

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 14 March 2024

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director ICT & Support Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** ICT Rolling Capital Programme

**WARD(S)** 'Borough wide'

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present a business case for the approval of the ICT Rolling Capital Programme supporting the requirements of the transformation objectives and the development of a Halton Digital Strategy.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- (i) **The development of the Council's digital strategy as set out in the report, be noted;**
- (ii) **The proposal to fund this development by increasing the annual ICT rolling capital programme by £0.5m as outlined in paragraph 5.7, be agreed;**
- (iii) **Council be recommended to increase the annual ICT rolling capital programme from £0.7m to £1.2m within the 2024/25 capital programme.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A Digital Halton strategy will cover the detail of the technology platform road map ahead, and will also support the delivery of the Re-Imagine Halton Transformation Programme. This fits together with the development of the technologies and platform expansion associated with the "Customer Journey" Transformation project within the wider corporate programme.
- 3.2 As the Authority moves toward a significant programmed service transformation, it is essential that the underpinning technology supports the re-Imagination of Halton.
- 3.3 It should be emphasised that this is a paradigm shift this away from traditional ways of delivering core IT operations for the Councils business areas and change demand.

- 3.4 The technology delivery teams fully understand that frontline services want technology to just work and don't have the time or need to understand the detail of what is/has been happening in the background.
- 3.5 All services, however, will be directly affected by the transformation of their technology assets over the coming weeks /months / years.
- 3.6 When we talk about digital strategy the thought process must evolve beyond laptops and Microsoft Office 365, which is simply a module within the highly capable platform. We are now moving into the realms of platform strategy and how as a business do we use to the full extent of the investment made within these considerable platforms.
- 3.7 We need to change and develop Contact Centre Systems, we need to deliver Interactive Web & Social Media Services, we need to be considering Artificial Intelligence (Ai) together with its secure use. We need as an organisation the delivery and support capability to embrace this new way of working before the cost of delivery increases to unaffordable levels through manual process.
- 3.8 Investment is required to deliver this digital vision, new capability, people skills, and platforms.
- 3.9 Platforms are available that will reduce the salaried resource within the wider business, Ai solutions all be it in their infancy are available and ready to be deployed.
- 3.10 The Authority needs to invest in a centralised platform to reduce costs within the wider organisation and remove outdated service models within the business as well as at the front door to the service areas.
- 3.11 This should link to a clear corporate vision allied with a transformation strategy to use and innovate through a single technology platform.
- 3.12 The Technology and Transformation teams have the ability in-house to programme manage and deploy these digital frameworks and platforms effectively but will require the financial commitment to do so.
- Funding for change is essential.
  - To train, deploy and link up 2,600 internal systems users, 130,000 residents, and schools users, is a considerable task.
  - Digital capability and key skill needs to be spread wider and the capability improved to support digital and business transformational change.

A focus upon Zero Touch technology management, with improved user capability, is essential and self-help will become more prevalent.

- 3.13 Together with projects looking to reduce the scale of the data centre footprint through the use of a Hybrid cloud, and the way in which the authorities current considerable and complex network secures our daily access through Zero-Trust design, with a firm objective to simplify and develop new ways of access-based working into the future.

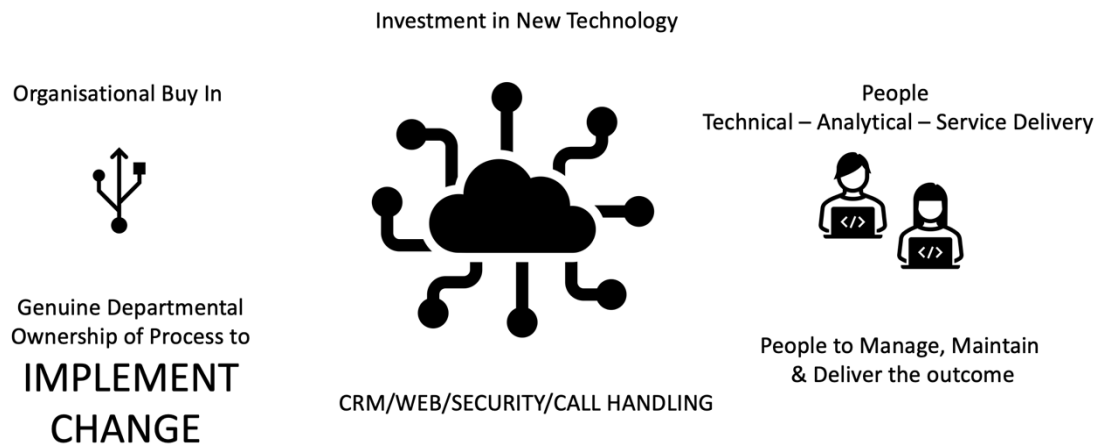
#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified at this stage.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 As a department, ICT services has over many years squeezed the maximum value out of purchased software products and where possible has developed in-house software systems that have essentially been at no cost to the authority. However for reasons previously explained, increasing customer expectations and technology redundancy coupled with pressure from suppliers to move to a pay-as-you-go cloud solution are now serious drivers to modernise our systems. Now is the right time to move into a new technology environment to enhance the customer user experience, and facilitate the transformation programme objectives a platform upon which to develop and re-design the authority as a business.
- 5.2 It is important to consider the cost benefit balance. Old systems become increasingly unreliable for users and are expensive to maintain. They can be and in some cases are now a blocker to developing more efficient service delivery mechanisms. By investing in the new technologies we can have simplified and automated systems with greater levels of integration into back-office systems allowing for a 'Single pane of glass' experience for customers.
- 5.3 For service managers, investing in new technology will facilitate easy access to real time dashboards and reporting solutions empowering them to make strategic business decisions based on real time data.
- 5.4 In order to successfully deliver transformational change, 3 elements need to be in place as illustrated in the diagram below. We should recognise that we have squeezed as much value out of our physical assets and staffing resource as we can, but in order to make further savings, investment is necessary both in software and hardware and also in staff to ensure the outcomes we wish to deliver can be achieved and maintained:

## 5.5 What Do We Need To Deliver This:



5.6 As previously mentioned, investing in this technology will support the “Customer Journey” transformation project. This workstream is an enabler; the new systems we are proposing to be put in place will benefit the authority as a whole by providing an automation platform that any service can access, allowing managers the opportunity to redesign their service delivery mechanisms and free up service capacity.

5.7 It is proposed that this be funded by the existing ICT Capital programme supported by additional capital investment delivering a long-term platform for change, also a platform capable of evolving as technology and demand evolves. It is therefore proposed that the annual ICT rolling capital programme be increased from £0.7m to £1.2m.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

The business case for technology investment outlined in this report will enable transformational change to be delivered within service areas across the authority and support the other workstreams comprising the Re-imagine Halton transformation programme.

It is important we invest in technology platforms that will allow our customers, both internal and external, improved user experience and access to services by facilitating self- service, 24/7, multi-channel delivery. Service managers will also benefit from having access to a platform for facilitating the redesign of the way they deliver their services to improve service efficiency and build capacity.

## 6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

As 6.0

**6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

As 6.0

**6.3 A Healthy Halton**

As 6.0

**6.4 A Safer Halton**

As 6.0

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

As 6.0

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Failure to invest in new technology to facilitate transformative change risks the gradual erosion of service levels and loss of capacity to make transformational change in the future.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The authority's policies and process will be followed.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.

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