoe Railway Station and Riverside Leisure Centre car parks and whether these could be enforced as part of the Parking Places Order? and
- further information on the modelling used to determine the parking usage between Saturdays and Sundays to predict the impact on congestion?

An opposition group leader raised the following points and questions:

- how did the report align with the Council's corporate plan objectives?
- there was concern about the financial implications and impact to Net Zero?
- the recommendations did not show any commitment to how building a new car park would fund Net Zero work;
- what were the costs for setting up a new car park and what its income would be? and
- what would the costs be relating to the Net Zero work and would the car park be temporary until 2030?

The Leader advised that the points and questions raised were quite detailed and requested that the questions be submitted to him for response. The questions and responses will follow and be appended to the minutes.

In response to questions and points raised by Members, the Head of Service - City Centre and Net Zero advised that:-

- the Pinhoe Railway Station was not part of the Parking Places Order and therefore misuse could not be enforced;
- the Exeter Leisure members would receive a permit to park and non-members would be required to pay; and
- modelling had been undertaken for parking use; however, the exact impact was challenging to predict, adjustments had been made to the income targets accordingly.

The Leader moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Wright, voted upon, and CARRIED unanimously.

RESOLVED that the amendment of the Parking Places order proceed with the following:

- reducing Sunday city centre car park charging by 25% for Central, Zone 1 and Zone 2 car parks;
- the re-introduction of 1hr (£2.00) parking for city centre car parks located in Zone 2;
- amending the opening and closing hours at the John Lewis car park to 8.00am - midnight;
- the additional of the following new car parks to the Parking Places Order:

  o Central Zone: Paris Street Car Park (Old Bus Station site); and
  o Zone 3: Riverside Leisure Centre.

- changing the cost of seasonal, residential, and business parking permits as set out in the report presented at the meeting;
- increasing the cost to purchase a seasonal, residential, and business parking permit by 5%;
- to increase the fee to purchase a discounted business and residential parking permits for existing permit holders, for the next 4 years, as agreed in the Parking Tariffs 2023 (as reported to the Executive on 7 February 2023); and
- to increase the cost for new permit holders by 5% for the purchase of a permit.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 5.55 pm)

Chair

The decisions indicated will normally come into force 5 working days after publication of the Statement of Decisions unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. Decisions regarding the policy framework or corporate objectives or otherwise outside the remit of the Executive will be considered by Council on 15 April 2025.

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 1 April 2025

Report of: Strategic Director of Corporate Resources

Title: Review of the Corporate Risk Register

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Risk Management is a Council function.

Risk Management is an important element of the council's Code of Corporate Governance.

Regular monitoring of the council's corporate risks helps to ensure that the council's business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The report advises the committee of the council's risk management progress and presents the revised Corporate Risk Register (Appendix A), which has been linked to the Council's Strategic Priorities.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That the Executive Committee considers the council's Corporate Risk Register and proposes to Council any necessary actions to help mitigate the risks for which it is responsible.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 To ensure that the risks associated with meeting the Council's Strategic Priorities are properly considered, managed, and monitored.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 The Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service, as appropriate, are asked to review the Corporate Risk Register on a quarterly basis. The register is reviewed quarterly by the Strategic Management Board.

4.2 Any actions agreed to mitigate the risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register may result in some resource implication. These would be subject to a specific report and the resource implications would be considered in that report.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 SMB and the Executive have produced the register based on the Council's Strategic Priorities. A summary page (Appendix B) has been added setting out the level of

intervention required and the impact of failing to address the risk. The risk in relation to finance has been updated to reflect the fact that a balanced budget has been set for 2025-26. This does not mitigate the longer term associated risks but carries the risk forward.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 Risk Management is an essential management tool to manage, assess and prioritise risks. Members will note the content of this report and the updated Corporate Risk Register which identifies risks so that they can be understood and managed proactively.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 There is no specific regulatory requirement to keep a risk register. However, it is a standard way to monitor and assess risk. The risk register identifies the overall risks to the Council in order that this can be understood and managed proactively, optimising success by identifying and addressing risks.

8. Report details:

8.1 In response to a review of the Corporate Risk Register by the Council's insurers, Zurich, the Strategic Management Board agreed that the Corporate Risk Register should be presented to Executive to provide assurance that the appropriate mitigations are in place. The council's Audit & Governance Committee will continue to have a role in ensuring that the council has a robust process in place for identifying and mitigating risks.

8.2 Each risk is assessed against the following matrix, assessing the likelihood and impact before and after mitigation.

Likelihood	Impact 1	Impact 2	Impact 3	Impact 4
4	4	8	12	16
3	3	6	9	12
2	2	4	6	8
1	1	2	3	4

8.3 The Risk Register includes a summary document (Appendix B), which enables Members to see the scope of the corporate risks in one straightforward table. This table is presented below for ease of reference.

| Corporate Plan Alignment Area | Risk Description | Risk Scoring | | Target Date |
		Inherent	Residual	
Net Zero Carbon City	Delivering against the key challenges in the Net Zero Carbon City section of the Corporate Plan	16	16	Apr-30
Healthy and Active City	Making progress towards a Healthy and Active City	12	6	Mar- 2025
Leading a Well-run Council	Adapting the council workforce to ensure appropriate skills and experience (Developing a future proof workforce)	9	6	Sep-25
Leading a Well-run Council	Maintaining the Financial Sustainability of the Council	16	8	Feb-25
Leading a Well-run Council	Maintaining the Council's Property and Infrastructure Assets	16	12	Feb-26
Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods	Delivering Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods and Communities	16	16	On going
Thriving Culture and Heritage	Maintaining a thriving Culture and Heritage sector	9	2	Jun 25
Prosperous Local Economy	Delivering against the key challenges in the 'Prosperous Local Economy' section of the Corporate Plan.	12	9	Mar 25
Leading a Well-run Council	Progressing the design and delivery of a corporate Customer and Digital Strategy	16	8	Mar-26

8.4 Alongside each risk on the summary page, there is a table, which sets out an assessment of the resources required to manage the risks under the themes of Time, Financial, People and Assets. This will allow for an assessment of the resources required to mitigate each risk to an acceptable level allowing members to determine if the resources required are deliverable and achievable.

8.5 In addition, the summary page includes an assessment of how the risks will affect a range of drivers.

8.6 The two tables use Very high, High, Medium, Low and Very Low to assess the resources required and the risk drivers.

8.7 The Final Column will assess the Council's risk appetite, whether it is open to risk, more cautious or even risk averse. These two tables help to inform the final risk scores presented in the register.

<u>Further development of the Corporate Risk Register</u>

8.8 The Strategic Management Board has been working with risk experts from the Council's insurers Zurich to review the current corporate risks. This work will continue alongside the work currently underway with Executive Members to review the council's Corporate Plan. Updates to the register will be reported to Audit and Governance Committee and Executive.

8.9   In addition, training and support will be provided to officers and Members to help build resilience and ensure that emerging as well as existing strategic risks are kept under close review.

8.10 As recommended by Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 19 March 2025, future registers will provide a clear indication as to which risks have changed since last reporting and whether they had increased or decreased.

9.   How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 Good governance contributes to the Council's purpose of a "Well Run Council."

10.   What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 N/A

11.   Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only.

12.   Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

12.2 Actions to mitigate the risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register may result in some future impact, however, any actions proposed would be subject to a specific report and the impacts would be considered in that report.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 N/A

Strategic Director of Corporate Resources, Dave Hodgson

Author: Lorraine Betts, Executive Office Manager

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

Contact for enquiries:
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Room 4.36
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Corporate Risk Register   <u>APPENDIX A</u>

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:	February 2025				
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date

1	**Delivering against the key challenges in the Net Zero Carbon City section of the Corporate Plan**
	Challenges: • GHG emissions in Exeter were on a downward trajectory with emissions down by a third from 2008 to 2019. This reduction is largely due to the reduction in the carbon intensity of the national electricity grid. There has been a 64% reduction in emission from the power sector (with most generation plant located outside Exeter) between 2007 and 2019. It is concerning that emissions from buildings and transport are exceeding targets set for 2020 and the lack of progress in these sectors, combined with growth in the city, will potentially lead to increases in emissions. Significant work to reduce emissions from buildings and transport will be required to deliver Net Zero for the City. • Limited resources available for city wide net zero activity. • A reliance on government funding to reduce city wide carbon emissions. • The need for city wide partnership working to deliver the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan • Cost of living challenges (for both businesses and residents) impacting the speed of change **Potential Impacts:** • Exeter does not meet its citywide target of becoming Net Zero by 2030.

Corporate Risk Register

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| | | | Review Month: | | | February 2025 | | | | |

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
	November 2019 Feb 2025 Updated by Strategic Director Place	PH - Climate, Ecological Change & Communities Officer Lead: Strategic Director for Place	4	4	16	We are working with the University of Exeter and Devon County Council to support their work in this area and focusing on reducing city wide carbon emissions. Our internal carbon net zero plan is now the subject of a separate risk register presented half yearly to the Audit & Governance Committee by the Project Manager for Net Zero.	4	4	16	With future updates presented every 6 months to Strategic Scrutiny on activity and progress. Exeter Energy Ltd (1Energy) presented an overview of the proposed Exeter Energy Network (EEN) to members. 1Energyhas consulted on proposals for an Energy Centre, located at Grace Road Field, Water Lane. Executive has agreed in principle, to the disposal of land at Grace Road Field to build the Energy Centre. A final decision will be made once the 1Energy's planning application has been determined. The City Council has received a report from the University which evaluates the measures needed to achieve Net Zero and estimates the costs for each service under different scenarios. The report and the City Council's response will be presented to Strategic Scrutiny, following consideration by Executive. A bid for PSDS funding for the Riverside Leisure Centre has been submitted.	Apr-30

Corporate Risk Register

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
						Review Month: February 2025					

2	**Making progress towards a Healthy and Active City**

Challenges
- Entrenched health inequalities in priority neighbourhoods.
- Cost of living crisis impacting on the ability of people to participate in paid for sport and physical activity including membership/fees at council leisure centres.
- Securing long term funding for Wellbeing Exeter with its proven ability to positively enable sustainable increases in physical activity amongst communities facing the biggest barriers and poorest health outcomes.
- Rising energy, maintenance and staffing costs of leisure centres.
- Achieving a balance between membership and running costs of leisure centres to achieve the Council ambition of providing a high-quality leisure service accessible and relevant to individuals and families on low incomes and culturally diverse communities.
- Delivering planned financial and operational outcomes of St Sidwell's Point Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre.
- Securing capital and revenue funding for the plan to create a Community Health and Wellbeing Hub at Wonford.

Potential Impacts
- Inability to achieve the strategic ambition of maintaining high-quality, city-wide, cost neutral built leisure facilities.
- Increasing subsidies for leisure services impacting on other service provision.
- Closure of some leisure centres reducing access to facilities for current users.
- Wellbeing Exeter closes and systemic asset-based community development across priority neighbourhoods ends, and vulnerable communities feel let down by the council.

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			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
	May 2023 Feb 2025 Updated by Strategic Director Place	Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Physical Activity. Officer Leads: Strategic Director, People & Communities and Strategic Director for Place.	4	3	12	Wellbeing Exeter Case for Change published in 2023 with a more targeted and flexible model. Funding secured for 24/25 through a combination of Sport England Grant and ECC Neighbourhood CIL funding. Successful implementation of new operating model for leisure reducing management and staffing costs resulting in reduction of deficit(subsidy) to @ £1.2m Marketing of ECC leisure membership delivering increases in membership @11,000.	3	2	6	Further review of culture and leisure operating models to be undertaken during 2025 by Head of Service. Further funding from Sport England confirmed to 2027 through a new Place Partnership. This will support ongoing programmes for Live & Move, Wellbeing Exeter and Active Travel. Capital funding application to Sport England submitted for Wonford Community & Wellbeing Hub. Planning application was approved in February. Match funding agreed for Wellbeing Exeter for 25/26/ and 26/27 at November 5th Executive. Public consultation on the Newtown Community Transformation scheme was completed in February. Following an evaluation a report on next steps will be presented at Strategic Scrutiny.	March 2025

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Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
										Officers are reviewing the ExeCard discount scheme for Leisure Services, for roll out during the new FY.	

Review Month: February 2025

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							Review Month:	February 2025				
			Inherent Risk					**Residual Risk**				
Ref	**Date Risk Identified**	**Risk Owner**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Mitigations & Controls**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Tracking notes and monitoring**	**Target Date**

3	**Adapting the council workforce to ensure appropriate skills and experience (Developing a future proof workforce)**
	Challenges AI, robotics and digitisation technologies require acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competencies and with an aging workforce whose demographics is not reflective of the diversity of the city's population; some national shortages of some professional roles and a growing trend to more remote and hybrid working the council needs a new approach to workforce development, recruitment and retention. Potential Impacts • Workforce and service delivery models not meeting the needs of customers leading to poor outcomes and inefficient, unaffordable services. • High levels of agency and consultancy spending. • Low staff morale and poor recruitment and retention • Loss of reputation of the Council

Corporate Risk Register

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			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:			**February 2025**		
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
	August 2024 risk updated by Strategic Director People	Deputy Leader, Officer Lead: Strategic Director, People and Communities	3	3	9	Market supplement scheme in place

Apprenticeship opportunities for new and existing staff

Senior Leadership restructure created new Strategic Director for People

A review of pay structure will be completed by December 2024.

External review of HR and OD functions and a mini-Peer Review into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion both completed by June 2024 providing a clear route map for organisational transformation a route map for total transformation

Recommendations are being taken forward into a transformation plan: outcomes | 2 | 3 | 6 | Strategic Director appointed with responsibility for OD, HR and customer and digital transformation.

A new permanent Head of Service HR and OD started 24/2 2025. Current Interim Head supporting induction and handover of HR Improvement Plan until 31/3/2025.

Delivery of HR Improvement Plan key objective for new HoS

Successful negotiations with Strata completed to bring forward replacement of current ITrent (HR and payroll system) with enhances cloud-based functionality agreed to underpin HR and OD transformation programme. Funding agreed in budget to deliver this work in 25/26.

Technical review of ITrent completed and set of recommendations currently being costed with the aim of a joint | March 2026 |

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Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
						will include a new operating mode for HR and OD functions better aligned to supporting the business needs and leading on policy and people development. Improved management information to enable effective performance monitoring on a wide range of people data, mandatory training and team and staff performance. A workforce development strategy underpinned by a skills audit and analysis to enable succession planning and future recruitment, retention and training strategies.				improvement plan being delivered in q1 25/26.

Proposed review of pay structure abandoned as mini review on critical roles offered no evidence that this impacts on recruitment and in the light of Devolution/ LGR White paper. | |

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				Review Month:	February 2025	

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		

4	Maintaining the Financial Sustainability of the Council
	Challenges: - Inability to deliver £5.7m savings target over four year period (to 2028-29); - Inability to obtain and maintain Business Rates income at levels currently generated; - Policy, regulatory or legislative changes which are not fully funded from central govt; - Impact of high inflation, high interest rates and other external economic factors; - Potential for Local Government Finance redistribution (including a reset of Business Rates); - Potential Impacts: - Significant reductions required to Statutory Services, which become unable to function legally; - Unable to balance budget, Government intervention required; - Larger than anticipated reductions (in year or over longer term). - Reduction in reserves below minimum level; - Impacts on council services and therefore resident outcomes.

Corporate Risk Register

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Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
	January 2018	Leader of the Council Officer Lead: Strategic Director Corporate Resources	4	4	16	Detailed MTFP assessed and agreed with Members; - One Exeter plan agreed and being implemented with suitable governance arrangements in place; - Budget for 2025 - 26 agreed; - Significant investment in city centre regeneration; - Appropriate level of unringfenced general fund reserves to protect against shocks; - Identify and bid for alternative sources of funding; - Lobby government for relaxation of council tax increase restrictions; - The Council has a clear strategy to address the savings required.	2	4	8	Feb-25 2025-26 Budget balanced and approved; MTFP approved for period to 2028-29; Minimum Reserves approved .	Feb-26

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Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		

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5	Maintaining the Council's Property and Infrastructure Assets

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			Review Month:	February 2025

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		

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Challenges:
• Council owns 100 operational properties and 600 Commercial Properties as well as 28 Bridges, 50 Parks, 90 Play Areas Footpaths, Highways, walls and a River, Canal and other watercourses
• Shortages of materials and labour causing delay and increased costs across the capital programme
• Interest Rate rises causing the cost of borrowing to rise significantly
• Additional Borrowing adds pressure to the financial stability of the Council.
Potential impacts:
• Increased costs to Council
• Sheer number of assets extremely high for a District Council, potential to cause significant financial harm
• Delay in all projects, predominantly the condition survey projects and HRA programme, leading to prolonged periods of buildings being below the standard the Council is aiming for

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Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			Review Month:						**February 2025**		
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
	August 2021 Feb 2025 Updated by Strategic Director Place	Leader of the Council Officer Lead: Strategic Director Corporate Resources	4	4	16	• Consider Programme of Asset rationalisation, where maintenance costs are uneconomic; • Identify alternative sources of funding to reduce reliance on borrowing; • Commercial Properties mainly let on a full repairing lease basis • Reviewed existing capital programme to defer and remove schemes. • Change of emphasis to internally borrow in the short term to offset interest rate rises.	4	3	12	The two property maintenance teams have now been merged under one Head of Service. This will allow a review of resources to take place and the sharing of good practice. Significant review of assets condition being undertaken and a review of both Asset Management Plans will take place (GF & HRA). New approaches to GF Maintenance being explored. Head of Commercial Assets appointed.	Feb 26

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:			February 2025		
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date

6	**Delivering Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods and Communities**
	Challenges: - brownfield first approach is the most sustainable option, and aligns with government policy but most sites are currently unviable and developers are unwilling to invest, resulting in sites being stalled - inadequate infrastructure funding for brownfield land regeneration - lack of specialist staff resources to support the work - inability to address complex land assembly and infrastructure challenges - significant abnormal costs associated with this type of programme - low land/property values and lack of investment appetite (especially BtR sector) - Significant local community opposition to development Potential impacts: - significant loss of income to fund services/infrastructure (CIL; S106; NHB; Council Tax; Business Rates) and inability to secure external funding from government - increased traffic congestion and net-zero not achieved by 2030 - Exeter Plan found unsound resulting in city housing needs not being met and exacerbating the Devon Housing Crisis, especially in terms of affordable housing; lack of 5-year housing supply resulting in loss of planning control/sub-optimal development and loss of green space/special characteristics of Exeter. - new neighbourhoods not created, existing communities become unbalanced and suffer from lack of infrastructure/services, and economy of the city is stalled - active travel and accessible city aspirations not met - unsustainable development and new homes do not meet Garden City principles - housing built on greenfield sites

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk			
						Review Month:	**February 2025**			
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
	November 2021	Leader of the Council Officer Lead: Strategic Director for Place	4	4	16	Access to government funding programmes (Brownfield Land Release Fund; Garden Communities; One Public Estate; New Development Corporations Competition Fund) is supporting Liveable Exeter and Council Owned Building projects - Project management capacity brought in - Preparation of business cases, feasibility studies, development frameworks for strategic sites (E.g. Marsh Barton, Southgate, Water Lane, red Cow & City Point) - Acquiring land and property using CPO powers and dispose of land to enable infrastructure. - Use of CIL and S106 funding to support infrastructure provision. - Through the Exeter Design Quality Partnership adopt an	4	4	16	A preferred bidder to develop Mary Arches car park has been approved, and pre-application discussions on a residential development have commenced. Bids to develop Clifton Hill have been received and evaluated. The Executive/Council will decide on a preferred bidder in the Spring. The Council Owned Building programme providing new council houses for tenants is continuing with Hamlin Gardens due completed and occupied and Vaughan Road (Phase 1) due for completion in the summer. Consultation on the Exeter Plan publication version (Regulation 19) ended in January, and the plan including all representations will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in June. An outline planning application for Water Lane (South), comprising over	On going

Note: column headers "Review Month:" and "February 2025" appear in the top band spanning the table width.

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
						enabling and collaborative culture with developers and landowners, instilling confidence in the planning process. - Enhanced Member Training to improve quality of decision making in planning. - Exeter Place Partnership established to bring together the city's institutions to take ownership of the city vision and aspirations and to work collectively on obstacles to delivery				1,000 homes has been approved, subject to a S106 agreement. Officers will be commissioning a new study looking at delivery options for the City Point site. The City Council hosted a Developers Forum in the Guildhall in January, as part of the EDQP.	

Review Month: February 2025

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:	February 2025				
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
7	**Maintaining a thriving Culture and Heritage sector**										
	Potential Causes: • A need to balance cultural ambition with the national funding picture and local financial challenges • A need to support Visit Exeter as a vital mechanism for promotion of events, business and cultural offer. Ensuring culture is relevant to all of Exeter's communities Potential Impacts: • Loss of NPO funding • Loss of wider impact of cultural regeneration of the city. • Inability to support night time economy • Inability to support cultural sector • Inability to deliver services including RAMM, Corn Exchange, Red Coats, Custom House, Underground Passages, Box Office • Non-renewal of UNESCO status • Reputational impact locally, nationally and internationally										

Corporate Risk Register

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				

Review Month: February 2025

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
	May 2023 Feb 2025 Updated by Strategic Director Place	Deputy Leader Officer Lead: Strategic Director for Place	3	3	9	Strong relationship with Arts Council England and stakeholders. New five-year Cultural Strategy being developed with tangible deliveries. Significant cultural assets owned and run by the cultural sector. UNESCO City of Literature status awarded and monitored. Funding agreed with ACE until 2026 with Exeter's National Portfolio Organisations	1	2	2	A review of Cultural Services, starting with the RAMM, has commenced. Officers are preparing a bid for the new round of NPO funding to be submitted in June. The scope for the new Cultural Strategy for the city to be discussed with key partners and stakeholders during next quarter, leading to work commencing to draft a new strategy and undertake consultation, following publication of the Council's new Corporate Plan. Following publication of the Historic Places Panel report, officers are preparing an action plan to be discussed with Historic England.	June 2025

Corporate Risk Register   <u>APPENDIX A</u>

			Review Month:	February 2025

Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	Inherent Risk			Mitigations & Controls	Residual Risk			Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
			L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		L'hood	Impact	Risk Score		
8		**Delivering against the key challenges in the 'Prosperous Local Economy' section of the Corporate Plan.**									
		<u>Key challenges:</u> • Retention and recruitment, with some difficult-to-fill vacancies, which is stifling business growth. • A rise in residents becoming economically inactive, particularly those in the 50+ age groups. • Matching the learning and skills opportunities for residents with current and future job opportunities. • Low levels of graduate retention from the University of Exeter. • Levels of aspiration amongst our young people and limited awareness of opportunities. • If there is an unsuccessful InExeter BID vote November 2024, its impact on the city centre business community. • Following previous budget reductions and the discretionary services review implemented in April 2023, there is no longer an economic development service or skills function. There are no officer resource or budget to progress this corporate priority. <u>Potential Impacts:</u> • Exeter's economic base is weakened. • A rise in Universal Credit claimants Residents of Exeter. • A slowdown of businesses opening up and surviving in Exeter. • Vacancy rates in the city centre increase. • The look and feel of the city centre declines.									

Corporate Risk Register   APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
										Review Month:	**February 2025**
Ref	**Date Risk Identified**	**Risk Owner**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Mitigations & Controls**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Tracking notes and monitoring**	**Target Date**
	May 2023	Deputy Leader Officer Lead: Strategic Director for Place	3	4	12	Partnership work with the University and Exeter College to take on more of a leading role in this area. New focus on the city centre economy. Close working with InExeter and other key partners, especially in relation to the city centre. Projects delivered through UKSPF to support people gaining news skills, the business community and new business start-ups.	3	3	9	Initial engagement with businesses and members on a new City Centre Strategy, undertaken in July and November 2024. InExeter BID vote was successful. Further guidance awaited on joint working with DCC on new Growth Plans. SMB exploring the scope for an Economic Growth Prospectus for Exeter. Joint working with the University to boost innovation in the city. A one-year extension to the UKPSF funding programme will be administered by the DT CCA, with funding allocations for existing projects awaited.	Mar 25

Corporate Risk Register   <u>APPENDIX A</u>

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:			**February 2025**		
Ref	**Date Risk Identified**	**Risk Owner**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Mitigations & Controls**	**L'hood**	**Impact**	**Risk Score**	**Tracking notes and monitoring**	**Target Date**

9	**Progressing the design and delivery of a corporate Customer and Digital Strategy**

<u>Challenges</u>

- Digital technology continues to change the way people live, connect and work and this shift has been expedited by the Covid-19 pandemic. Digital technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace and for many have become an essential part of everyday life.
- People expect easy access to joined-up information and efficient, secure services in the palm of our hand; increasingly expecting to interact with organisations wherever they like, whenever they like, on whichever device they have and on whatever channel they choose.
- With customer behaviour changing faster than ever, the task of digital transformation demands significant changes to people, processes and technology. Our key challenges are the pace and scale of transformation needed in business processes; functional and organisational structures; culture; skills and resources within the Council and within and between Strata and our partner councils.
- We are currently lagging many other Councils in our development of digital services and how we engage with our customers to improve and develop them. We have identified this as a priority to address in the One Exeter programme.

<u>Potential Impacts</u>

- Failure to agree and implement the required level of organisational change will impact on the ability of the Council to deliver a balanced MTFP which requires transformational change in how services are delivered.
- Workforce and service delivery models not meeting the needs of customers leading to poor outcomes and inefficient, unaffordable services.
- High levels of agency and consultancy spending.
- Low staff morale and poor recruitment and retention

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:	February 2025				
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date

- Loss of reputation of the Council

April 2024: New risk: Cyber Security: There is increased global concern about the use of AI and emerging technologies for malign purposes. Whilst there are no specific new threats nationally or regionally in relation to Local Government and we have no specific concerns about current systems and processes, Strata Directors have requested the company to undertake a risk awareness and management workshop with the Directors of all 3 Councils to provide assurances that there is sufficient capability and capacity to understand and mitigate risks and respond should a "never event" occur. This process is due to complete in October 2024 and until this process has been completed and assurances /action plans adopted this issue will remain on the Corporate Risk Register.

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
										Review Month:	February 2025
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
	May 2023 updated by Strategic Director August 2024	Leader of the Council Officer Lead: Director for People and Communities	4	4	16	Improved control of ICT Business Change Requests resulting in better use of valuable Strata resources.

Customer Digital Strategy approved by Council in November 2023 sets clear direction around 10 outcome gaols.

June 2024 successful implementation and roll out of Microsoft 365 and the uses of Teams for improved communication and collaboration. New member SharePoint site designed and delivered.

One Exeter a single integrated transformation programme across the Council, with strong leadership from SMB and the Extended Leadership Team, | 2 | 4 | 8 | New Telephony System under implementation foundations for delivery of CDS in place. Report on progress to date being prepared for Executive along with a detailed delivery plan for 25/26.

Phase one of roll out of new laptops completed and full roll out plan under development..

Due to new Cyber Security risk a Gov Cyber Assessment Framework is being undertaken, further workshops planned with ELT and results of phishing exercise undertaken in February currently being analysis and staff breaching policy individually targeted for training. | Mar-26 |

Corporate Risk Register

APPENDIX A

			Inherent Risk				Residual Risk				
						Review Month:	February 2025				
Ref	Date Risk Identified	Risk Owner	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Mitigations & Controls	L'hood	Impact	Risk Score	Tracking notes and monitoring	Target Date
						refocused on fewer but more strategic organisational change programmes.					

| Corporate Plan Alignment Area | Risk Description | Risk Scoring | | | Internal | | | | External | | | | | | Risk Appetite Rating |
| | | | | | Resources | | | | Risk Drivers for Appetite | | | | | | |
		Inherent	Residual	Target Date	T	F	P	A	F	Rep	Reg	L	Comp	Comm	
Net Zero Carbon City	Delivering against the key challenges in the Net Zero Carbon City section of the Corporate Plan	16	16	Apr-30	H	H	H	H	L	VH	VL	VL	L	H	Cautious (M)
Healthy and Active City	Making progress towards a Healthy and Active City	12	6	Mar- 2025	M	M	H	H	L	VH	L	L	L	H	Open to Risk (H)
Leading a Well-run Council	Adapting the council workforce to ensure appropriate skills and experience (Developing a future proof workforce)	9	6	Sep-25	M	H	L	VL	VH	VH	M	M	M	VH	Open to Risk (H)
Leading a Well-run Council	Maintaining the Financial Sustainability of the Council	16	8	Feb-25	H	L	H	VL	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	Cautious (M)
Leading a Well-run Council	Maintaining the Council's Property and Infrastructure Assets	16	12	Feb-26	VH	VH	H	VH	VH	H	H	VH	VH	VH	Cautious (M)
Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods	Delivering Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods and Communities	16	16	On going	VH	H	M	L	H	VH	H	H	H	VH	Open to Risk (H)
Thriving Culture and Heritage	Maintaining a thriving Culture and Heritage sector	9	2	Jun 25	M	H	H	M	H	M	H	L	L	M	Cautious (M)
Prosperous Local Economy	Delivering against the key challenges in the 'Prosperous Local Economy' section of the Corporate Plan.	12	9	Mar 25	L	L	L	L	VH	H	M	L	L	VH	Open to Risk (H)
Leading a Well-run Council	Progressing the design and delivery of a corporate Customer and Digital Strategy	16	8	Mar-26	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	L	L	M	Open to Risk (H)

Key

Resources	
T	Time
F	Financial
P	People
A	Assets
Risk Drivers for Appetite	
F	Financial
Rep	Reputational
Reg	Regulatory
L	Legal
Comp	Compliance
Comm	Community
Risk Appetite Rating	
VL	Very Low
L	Low
M	Medium
H	High
VH	Very High

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 1 April 2025

Report of: Strategic Director, People and Communities

Title: Update on the Digital Customer Strategy

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The Digital Customer Strategy was adopted by the council in December 2023, this report provides an update on progress to date. Delivering the strategy is vital for delivering members aspirations for customer-focused services, emphasising the importance of a culture of excellent customer and digital service, digital equality, and efficient processes.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 The report is noted by Executive.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 This report is for information to give members a progress report on a previously adopted strategy.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 There are no specific resource implications to note as the strategy is being delivered within existing resources identified through the annual budget setting process.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 The funding required has been approved by Council either via the Capital Programme or the Strata Business Plan.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 This report is for information purposes only. There are no legal issues to bring to the attention of Members.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 Members of Executive will note that this report is for information purposes only. The Executive is not required to make a decision, but to note the content of the report.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Digital Customer Strategy update report in Appendix A and the Action Plan in Appendix B outlines the progress on delivering on the key aims and objectives of the strategy.

The strategy was adopted by the council in December 2023, its aim is to improve user experience and ensure customer/residents needs guide service development and delivery. The strategy emphasises a culture of excellent customer and digital service, digital equality, and efficient processes.

Prior to the adoption of the strategy, significant groundwork was laid, including the rollout of Microsoft 365 to all staff, reduction of mailbox sizes, creation of a SharePoint site for council members, and commissioning audits into digital equality and data use. The strategy sets out ten goals covering all elements of digital customer service, with detailed outcomes and priority actions listed for each goal.

The strategy was developed with input from various stakeholders and a public consultation, which included an online survey and outreach to ensure broad participation. Red Quadrant was engaged to assess the council's customer experience maturity and data maturity and have provided recommendations for enhancing customer intelligence, addressing digital exclusion and the data strategy that will be considered by Executive in April.

Since the adoption of the strategy, several key achievements have been made, which are detailed in the attached report., these including the creation of dedicated Customer and Digital Teams, adoption of the Strata Business Plan which has 10 bespoke enabler projects which will contribute to the success of the strategy, and the launch of MyExeter our digital front door to council services.

The action plan appended to this report sets out the approach being taken to ensure delivery of the council's commitment to enhancing customer service through digital transformation. This report and action plan shows the council is on track to achieve the goals outlined in the strategy. Ongoing efforts to address digital inequality, promote digital collaboration, and build digital knowledge and skills will ensure that the strategy continues to deliver positive outcomes for residents and staff alike.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The Council's corporate plan is the Council's overarching strategy, setting out the council's vision and ambitions for Exeter and the outcomes it wants to achieve for both the city and the council. The Digital Customer Service Strategy is vital for the council's role in leading a well-run council and delivering customer-focused services.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 There are significant risk to the successful achievement of the outcomes attached to the ten strategic goals. These could be themed as reputational, leadership, culture, skills, capacity and financial resources. As the delivery plan is implemented change projects will have risk assessments and mitigation plans built in.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because: because the report is for information only.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 If the Council had not adopted the strategy in December 2023, it could have considered maintaining the status quo with most services offering limited variety of channels and continuing to rely on traditional (old fashioned) delivery methods and incremental shifts to digitisation. The Council could have continued to develop services from an organisational perspective and not make the shift to customer "centric" thinking. However, this would create an increasingly inefficient, costly and ineffective experience for customers and staff. This would also be contrary to all expectations of a modern local authority as set out in The Outcomes Framework for Improving and Supporting Local Government Digitalisation published by the Local Government Association (LGA) in July 2022.

Director: Jo Yelland, Strategic Director People and Communities.

Authors: Andrew Hopkins, Head of Service, Digital and Data and Stephen Clayton, Head of Service, Customer and Communities.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Appendix A: Digital Customer Strategy update report – March 2025

Introduction

The Digital Customer Strategy was adopted by the council in December 2023 and aims to put the customer first by improving user experience and ensuring customer needs guide service development and delivery. This strategy is vital for delivering customer-focused services, emphasising the importance of a culture of excellent customer and digital service, digital equality, and efficient processes. This report provides an update on the progress made towards achieving the goals outlined in the strategy. A detailed action plan for 2025/26 is provided in Appendix B.

Work carried out prior to the adoption of the Customer Digital Strategy

Prior to the adoption of the Digital Customer Strategy by members, officers had carried significant work to prepare the authority for an ambitious digital transformation programme, this work included:

- **Work carried out prior to December 2023 included**:
  - Rollout of Microsoft 365 to all staff
  - Reduction of mailbox sizes to reduce the amount of individual data being held by staff and files stored in Outlook.
  - The creation of a SharePoint site for council members
  - The commissioning of audits into Digital equality in Exeter and Data use at the City Council.
  - The creation of a Gateway to agree non-standard service requests submitted to Strata our IT Service Solutions and Transformation company.
  - Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) process developed and rolled out to testers in Strategic Management Board (SMB) / Operational Management Board (OMB).
  - Improvements to the Contact Us form on the ECC website allowing customers to select from a list of common enquiries. The customer's query is then directed to the appropriate service for action; or the customer is directed to a webpage containing the information and forms to address their enquiry.

- **Goals and Outcomes**: The strategy set out ten goals covering all elements of digital customer service, with detailed outcomes and priority actions for each goal as laid out in Appendix A.

Ten goals for the Digital Customer Strategy

- **Consultation Process**: The strategy was developed with input from various stakeholders and a public consultation, which included an online survey and outreach to ensure broad participation.
- **Consultation Feedback**: Feedback from 451 completed surveys showed strong support for the strategy, with most respondents emphasising the importance of professional customer service and a single point of contact.
- **Customer Experience Research**: RedQuadrant was engaged to assess the council's customer experience maturity and provide recommendations for enhancing customer intelligence and addressing digital exclusion.
- **Key Findings**: The research identified fragmented customer interaction data, the need for clearer governance, and the importance of digital inclusion, with 10-15% of residents facing digital access barriers.
- **Recommendations**: Recommendations in the proposal include developing a customer intelligence model, investing in digital inclusion, and linking employee experience to customer experience.

Key Achievements since Customer Digital Strategy adoption in December 2023.

1. **Creation of dedicated Customer and Digital Teams**

New bespoke Customer and Communities, and Digital and Data teams have been created within the People and Communities Directorate; new Heads of Service were recruited in November 2024 with

2

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additional staffing resources being recruited in Spring 2025 a Consultation and Engagement Manager, Project Manager and Data Analyst. These teams are working with Strata our IT service solutions and transformation company and are focused on delivering the Digital Customer Strategy and the adopted Strata business plan.
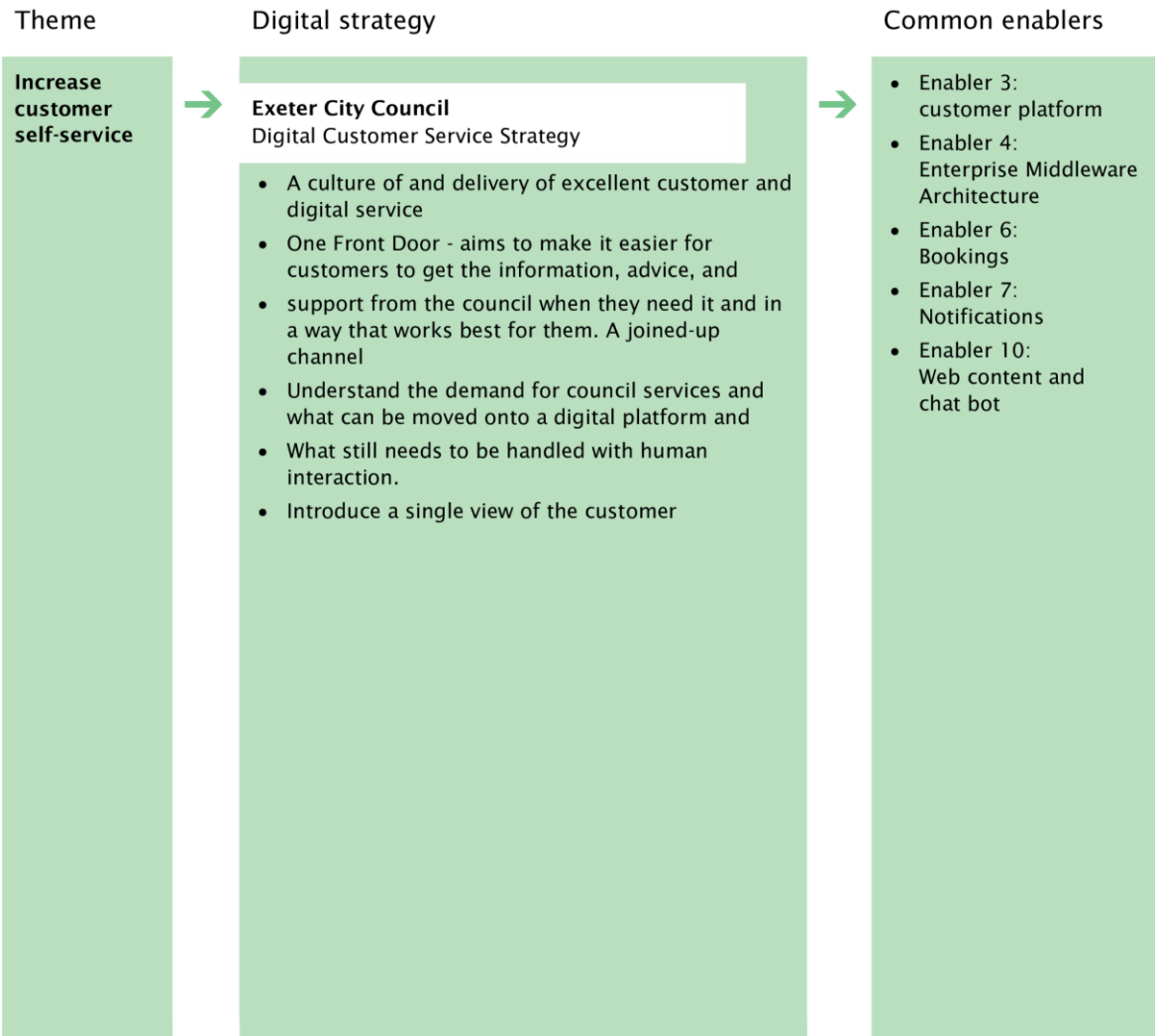
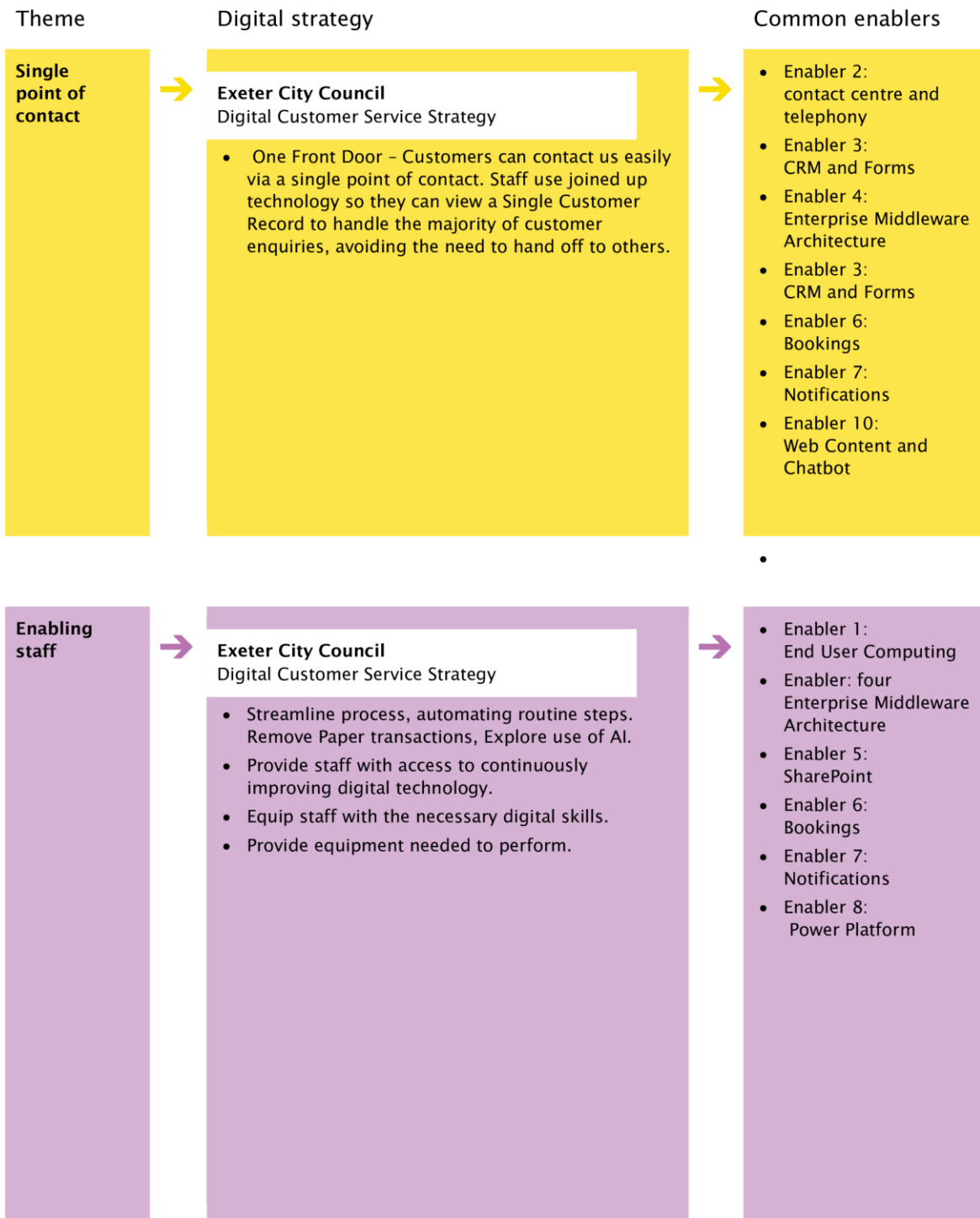2. **Adoption of the Strata Business Plan**

Members through the Strata Joint Executive Committee and Full Council approved the business plan for 20204/25, this document was written by Strata to cater for a diverse range of audiences and sought to align the vision of the 3 councils involved and outlined key enablers to deliver the council's digital aspirations, drive change and efficiency.
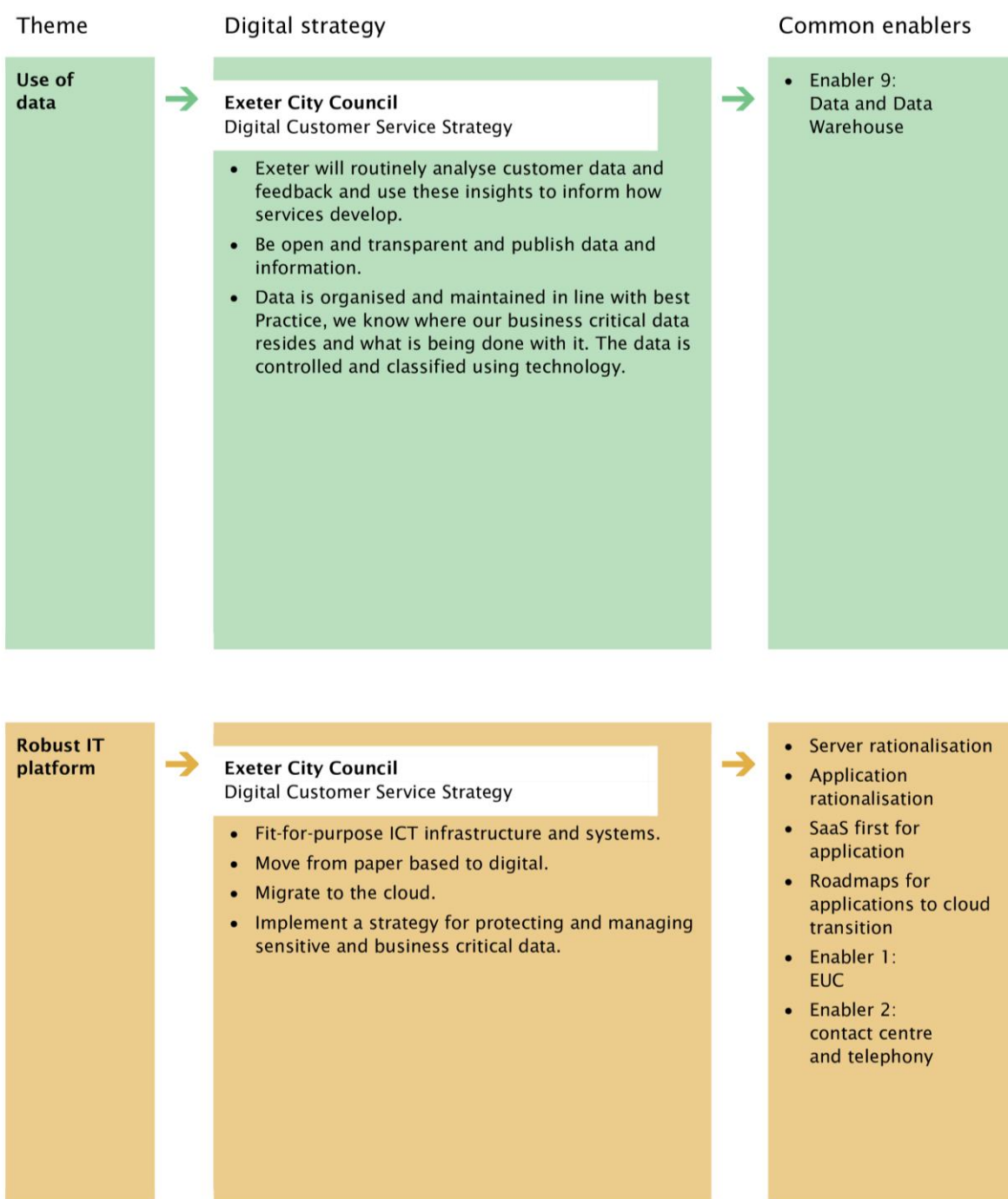
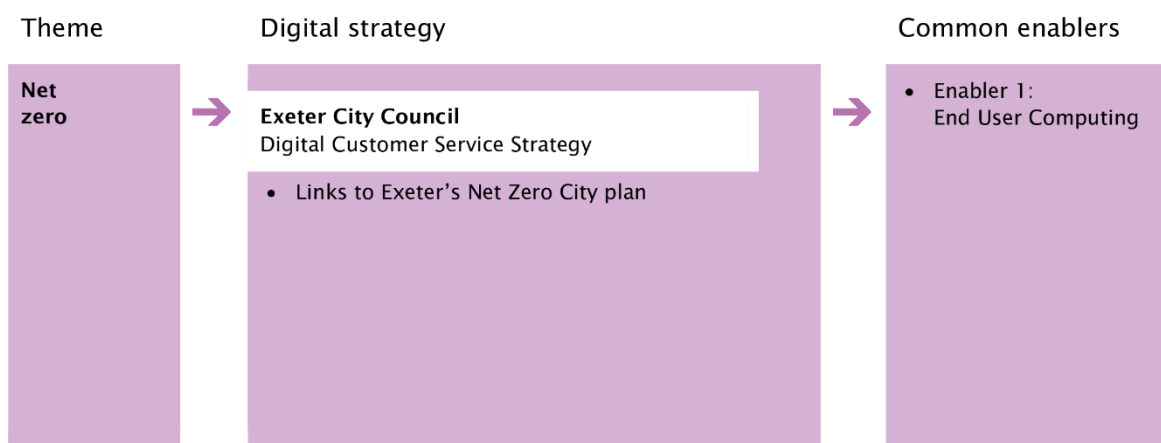The key enablers identified in the Strata Business Plan are:

- **Enabler one: introduce new end user computing model**: This enabler focuses on transforming the working experience for users by introducing a new end user computing model (i.e., new laptops). It aims to enable native functionality on Windows laptops, gradually phasing out the need for VMware Horizon virtual desktops. Users will have direct access to Office 365 applications, including Outlook, Teams, and Skype for Business, as well as files in OneDrive and SharePoint.
- **Enabler two: contact centre and telephony**: This enabler involves the implementation of a new telephony and contact centre system across the Strata partnership. The system aims to create a seamless customer experience by providing efficient and integrated communication channels.
- **Enabler three: CRM and forms**: This enabler focuses on the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and forms to improve customer interactions and streamline processes, in the case of Exeter this will include the launch of MyExeter, a digital one-stop shop for council services.
- **Enabler four: Enterprise Middleware Architecture (EMA)**: The EMA serves as a crucial layer in modern IT environments, enabling seamless integration and communication between various applications, systems, and databases. It aimed to future-proof integrations and reduce the impact of replacing back-office systems.
- **Enabler five: SharePoint**: SharePoint is identified as a key enabler for secure and efficient management and retrieval of documents. It meets strategic objectives such as good data management, compliance with legislation, and obligations like the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- **Enabler six: Bookings**: This enabler involves the implementation of a booking system to streamline and manage appointments and reservations effectively.
- **Enabler seven: Notifications**: This enabler focuses on enhancing the notification system to provide timely and relevant updates to customers and staff.
- **Enabler eight: Power Platform**: The Power Platform enabler aims to leverage Microsoft's Power Platform to create custom applications, automate workflows, and analyze data, thereby improving efficiency and productivity.
- **Enabler nine: Data Platform**: This enabler involves the development of a robust data platform to support data-driven decision-making and improve data management practices.
- **Enabler ten: Website Content and Chatbot**: This enabler focuses on enhancing website content and implementing a chatbot to improve customer engagement and provide instant support.

3

Within the business plan examples have been provided how the council's aspirations can be met by common enablers that can be embedded into its digital program, for example:

Theme	Digital strategy		Common enablers
Increase customer self-service	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy	→	• Enabler 3: customer platform
	• A culture of and delivery of excellent customer and digital service		• Enabler 4: Enterprise Middleware Architecture
	• One Front Door - aims to make it easier for customers to get the information, advice, and		• Enabler 6: Bookings
	• support from the council when they need it and in a way that works best for them. A joined-up channel		• Enabler 7: Notifications
	• Understand the demand for council services and what can be moved onto a digital platform and		• Enabler 10: Web content and chat bot
	• What still needs to be handled with human interaction.		
	• Introduce a single view of the customer		

4

Theme	Digital strategy	Common enablers
Single point of contact	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy • One Front Door – Customers can contact us easily via a single point of contact. Staff use joined up technology so they can view a Single Customer Record to handle the majority of customer enquiries, avoiding the need to hand off to others.	• Enabler 2: contact centre and telephony • Enabler 3: CRM and Forms • Enabler 4: Enterprise Middleware Architecture • Enabler 3: CRM and Forms • Enabler 6: Bookings • Enabler 7: Notifications • Enabler 10: Web Content and Chatbot •
Enabling staff	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy • Streamline process, automating routine steps. Remove Paper transactions, Explore use of AI. • Provide staff with access to continuously improving digital technology. • Equip staff with the necessary digital skills. • Provide equipment needed to perform.	• Enabler 1: End User Computing • Enabler: four Enterprise Middleware Architecture • Enabler 5: SharePoint • Enabler 6: Bookings • Enabler 7: Notifications • Enabler 8: Power Platform

5

Theme	Digital strategy	Common enablers
Use of data	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy • Exeter will routinely analyse customer data and feedback and use these insights to inform how services develop. • Be open and transparent and publish data and information. • Data is organised and maintained in line with best Practice, we know where our business critical data resides and what is being done with it. The data is controlled and classified using technology.	• Enabler 9: Data and Data Warehouse
Robust IT platform	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy • Fit-for-purpose ICT infrastructure and systems. • Move from paper based to digital. • Migrate to the cloud. • Implement a strategy for protecting and managing sensitive and business critical data.	• Server rationalisation • Application rationalisation • SaaS first for application • Roadmaps for applications to cloud transition • Enabler 1: EUC • Enabler 2: contact centre and telephony

6

Theme	Digital strategy	Common enablers
Net zero →	**Exeter City Council** Digital Customer Service Strategy • Links to Exeter's Net Zero City plan	→ • Enabler 1: End User Computing

The updated Business Plan for 2025/26 builds upon the foundations of the first plan and its key enablers – Contact Centre, End User Computing, SharePoint migration, Middleware and Cyber Security enhancements and emphasises the importance of continuing to develop these to sustain a strong and resilient ICT service. The plan highlights the ongoing improvements to IT and systems which will enable a move to cloud-based systems which will replace the need for physical server rooms across the council estate. The move from Skype to Teams telephony and preparing to move lines from analogue to digital services.

Exeter City Council has committed significant sums to its capital program to help deliver this plan. Further information can be found in section 10. The enablers are supported by the council and underpin the transformation work it is carrying out to improve customer service.

3. **Launch of MyExeter**

One of the significant milestones achieved is the launch of MyExeter, the council's new digital front door. MyExeter went live in January 2025, starting with the Garden Waste subscription service. This platform aims to provide a seamless and user-friendly experience for customers, allowing them to access various council services online. The initial feedback from users has been positive and plans for a dedicated communications plan to encourage sign-up are underway with the Communications team and to further expand the services available through MyExeter during 2025.

4. **Digital Workshops and Training**

To ensure that staff and members are well-equipped to deliver excellent customer service, several digital workshops have taken place, and more are planned for 2025. For example, the Extended Leadership Team participated in a variety of workshops, which focused on the digital customer service strategy, its outcomes and the collection of data for the new Corporate Performance Framework. Additionally, Beyond Teams sessions are planned for all staff in March 2025. These sessions aim to enhance digital knowledge and skills, enabling staff to better use the new digital tools available to them. A newsletter updating staff and members on the improvements taking place is planned to be rolled out from March 2025.

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5. **Development of a Customer Charter**

The Customer Services team is in the process of developing a Customer Charter, which will be developed with input from Councillors and customers during 2025. The Customer Charter will outline the standards customers can expect across all services, ensuring a consistent and high-quality customer experience and will provide data on areas for improvement as part of the Corporate Performance Framework across all service areas. This initiative is part of the broader effort to foster a culture of excellent customer service within the council.

6. **Telephony and Contact Centre Solution**

In 2023/2024 the published telephone numbers and email addresses across the website were reviewed and rationalised to ensure that customers were presented with a simple, easy to understand journey that promoted our One Front Door approach.

As of February 2025, all staff have transferred from Skype to Teams telephony, with control of administration such as routing, in-call messaging and opening hours now sitting with Customer Services. Customer Service staff will transfer to Teams in line with the implementation of the new Contact Centre platform in late Spring 2025.

The new contact centre solution, Nice CX One, was procured in December 2024 across the Strata partnership and is scheduled to go live in Exeter in Spring 2025. This solution will enhance the seamless customer experience by providing efficient and integrated communication channels. Implementation will be phased, with each phase delivering measurable business and customer benefits, such as delivering a single omnichannel solution, (chat, telephony, online etc, in a single solution), and developing use cases for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist agents in achieving effective outcomes for customers.

Progress on Digital Customer Strategy Goals

The Digital Customer Strategy outlines ten goals, each with specific actions and measures of success. The following sections provide an update on the progress made towards achieving these goals:

A. **A Culture of Excellent Customer and Digital Service**

The council has made significant progress in fostering a culture of excellent customer and digital service. Briefings on the digital customer strategy are planned for all staff, highlighting expectations and how they can contribute through behaviours, systems, and ways of working. A newsletter will shortly be launched to update all staff on the progress of the strategy, and Teams awareness sessions are scheduled to begin in Spring 2025.

B. **Digital Equality**

In September 2023 work was commissioned to develop a city-wide picture of digital inequality and make recommendations around addressing this. This area is one of the priority themes of Exeter's Community Grants programme. In addition, the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) improvement plan has the training of staff, to increase staff knowledge and awareness of the Equality Duties as a key outcome. EDI and accessibility are ongoing themes within design and delivery of services to residents.

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C. **Efficient Processes**

The council is committed to streamlining processes to enhance efficiency and improve the customer experience. The implementation of the new telephony and contact centre solution is a key step in this direction. Additionally, efforts are being made to simplify and automate various processes, reducing the time and effort required to access services.

Projects are currently underway in the City Development, Parks and Open Spaces, and Waste Management services to review processes, content on the website and look at ways that digitalisation will enable us to enhance the service we offer to residents.

For example, the project aims of the City Development transformation project are:

- To enable City Development to deliver the outcomes in the Digital Customer Strategy and be an exemplar of excellent digital and customer service delivery, by collaborating with national initiatives and integrating best practice.

- To create an approach and methodology for how we will systematically transform frontline services across the council, in line with the outcomes of the Digital Customer Strategy.

The Rapid Impact Team has brought in a small group of experts from RedQuadrant working alongside the operational managers in Parks and Open Spaces, and Waste Management to undertake a rapid assessment of current processes, use of line of business systems; operating models and performance within each service and benchmark this against best practice models and the councils aspirations in the Digital Customer Strategy and the potential deployment of the Strata enablers as set out for digital transformation.

Both of these projects will be delivering their initial feedback in April 2025 with actions plans for each to be created and a work programme for delivery to be determined.

D. **Joined-Up Channels**

The strategy emphasises the importance of providing joined-up channels for customer interactions. MyExeter is a significant step towards achieving this goal, offering a single platform for accessing multiple services. Plans are in place to integrate additional services into MyExeter, further enhancing the customer experience, the processes chosen have been from usage data and quick wins.

To compliment the garden waste process which was the first process to be added to MyExeter services from the Waste Management service will the next ones to be added:

Process	Demand / Usage
Bin Reminders	4,735 current subscribers
Bulky Waste Collections	2,096 annual collections
Order a New or Replacement Bin	4,187 cases per annum

	10,672 cases (9,602 online, 1,957 via Customer Services, 1,070 via Bartec)
Report a missed bin	

Quick wins are those processes with high demand and by adding these to MyExeter will help customers to track the progress of their enquiry which will remove the need to contact the council via other communication channels:

Process	Demand / Usage
Allotments	590 cases per annum
Car Park Season tickets	516 cases, 634 tickets per annum

A full communications plan for MyExeter is being developed by the Communications Team which will help us promote the service to residents, businesses, and tenants.

E. **Secure Data**

Ensuring the security of customer data is a top priority for the council. Measures have been implemented to safeguard data and protect customer privacy. Regular audits and assessments are conducted by Strata to identify and address potential vulnerabilities, this includes the completion of the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) which is a tool designed to help the council and Strata to achieve and demonstrate cyber resilience for its critical functions.

The CAF consists of objectives, principles, outcomes, and indicators. The framework will be used to assess the extent to which cyber risks to essential functions are being managed. The CAF involves several key aspects:

- Decision Making: Ensuring that security management is led and supported at the senior level, with evidence such as minutes, job descriptions, and regular reviews of security information from Strata.

- Governance: Formal governance of cyber/IT security, including evidence of meetings and outcomes, and ensuring that security practices are directed towards council staff and Strata where required.

- Risk Management: Having a risk policy and evidence of its review, recording security risks, and ensuring that risks are communicated to key risk owners in the council and Strata.

- Assurance: Providing assurance that the governance and resulting outcomes from the cyber approach are delivering within the council's risk appetite.

Staff training on data security has been provided to ensure that all employees are aware of best practices and protocols. We have recently carried out a phishing test of all staff to assess the level of staff compliance with policy and to understand colleagues' awareness of potential phishing emails. The test involved sending a phishing email to all staff users at an agreed time.

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The test highlighted the need for further training and awareness among staff to prevent such incidents in the future. Technical controls put into place by Strata to protect the council, including the use Mimecast and Microsoft E5, which would have quickly spotted a mass campaign and blocked it after the first few clicks.

Further training on cyber security and tests will take place at regular intervals.

F. Digital Collaboration

The council recognises the importance of digital collaboration in achieving its goals. Efforts are being made to foster collaboration both within the council and with external partners. The digital workshops and Beyond Teams sessions are examples of initiatives aimed at promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing. The City Development Transformation Programme, HR Improvement Plan and Rapid Impact Project which is looking at services in Parks and Open Spaces, and Waste Management are examples of initiatives currently underway in the council where improvements to processes, web processes and practices are being made. These proof-of-concept projects can be used as templates to make further improvements across the rest of the council. Sharing of best practice across the councils that make up the Strata partnership continues to take place and is actively encouraged.

G. Enhanced Digital Knowledge and Skills

Building digital knowledge and skills among staff and members is crucial for the success of the strategy. A training programme is planned for delivery in 2025 to provide tailored training to meet the specific needs of different roles. This programme is intended to equip staff with the skills required to deliver a first-class customer service and effectively utilise digital tools and technologies.

H. Customer-Centric Design

The strategy emphasises the importance of designing services with the customer in mind. Feedback from customers is being actively sought through improvements to the website to seek advice and discussions with the new Consultation and Engagement Manager on ways we can implement this into our business as usual and once in place it can be used to inform the design and improvement of services. The development of the Customer Charter is a key initiative in this regard, ensuring that customer expectations are met and exceeded.

I. Continuous Improvement

The council is committed to continuous improvement in its digital customer service. Regular reviews and assessments are conducted to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes. The progress report on the strategy is an example of the council's commitment to transparency and accountability.

J. Sustainable Digital Transformation

Sustainability is a core principle of the Digital Customer Strategy. Efforts are being made to ensure that digital transformation initiatives are sustainable and have a positive impact on the environment. The council is exploring ways to reduce its carbon footprint through the use of digital technologies and processes.

Within the Strata Business Plan 2025-2026 several initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainability have been added. This includes upgrading to more energy-efficient equipment and optimising energy use in existing systems. Strata plan to implement a system to monitor and report on its carbon footprint. This will help track progress and identify areas for improvement. The plan includes

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initiatives to engage employees in sustainability efforts. This involves training and awareness programmes to promote eco-friendly practices, and they plan to work closely with us to align sustainability goals and share best practices.

Investment and Budgets available for the Digital Customer Strategy

In 2023/24 the council invested capital of £288,989 in support of the emerging Customer Digital Strategy. A further £1,139,340 was approved for investment in 2024/25 to support the delivery of the Enablers within the Strata Business Plan. For 2025/26 Council plans further capital investment of £452,758.

REVENUE COSTS	21/22	22/23	23/24		24/25
	Actual	Actual	Actual		Actual (up to qtr 3)
	£	£	£		£
Strata Contract for ECC	1,951,686	2,107,677	2,331,835		2,129,833

Conclusion

The Digital Customer Strategy has made significant progress since its adoption in December 2023. The creation of dedicated capital funding for this strategy, bespoke Customer and Communities and Digital and Data teams in the council's new structure, the launch of MyExeter, digital workshops, and procurement of a new telephony and contact centre solution are some of the key achievements. The council remains committed to enhancing customer service through digital transformation and is on track to achieve the goals outlined in the strategy. Ongoing efforts to address digital inequality, promote digital collaboration, and build digital knowledge and skills will ensure that the strategy continues to deliver positive outcomes for residents and staff alike.

Andrew Hopkins, Head of Service, Digital and Data
Stephen Clayton, Head of Service, Customer and Communities
March 2025.

Appendix B: DIGITAL CUSTOMER STRATEGY ACTION PLAN - MARCH 2025		Authors: Andrew Hopkins and Stephen Clayton.	
AGREED ACTIONS	**PRIORITY ACTIONS**	**PROGRESS REPORT**	**PROPOSED DELIVERY DATES**
Goal 1. A culture of excellent customer and digital service			
Our staff and members understand our digital customer service strategy and its outcomes. These inform the design of their work, putting customers and digital at the forefront of everything we do.	We will run awareness (cultural change) sessions on our digital customer strategy for all staff, highlighting and explaining expectations and how they can contribute through behaviours, systems and ways of working.	Digital workshops and workshops on collecting data for the new Corporate Performance framework have been held with Extended Leadership Team. 3 x Beyond Teams sessions for all staff held in March. Further training will be scheduled. Bespoke newsletter to update all staff to begin April 2025.	June 2025
Our members and staff have the knowledge and skills to plan, resource and deliver a first-class customer service.	We will provide a programme of training tailored to the needs of staff and members.	Programme will be scheduled in April 2025 to be rolled out during May/June 2025.	June 2025
Our organisational structure and the allocation of our resources enable our digital and customer service outcomes.	We will ensure that this vision and mission is embedded into our organisational change plans.	Bespoke Digital and Data and Customer and Communities teams created in restructure in 2024, with Heads of Service appointed.	Completed
Goal 2. Digital equality			

Members and staff understand the scope and scale of digital inequality in Exeter, and we work with communities and partners to address digital exclusion and inequalities so that everyone can benefit from digital opportunities.	We will commission a report from experts to get insight and data to better understand digital inequality in Exeter.

We will implement a plan to address the issues that we discover.

We will increase our training around disabilities and diversity to help our staff deal with all customers more effectively. | RedQuadrant were commissioned to look at Digital Equality and a report was presented to council in September 2023

Within the Red Quadrant report were several recommendations these included:
The use of community grants programme to promote digital inclusion.
Money from the Neighbourhood CIL was set aside for a digital inclusion project. However, due to a downturn in the CIL forecast this is not currently in the pipeline for 2025/26 and we will need to review how we deliver this.

An EDI Project Plan has been created with a dedicated EDI Officer and a training programme being developed as an outcome. | December 2025 |
Goal 3. Excellent customer and digital services			
We understand what excellent digital services means to our customers and we meet these standards.	We will publish a Customer Charter setting out the standards that customers can expect across all our services, monitor our performance and continuously improve.	The new Consultations and Engagement Manager will be working on this during 2025.	October 2025
We listen to customers to improve existing services and to design excellent new services.	We will routinely analyse customer, data and feedback and use this insight to ensure to inform how services develop.	New mechanisms to receive feedback on our website and online processes to be added in April 2025, these will be analysed by the Customer Services and Digital Teams to make relevant improvements.	April 2025 and on-going - progress to be reported annually
The customer experience is improved by the use of virtual assistance technology (also known as a digital assistants) which answer questions and process	We will work with recognised industry experts to identify how we can use virtual assistance in our digital services and learn from proofs of concept to ensure we understand the business and customer benefits prior to wholescale change.	Within the Strata business plan are enablers (notifications, website, chatbots, enterprise middleware architecture, CRM and forms) all of which will enable improvements to be made. These improvements will start to improve the service during 2025.	On-going - progress to be reported annually

simple and routine tasks without human intervention.		Chatbot project to commence in Spring 2025.	October 2025
Customers receive pre-emptive and proactive communication, which keeps them updated about issues, appointments and progress so they don't need to contact us.	We will explore and test out how we can use digital channels e.g. email, text, chat, apps for proactive communication and make content and information available in formats that are accessible to all.		
Customers can keep track of their requests to the council and access frequently used services and information by logging into their customer account.	We will assess the ongoing requirements for, the business benefits of, and the advantages for customers of customer accounts and implement the optimum solution.	MyExeter our online digital front door was launched at the end of January 2025 with Garden Waste subscription as the first service, additional services will be added through 2025. First phase of promotion for MyExeter	On-going - progress to be reported annually June 2025
When customers or members raise an issue or problem with a council service this is managed efficiently and effectively and escalated to a formal complaint if not resolved.	We will continue to review our contact us/complaints process to ensure that the digital solution is working effectively for customers.	The Customer services and Digital Teams are working to improve the service provided. Improvements will be made through 2025 including a revision of the current complaints process.	November 2025
Goal 4. Prioritised, joined-up channels			
The majority of customer enquiries and transactions are handled through digital channels and demand for other forms of contact (face-to-face, telephone and email) is continually reducing and is mainly for specialist or complex enquiries.	We will design services, so that digital becomes the channel of choice, providing staff with the time and skills to deal with specialist and more complex enquiries.	Work to deliver this change with the launch of MyExeter has begun, our new digital front door for the council. The removal of email addresses and (where appropriate) from web pages has taken place. First phase of promotion for My Exeter.	On-going progress to be reported annually June 2025

Our contact centre offers a choice of channels, but the relevant information follows the customer across channels and interactions, so we retain the full history and context of customers' enquiries.	We will assess the capability of our line of business and customer relationship management systems, to deliver a seamless customer and staff experience.	A telephony and contact centre solution has been procured and will go live in Spring 2025.	June 2025
Our single customer services function with the knowledge and skills to resolve enquiries at the first contact point across all channels, with the ability to enable customers to easily access specialist support.	We will Design services so that customers get to the right place, first time. Train staff to gain the skills, to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact and, where this is not possible, to efficiently enable customers to the right place/person.	An ongoing programme to improve our processes has begun, initially with the Rapid Improvement Team projects in the Operations Directorate due for reporting by May 2025 with project in City Development, due to report in Sept 2025. Both will inform the wider organisational development plan to be produced by September 2025.	September 2025
Customers can contact us easily via a single point of contact without having to navigate multiple, complex contact points.	We will Increase the proportion of contact handled by our professional contact centre function Reduce the number of published contact routes Enhance our online 'Contact Us' and central telephony services, to simplify and improve the user experience Join up services for a seamless customer experience.	Reducing published contact routes and first phase of 'Contact Us' completed. Multiple links to Contact Centre Project, My Account, Rapid Improvement and City Development Projects	Phase 1 complete Linked projects by December 2025
Staff use joined-up technology so that they can view and update a single customer record to handle the majority of customer enquiries and review records of customer	We will upgrade the capability of our customer contact systems to deliver a seamless customer and staff experience.	A telephony and contact centre solution has been procured and will go live in Spring 2025. Phase 1 implements the new solution	Phase 1 June 2025 Phase 2

		Phase 2 Omnichannel functions and AI	December 2025
transactions across multiple services, avoiding the need for handing off to others.			
Goal 6. Accessible information			
All customers can serve themselves on any device by finding, or being directed to readable, accessible, accurate and up-to-date online information.	We will: Redesign the content of our website to ensure that our published digital information is readable, accessible, accurate and up-to-date Improve our staff's knowledge and skills in writing readable (Plain English) digital content and accessibility requirements Publish and implement a Data Strategy.	A programme to revise and update the website, including a reduction in the number of templates and new home page, included an improved A-Z search facility is planned for 2025.	On-going progress to be reported annually
We will be open and transparent and publish data and information. Performance is regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered.		City Development the first service to fully review and update its pages and content. Data Strategy will be considered by Executive in April 2025.	June 2025 April 2025
Goal 7. Efficient processes			
The number of processes is reduced, or they are streamlined, paperless and automated so that it's simple for customers to complete a transaction (apply for something, pay for something, book something) and more efficient and cost effective for the council.	We will: Start with the customer when reviewing and designing our processes Ensure our processes are as effective and efficient as possible by automating routine steps and removing inefficient manual (human) processing Aim for processes that are automated from beginning to end Remove paper transaction and communication Explore the use of artificial intelligence, robotics and digital signatures and develop proofs of concept.	An ongoing programme of process improvement continues, this is initially focussed on the City Development service. Programmes for the Operations, Waste Management and HR services are planned for Spring 2025. Both will inform wider Organisational development plan to be produced by September 2025.	September 2025
Goal 8. Fit-for-purpose ICT infrastructure and systems			

Our staff and members have access to continuously improving digital technology, with the kills and confidence to use it well, helping them deliver great services to residents as efficiently as possible.	We will work with Strata, our ICT partner, and our partner Councils, to create a plan for ICT that enables the goals of our Digital Customer Service Strategy and our three essential principles.	Strata plans to improve the ICT infrastructure by transitioning from analogue to digital systems and migrating to the cloud. This will involve implementing digital collaboration tools and shared data platforms to enhance internal and external communications, as well as developing a detailed implementation plan for a cross-council roll-out of Microsoft 365.	December 2025
Our ICT infrastructure and systems operate in line with our essential principles: Move from analogue to digital Migrate to the cloud Introduce a single customer platform.		Cloud (Azure) Business Case has been agreed within Strata Partnership with transitional implementation plans proposed to be begin Summer 2025.	
Goal 9. Well-maintained and secure data			
Our systems and data are secure and protected from cybersecurity breaches and unauthorised sharing.	We will: work with Strata our ICT partner to ensure that our systems are regularly tested to identify any vulnerabilities and mitigate any risks	Strata will ensure that systems are regularly tested to identify any vulnerabilities by conducting routine security assessments and audits.	On-going progress to be reported annually
Customers are confident that any information provided to the council will be kept safe and secure.	Ensure staff are aware of our information security policies and procedures and how to mitigate the risks of cyber security breaches.	They plan to mitigate the risks of cyber security breaches by implementing robust security measures and continuously monitoring for potential threats.	
We use data to review and continuously improve our digital services.	We will implement a strategy for protecting and managing sensitive and business critical data so that:	A data strategy will be considered for adoption by Executive in April 2025.	
Our data is organised and maintained in line with best practice.	We know where our business critical and sensitive data resides and what is being done with it. We have control of this data as it travels inside and outside of the council We use technology to classify, label, and protect this data		

	We use our data to inform decision making and improvement.		
Goal 10. Digital collaboration			
As a Microsoft 365 house we will use digital collaboration tools to work effectively internally and with customers and partners to promote more open communications and making use of shared data and digital platforms.	We will compile a detailed implementation plan for a cross-council roll out of Microsoft 365, which optimises the opportunities for breaking down silos and using tools to achieve our digital customer service goals.	Strata and the Digital and Data team continue to work on a cross-council roll-out of Microsoft 365 and provide staff and members with the tools to achieve the digital customer service goals.	On-going progress to be reported annually

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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 1 April 2025

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 15 April 2025

Report of: Strategic Director, People and Communities

Title: Data Strategy

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 The Exeter City Council Data Strategy outlines the council's approach to using data to achieve its strategic goals. The strategy aims to align with the adopted Digital Customer Strategy and the revised draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028 and outlines the principles for data use at the council, the technology that will be used, the processes, roles, and responsibilities needed to make informed decisions.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that Council approve the Data Strategy as set out in Appendix A.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 The aim of the Data Strategy is to enable the Council to meet its strategic goals by making better and greater use of the data it holds.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

4.1 None, the work to implement the Data Strata which be picked up within business as usual, One Exeter and the Strata Business Plan 2025/26.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no additional financial implications for Council to consider.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 The Council is required to ensure that it complies with the legal provisions concerning the governance of personal data in its policies and practices. The law concerning data protection in the United Kingdom is primarily governed by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). The DPA 2018 supplements the UK GDPR and provides a comprehensive legal framework for data protection in the UK.

6.2 The DPA 2018 outlines the processing of personal data, which includes any operation performed on personal data such as collection, recording, storage, and dissemination. It defines key terms such as "personal data," "data subject," "controller," and "processor". The Act also establishes the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as the regulatory authority responsible for enforcing data protection laws in the UK.

6.3 The UK GDPR assimilates the EU GDPR into UK law post-Brexit and imposes extensive obligations on organisations processing personal data. These obligations include ensuring the lawfulness, fairness, and transparency of data processing, data minimisation, accuracy, storage limitation, integrity and confidentiality, and accountability. The UK GDPR also grants various rights to data subjects, such as the right to access their data, the right to rectification, and the right to erasure.

6.4 The DPA 2018 also includes provisions for criminal offences related to the misuse of personal data, ensuring that data protection laws are upheld with significant penalties for non-compliance.

6.5 Accordingly the DPA 2018 and the UK GDPR together provide the basis of data protection law in the United Kingdom by providing a robust framework which is designed to ensure that fair and responsible use of personal data while safeguarding the rights of individuals.

6.6 Other legislation relevant to the strategy includes the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015 concerning access to information held by public authorities and which has been identified as available for re-use, as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 concerning access to information held by the Council, as well as a duty to proactively publish information.

6.7 Members will also note the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 which sets out specific information that must be published by local authorities will the aim of ensuring transparency. This includes, for example, the requirement to publish details of all items of expenditure over £500 and the publication of contracts with a value over £5,000.

6.8 Finally, the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 addresses matters including the responsibility of local authorities to manage and preserve records of local interest to ensure that such records are accessible for public inspection.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 Members will note that the proposed strategy is to apply across the Council. In applying a data strategy, the Council needs to ensure that it complies with relevant legal requirements.

8. Report details:

8.1 The Data Strategy outlines Exeter City Council's approach to using data to achieve its strategic goals.

The strategy outlines the context from Government which set out in 2020 a national data strategy with a key message that the use of data is a key enabler for delivering outcomes for citizens.

A data maturity assessment tool was developed for local government to help local authorities understand how well they are using data. In 2023, Exeter City Council engaged independent consultants Red Quadrant to undertake this assessment. The outcome was an overall data maturity of 2.88 (out of 5) indicating that while the council had begun its journey working with data, it had not implemented a systematic approach to developing data capacity and capabilities.

The production and adoption of the Data Strategy (as set out in Appendix A) is a key step in achieving higher levels of data maturity.

The data strategy aims to enable the council to:

- understand the true cost of services by combining datasets from financial and operational sources;
- move towards real time analysis to ensure deployment of resources is as efficient way as possible;
- publish data to help businesses grow the local economy and enhance the authorities' cultural heritage;
- facilitate the use of geographic data to manage local assets, influence local stakeholders and map local needs and resources;
- standardise data flows across the council to produce an insight into customers' use and experience of services to enable continuous improvement; and
- consume external data to develop the evidence base for de-carbonisation of the local economy

The report sets out the risks if we were to take a 'do nothing' approach to data maturity and sets out the future vision with the principles the council will take to its use of data in the future. Namely that our data is trusted and represents a single version of the truth which will enable all decisions made to be evidence-based using timely data.

A timetable of the proposed actions and next steps for the use of the data in the council is set out in the report which includes how we plan to develop skills and capabilities of all staff and Councillors and how Strata our IT service solutions and digital transformation partner will help us deliver the strategy. Officers plan to bring updates on the implementation plan as part of the updates provided on the progress of the Digital Customer Strategy.

9.   How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The Data Strategy once adopted will enable us to report on all the measures and actions as set out in the Corporate Plan and contribute to our objectives of being a Well-Run Council.

10.   What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 If we don't adopt and embed the Data Strategy into the work of the council our services would fail to deliver their intended strategic objectives as we fail to understand the changing demands from customers and would be unable to predict and prepare for future demand based on trends.

11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for information only.

12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 No

Strategic Director People and Communities, Jo Yelland

Author: Andrew Hopkins – Head of Service, Digital and Data

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report: -

None

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Exeter City Council Data Strategy

Introduction

This Data Strategy is for the whole council and not just data teams and specialists. It sets out how using data will enable us to achieve our wider strategic goals.

Data is an information asset, and like all organisations, we are collecting, creating and storing large amounts of data through our day-to-day operations. This data strategy sets out the technology, processes, roles and responsibilities that are needed to use our information to make informed decisions.

It is aligned to and supports the implementation of the Digital Customer Strategy previously agreed by the Council in 2023.

National Context

In 2020 the Government published a national data strategy that sets objectives for how the use of data will help the country make use of five opportunities:

1. Boosting productivity and trade
2. Supporting new businesses and jobs
3. Increasing the speed, efficiency and scope of scientific research
4. Driving better delivery of policy and public services
5. Creating a fairer society for all

A key message, for the wider public sector from Government, is that the use of data is a key enabler for delivering citizen outcomes

In 2023 the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published a policy to support local government to improve its performance by collating performance metric data to help identify opportunities for improvement and predict governance and financial failures at local authority level.

The Local Authority Data Explorer demonstrates the increasing need for external stakeholders to receive transparent performance reports based on accurate data collected.

Local Context

The Local Government Data Maturity Assessment Tool has been developed to enable local authorities to build a shared understanding of how well they are using data. https://datamaturity.esd.org.uk/

In 2023 we engaged independent consultancy Red Quadrant to undertake the assessment, all members of the extended leadership team and individuals known to have experience of working with data from across the organisation were asked to complete the survey to give a broad range of perspectives.

The outcome was an overall data maturity score of 2.88 (out of 5) indicating that while we have begun our journey of working with data, we have not yet implemented a systematic approach to developing data capacity and capabilities.

The main implication of this is that there is a need to take concerted actions and make considerable investment in data collection and handling before good practice becomes both widespread and reliable. This is also likely to take some time to achieve through a carefully planned project plan.

The production of this strategy is a key step in achieving higher levels of data maturity.

Strategic Objectives

The purpose of a digital strategy is to enable the achievement of the strategic goals set out in the Customer digital strategy 2023 2026 and the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028 in conjunction with the Strata Business Plan 2025/26.

Customer Digital Strategy: ambition: "We excel at customer and digital service". To achieve this goal, we need a data strategy that helps up gather useful insights from customer data and builds the skills needed to create and run great digital experiences for our customers.

Corporate Plan: All local authorities are under pressure to reduce budgets and provide value for money. The data strategy must enable us to:

- understand the true cost of services by combining datasets from financial and operational sources
- move towards real time analysis to ensure deployment of resources is as efficient way as possible
- publish data to help businesses grow the local economy and enhance the authorities' cultural heritage
- facilitate the use of geographic data to manage local assets, influence local stakeholders and map local needs and resources
- standardise data flows across the council to produce an insight into customers' use and experience of services to enable continuous improvement
- consume external data to develop the evidence base for de-carbonisation of the local economy

Strategic Objectives – Risk Assessment

If we were to take a 'do nothing' approach to data maturity. We would fail to meet customers' expectations because:
- Customers will have a poor experience of our services through duplication of effort as they must use multiple digital systems
- We can't give customers updates on their service requests in real time
- We are unable to diagnose and address service quality issues
- We are unable to provide the transparency customers expect

Our services would fail to deliver their intended strategic objectives because we lack an understanding of the changing demands from customers and are unable to predict and prepare for future demand based on trends.

We would fail to achieve several of our net-zero carbon goals, city centre strategy and local plan objectives because we would be unable to publish persuasive evidence to influence partners and local strategic decisions

We would also be unable to make the efficiency savings needed to deliver a balanced budget and MTFP because we have data that is of poor quality and unusable for generating insight, and our leadership will become increasingly incapable of driving digital transformation and implementing data projects

Our asset portfolio performance would worsen over time leading to a loss of income and strategic benefit because we are unable to make evidence-based decisions, and our asset data becomes increasingly inaccurate as our data processes lag behind our strategic and operational requirements

Our Future Vision

Our data is trusted and represents a single version of the truth that enables us to be informed, data-driven, and intelligent in our approach to service development, driving a collaborative approach to solving challenges, improving services, and enhancing customer experience.

All decisions we make are evidence-based using timely data. Our elected members make data-informed decisions and drive our data ambitions. We have clear goals for how our data can be used for wider public benefit and we monitor our progress against these goals.

We have a comprehensive range of data available to us and this is searchable, and we have broad awareness of where our data is stored. Data underpins our planning of all new work or service design changes, and we identify how all data projects support our wider strategic goals, and learn from previous projects when developing data products

Our data products are all designed for reuse. Data collection and storage processes are based on recognised data standards and documented. Data is made available quickly and reliably when requested and we have continuous data quality improvement.

Our staff have access to easy-to-use analytical tools and support, and they will routinely use suitable analytics and automation in service design and improvement, performance management and strategy development.

We will use our data for maximum public good, sharing data with partners for strategic planning, and publishing data using recognised standards.

Our staff will all be highly-data literate l and we will invest in recruiting and retaining the specialist and non- specialist roles we need to achieve our objectives. Data skills will be developed through a comprehensive training and development programme.

Principles we will work to

- Our data is a valuable corporate asset as it enables us to achieve our strategic priorities.
- Regardless of how it has been collected or acquired, our data does not belong to a team, service or department and is used by all parts of the organisation for maximum benefit.
- Our data must be used for the public good of the people within the authority and wherever possible published on broadly adopted open data standards.
- All data must be collected and stored in structured datasets at or as soon as possible after the events they represent.
- Our data must be of sufficient quality, based on recognised standards, stored in standardised formats, complete and current.
- Our data must be defined using a corporate metadata framework, catalogued, discoverable and searchable.
- Our data must be ready for use at the point of access by being technically accessible, interoperable across our technology, linkable to other datasets and reusable.
- All staff, in both specialist and non-specialist roles, and councillors must have the requisite data awareness, knowledge and skills.
- We always consult and inform data product users and affected stakeholders when planning new data projects.
- Every dataset we hold must have an owner who understands their governance responsibilities.

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- Our use of data must be governed via standardised processes that are well understood and implemented consistently.
- Our use of data must always be lawful, ethical, fair and transparent.
- Our data structure and processes enable pro-active decisions and a coordinated approach across all service areas

Key Components of the Strategy

Due to our partnership with Strata, it is important to understand which elements of our data strategy will be delivered by Strata (set out in their business plan,) and which will require us to lead or support actions. Using the LGA data maturity framework, it is also important to understand how the different elements in our data strategy interact with or depend on each other. These are set out below.

Skills & Capability	Leadership & Strategy	Culture & Structure	Systems & Tools	Data Life Cycle	Governance & Compliance
This is the foundation of your data strategy and is led and delivered internally.	This is the base platform on which you will develop other enabling pillars so must be led and delivered internally.	This is an enabling pillar that you need to develop and is led and delivered internally.	This is an enabling pillar that will be delivered through the Strata business plan.	While elements are enabled by Strata, this enabling pillar requires significant internal investment.	This enabling pillar focuses on internal policy and behaviours so must by led and delivered internally.

The following diagram sets out how these workstreams fit together to deliver the key outcome of becoming a data-driven council

Legend:
- Council led and delivered
- Enabled by Strata with significant investment by the Council
- Delivered by Strata with input from the Council

Outcome → Data-driven Council

Enabling pillars → Culture and Structure | Systems and Tools | Data Life Cycle | Governance and Compliance

Ground level/base → Leadership and Strategy

Foundation → Skills and Capability

Sitting on the foundation of Skills and Capability and the base of Leadership and Strategy, the pillars will enable you to become data-driven.

The base is visible and sets the position for the enabling pillars to be built up.

The foundation is not always visible but is vitally important for holding up the structure

Timeline and Sequencing: Actions and Next Steps

This diagram sets out the themes and actions in the strategy and how they are proposed to be sequenced.

Skills and capability, as the weakest element currently, is addressed first, followed by leadership and strategy in 2025/26. The other elements of the strategy are enabled by these and take shape over 2025-2028.

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Actions and Next Steps

Systems and tools - Strata business plan 2024 -27

Skills and Capability

- There is clear understanding of data roles needed to achieve strategic goals
- An enterprise data competency framework is in place
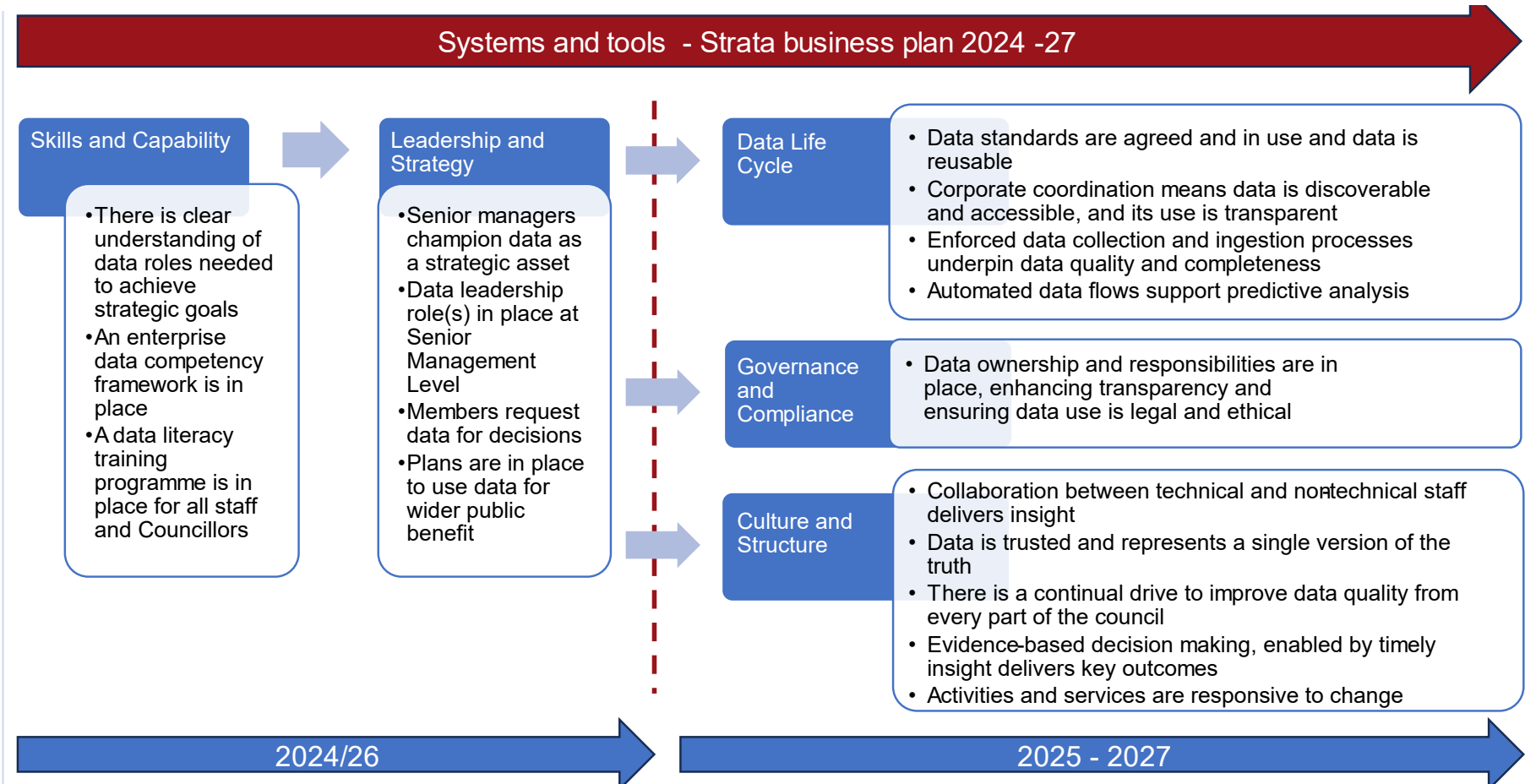- A data literacy training programme is in place for all staff and Councillors

Leadership and Strategy

- Senior managers champion data as a strategic asset
- Data leadership role(s) in place at Senior Management Level
- Members request data for decisions
- Plans are in place to use data for wider public benefit

Data Life Cycle

- Data standards are agreed and in use and data is reusable
- Corporate coordination means data is discoverable and accessible, and its use is transparent
- Enforced data collection and ingestion processes underpin data quality and completeness
- Automated data flows support predictive analysis

Governance and Compliance

- Data ownership and responsibilities are in place, enhancing transparency and ensuring data use is legal and ethical

Culture and Structure

- Collaboration between technical and non-technical staff delivers insight
- Data is trusted and represents a single version of the truth
- There is a continual drive to improve data quality from every part of the council
- Evidence-based decision making, enabled by timely insight delivers key outcomes
- Activities and services are responsive to change

2024/26

2025 - 2027

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Appendix 1 : Data Life Cycle

Activities and behaviours towards data at the planning and design stage of projects.

Behaviours when data is collected, acquired from elsewhere and ingested into business systems.

Practices of preparing, storing and maintaining the data held by the Authorities.

Use and processing activities including analysis and automated approaches.

Practices of sharing data, internally and externally, as well as making data and insights available through publishing.

Practices of archiving data and destroying it where appropriate.

Plan and design

Collect or acquire, and ingest

Prepare, store and maintain

Use and process

Share and publish

Archive and destroy