

Corporate Select Committee

Date: **11 March 2024**

Time: **10:00**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich**

Membership:

Cllr R Oliver (Chair)
Cllr A Birmingham
Cllr S Clancy
Cllr D Bills
Cllr G Carpenter
Cllr D Roper
Cllr A White

Cllr D Sayers
Cllr T Jermy
Cllr B Price
Cllr V Thomson
Cllr W Nunn (Vice Chair)
Cllr C Smith

Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person

It will be live streamed on YouTube and members of the public may watch remotely by clicking on the following link: [Norfolk County Council YouTube](#)

We also welcome attendance in person, but public seating is limited, so if you wish to attend please indicate in advance by emailing committees@norfolk.gov.uk

Current practice for respiratory infections requests that we still ask everyone attending to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene and, at times of high prevalence and in busy areas, please consider wearing a face covering.

Please stay at home if you are unwell, have tested positive for COVID 19, have symptoms of a respiratory infection or if you are a close contact of a positive COVID 19 case. This will help make the event safe for attendees and limit the transmission of respiratory infections including COVID-19.

A g e n d a

1. To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending

2. Minutes

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting held on **15 January 2024** Page 4

3. Members to Declare any Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter.

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an **Other Interest** in a matter to be discussed if it affects, to a greater extent than others in your division

- Your wellbeing or financial position, or
- that of your family or close friends
- Any body -
 - Exercising functions of a public nature.
 - Directed to charitable purposes; or
 - One of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union);

Of which you are in a position of general control or management.

If that is the case then you must declare such an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

4. To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency

5. Public Question Time

Fifteen minutes for questions from members of the public of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team (committees@norfolk.gov.uk) by **5pm 5 March 2024**. For guidance on submitting a public question, view the Constitution at: [Ask a question to a committee - Norfolk County Council](#)

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

Fifteen minutes for local member to raise issues of concern of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team (committees@norfolk.gov.uk) by **5pm 5 March 2024**.

7. **Norfolk’s Digital Inclusion Strategy and “Tech Skills for Life” Pilot in West Norfolk next steps** **Page 10**
Report by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation
8. **Continuous Improvement Update** **Page 44**
Report by the Executive Director for Strategy and Transformation
9. **Forward Work Plan 2023** **Page 49**
Note by the Executive Director for Strategy & Transformation

Tom McCabe
Chief Executive
County Hall
Martineau Lane
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NR1 2DH

Date Agenda Published: **1 March 2024**



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Corporate Select Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 15 January 2024 at
10:00 am in Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane Norwich NR1 2DL

Present:

Cllr R Oliver (Chair)
Cllr D Bills
Cllr G Carpenter
Cllr T Jermy
Cllr B Price
Cllr D Sayers
Cllr A White
Cllr V Thomson
Cllr A White

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Fisher
Cllr Jones
Cllr Watkins

Also Present:

Sarah Rhoden	Director for Community, Information and Learning
Jo Richardson	Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
Jonathan Franklin	Strategy Manager (Procurement & Net Zero)
Al Collier	Director of Procurement and Sustainability
Jeremy Wiggin	Head of Sustainable Transport
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste
Titus Adam	Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)
Sam Pittam-Smith	Director of Strategy, Design & Delivery
Maisie Coldman	Trainee Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Clancy (substituted by Cllr Fisher), Cllr Birmingham (substituted by Cllr Jones), Cllr Smith, Cllr Roper (substituted by Cllr Watkins) and Cllr Nunn.

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. Items of Urgent Business

4.1 There were no items of urgent business.

5. Public Question Time

5.1 There were no public questions.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

6.1 There were no member issues/questions.

7. Climate Policy for Norfolk County Council

7.1 The Select Committee received and was introduced to the Climate Policy for Norfolk County Council report by Cllr Vardy, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste. The importance of the Climate Policy in a time when the reality of climate change was already being felt by local communities was highlighted.

7.2 The report introduced a Climate Policy that reflects the main elements of the Climate Strategy in a more concise policy format. It also used the Climate Policy as an opportunity to restate the council's county wide commitment, seeking better alignment with the UK's 2050 net zero target and the ambitious trajectory set out in the national carbon budgets. If agreed at Full Council, the Climate Policy would go on to form part of the Policy Framework. The Select Committee was asked to review and comment on the proposed Climate Policy, including the new statement of the council's county-wide net zero commitment.

7.3 The following points were noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- Some members felt that the Climate Policy did not go far enough or was not ambitious enough. Officers highlighted that the UK had halved emissions since the 1990s, and the target to align the county with the national target to halve it again, in a much shorter time frame, was felt to be an ambitious goal.
- Members generally felt that the Climate Policy could more enthusiastically capture the positive work that was being carried out and could also note the other benefits of reducing carbon emissions such as financial savings, improved wellbeing, etc
- A member raised concerns that carbon emissions were still being incurred even though they may no longer be captured in Norfolk County Council's (NCC) estate emissions. For example, the move towards academisation of schools and home working. It was however confirmed that NCC estate emissions do not include the emissions of schools.

Thus, there was no impact on the figures of NCC estate emissions if a school became an academy.

- Officers confirmed that NCC was due to achieve a 66 percent estate emission reduction in 2024/25, the percentage was currently in the high 50s.
- There was currently no framework that outlines local areas' contribution to national reduced carbon emissions. Work funded by Innovate UK at Cambridgeshire Council was trying to establish a framework that could be replicated across other councils.
- It was noted by officers that metrics allow for progress to be monitored and for carbon budgets to be followed. Tracking of action plans would show progress against deliverables under the Climate Strategy
- The committee heard that thought had been given when setting out the Council's budget to account for the required adaptations for the effects of climate change. Most of the cost would be incurred long term. It was also noted that there was a need to remind the central Government of the additional costs that would be incurred.
- A member raised that active travel and public transport are different but were often grouped. In response to this, it was noted that whilst they are different, it was beneficial to look at them in a joined up and parallel approach. A journey might often combine public transport and active travel.
- The Local Transport Plan supports into the Climate Policy and provides specific details on the transport ambitions. Members heard that Norfolk performs strongly in the East of England in respect to the progress on providing electric vehicle charging points and over half of the Norwich bus fleet would be electric from March 2024. The officer noted that a lot was going on that was not being amplified.
- The officers noted that the Carbon Quantification guidance for transport emissions had not been received from the central government. This framework would inform how the benefits of carbon reduction are quantified which could show how aspects of the Climate Policy were working. There was a tension between trying to move ahead and waiting for the guidance. With respect to transport, work was being carried out with WSP, an environmental consultancy, to begin early work on quantifying carbon reduction.
- In response to a member's question about the percentage of electric vehicles in NCC's fleet, the committee heard that NCC has a relatively small fleet in comparison to third party providers. The Fire Service now had plug in hybrid vehicles as electric vehicles were not yet fit for this particular application.

- The limited inclusion of agriculture and farming within the Climate Policy, and the opportunity to encourage farms to transition to lower carbon practices, were raised. Officers highlighted that the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency were responsible for having conversations about lower carbon practices and that DEFRA already had incentive schemes in place. At NCC, the officers responsible for leading conversations about sustainable land practices were Wendy Brooks and her team. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that there was an ambition to hold a session for the agriculture sector, similar to one held for businesses, to discuss how practices could be adapted.
- There was some degree of control to exert influence within the supply chain to encourage improved environmental practices. The committee heard that NCC's community equipment stores operator, Medequip, had adopted an electric fleet to reduce their carbon emissions. Additionally, some major highway contracts were due to be retendered and would provide the opportunity to make emission reduction a requirement. Work was also continuing to increase the number of electric buses in Norfolk and Norse was due to produce a climate change plan later in the year.
- Regarding streetlighting, the committee heard that the initial tranche, which focused on bigger more energy consuming streetlights, was now completed. The focus was now on updating the smaller streetlights. It was anticipated that half of the remaining streets light would have been updated by next winter.
- To ensure that tree saplings are being planted in the most suitable conditions, there are considerations in place to ensure that the right tree is being planted at the right place at the right time. The committee heard that future contracts would need to include provisions to ensure that trees planted as part of construction schemes are planted correctly and then maintained appropriately.
- Concerning the considerations being given to the disproportionate impacts of climate changes on particular communities, it was noted that the benefits of tackling climate change often incurred positive impacts for people experiencing inequalities, such a warmer homes and better public transport.
- It was felt by members that residents needed to be involved in Norfolk's approach to tackling climate change. Parish councils often do not have a climate change plan in place. In response, Cllr Vardy said that parish councils could in some instances do more and that the Carbon Literacy programme being developed for members at NCC would also be shared with Parish councils.

- In response to a member's question about whether NCC would declare a climate emergency, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste responded that this motion had been discussed at Full Council several times and that he felt that action was needed rather than declarations.
- There was a working assumption provided by officers that the policy would be reviewed on a five-year basis.
- Highlighted within discussions was the benefit of Member collaboration and idea sharing to help shape the policy.

7.4 Cllr Price proposed that there was an annual report to a Select Committee that would note the progress of the Climate Policy. The proposal was seconded by Cllr White and following a vote, the recommendation was **CARRIED**.

7.5 Having considered and commented on the Climate Policy the Select Committee **agreed** to:

1. **Endorse** the Climate Policy's progression for Cabinet's consideration.

8. Progress on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026

8.1 The committee received and was introduced to, the Progress on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026 report by Jo Richardson, Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The plan included a range of priorities agreed by the Cabinet in March 2023 that aimed to ensure that no community was left behind in Norfolk. The committee heard that one particular area of focus was to eliminate racism at work. NCC was more ethnically diverse than Norfolk as a whole, and with a growing international workforce, it was important that employees felt safe and valued at work.

8.2 The Corporate Select Committee was asked to review and comment on the progress to date, to consider the benefit of briefing sessions that cover specific related topics, and to consider the role of the Select Committee in their support of Cabinet to continue to champion race equality in Norfolk.

8.3 The following points were noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- A member highlighted the limited diversity of councillor representation and suggested that political groups should be encouraging more diverse representation.
- The staff survey was mentioned as a useful tool for capturing information and informing the direction of work required concerning EDI.
- In response to a member's question about the time scale for implementing EDI objectives, the officer shared that there are a number

of priorities and that it was not possible to deliver them all at the same time. The report sets out the top priorities which are agreed by Cabinet and would be delivered first. It was seen as important that report sets out the timescales for delivering all of the priorities to ensure all stakeholders understand our plans for progressing priority areas.

- Work to design race equality training has progressed and the training has been developed, piloted and is due to be launched soon. The training has been revised to reflect the feedback from colleagues that suggested that they wanted less abstract training and more training on critical skills to deal with and manage racism at work. This training had been developed, a pilot had occurred, and it was due to be launched soon.
- A member asked for details about the internal wellbeing service. It was shared that the service was well established and there were high levels of reports into the service. Cabinet received an update on the service as part of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report considered at the 10 January 2024 meeting.
- A member asked for reassurance that the fear of reporting racism was being addressed. In response, the committee heard that highly valued international colleagues, who were filling vital vacancies in social and health care to deliver essential services, were worried about reporting racism in case it impacted on their visa status. Other colleagues were worried about reporting racism in case it impacted on their career prospects. The member was assured that efforts were taking place to enforce the message that anyone who makes a report will be supported by their line manager or with HR if that was preferable.

8.4 Having reviewed and commented on the progress on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan and Objectives 2023-2026, the Select Committee **resolved** to **NOTE** the information.

9. Forward Work Plan 2024

9.1 The committee resolved to **agree** the forward work programme.

Meeting concluded at 11:11

Rhodri Oliver Chair

Corporate Select Committee

Corporate Select Committee

Item No: 7

Report Title: Norfolk’s Digital Inclusion Strategy and “Tech Skills for Life” Pilot in West Norfolk next steps

Date of Meeting: 11 March 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Jane James (Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance)

Responsible Director: Paul Cracknell, Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation

Executive Summary

Over the past 3 decades the personal computing revolution and internet access has transformed our society, changing the internet from a place we visit to an essential part of the economy and our everyday lives.

The pandemic increased the rate of digitisation across the economy and society, benefitting many but exacerbating digital exclusion for those people who didn’t have the tech, skills, confidence, financial means, or connectivity to use and benefit (economically and socially) from using technology.

Digital exclusion is complex and influenced by many factors. A person can move in and out of digital exclusion depending on their circumstances for example due to a change in their health or financial status.

The councils Digital Inclusion Strategy was agreed in 2018 and updated and refreshed in December 2021. A programme was launched in January 2022 to implement this strategy. Its aims support the outcomes of “Better Together for Norfolk” by enabling our residents to have digital skills for work and life, engaging with their communities and accessing information and resources to thrive in today’s digital world.

Following a successful bid for funding in 2023 through the Norfolk Investment Fund, an innovative proof of concept pilot was launched. The pilot service is called Tech Skills for Life – West Norfolk. This is a place-based approach working with residents and partners in the local community to improve access to and use of technology.

The pilot launched in July 2023 and concludes March 31, 2024. This report provides an update on the wider digital inclusion programme but also the findings of the pilot in West Norfolk and the benefits of expanding this wider.

Our vision is that: *“Every Norfolk resident is provided with the appropriate digital access opportunities to meet their needs and enable them to be digitally included in all aspects of their lives”*.

Digital exclusion is defined as *“the inability to interact with the online world fully, when where and how an individual needs to”* – Digital Poverty Alliance. It’s important to note there is no specific measure for those who are digitally excluded but certainly if you are older, have a lower income, are unemployed, homeless, have a disability or accessibility need, a lower level of education, belong to an ethnic minority, live in a rural area then you have a higher chance of being digitally excluded to some degree or another. This impacts on a person’s ability to access the online world and some of the fundamentals of life such as social services, healthcare, education, training to interacting with friends, family, and the local community.

Digital inclusion is no longer a “nice to have” it’s an essential. Being digitally excluded isn’t just an inconvenience it compounds and exacerbates social and health issues.

There is much evidence that Digital Inclusion is not just beneficial to the individual if they choose, but also to society as a whole. A lack of digital skills and access can have a huge impact on someone’s life which can ultimately lead to poorer health outcomes, increased loneliness and social isolation, less access to education and jobs and a lower life expectancy.

The Good Things Foundation is a social change charity. Its objective is to make the benefits of digital technology more accessible to those who are digitally or socially excluded. It also commissions and undertakes research into digital exclusion. An information graphic (appendix B) is attached but some of the key figures to draw out are:

- 10.2m adults lack the most basic digital skills.
- 1 in 14 households have no home internet.
- 2.5m UK households struggle to afford fixed broadband.
- Non – users are twice as likely to have a disability or health condition.
- Limited users are five times more likely to come from low-income households and six times more likely to be over 65.
- 20% of those unemployed can’t do any essential workplace digital tasks.
- The return on investment from basic digital skills support is £9.48 per £1 invested.

There are a number of recommendations that councils should take to promote and embed digital inclusion. Norfolk County Council has already built these into its Digital Inclusion Strategy and programme.

Digital inclusion is a key enabler to the prevention and health inequality agendas being pursued by our NHS Integrated Care System (ICS) partners. In recent years, we have been working increasingly closely with our partners in the health service, the district councils, and the Voluntary sector as well as local community groups to put in place coordinated support to help our residents.

Some of these are quick wins whilst others are a longer more complicated solution.

One of those longer-term solutions is a proof-of-concept pilot in West Norfolk “Tech Skills for Life – West Norfolk” which focusses on pulling together wraparound support to help people use technology more by providing devices and equipment, data and connectivity, skills, and training either on a one to one or small group basis. The support is provided in a trusted place and if possible, alongside someone the person trusts.

This pilot was made possible through council funding of £233k through the Norfolk Investment Fund.

From 2025 the old analogue copper telephone landline network will be switched to digital, meaning that all phone calls will go through the internet, and everyone will require broadband to make landline phone calls.

We are actively promoting the ongoing landline to digital phone switchover as well as the 3G switch off. There is a potential risk if a resident uses a service that relies on a landline connection as they may be impacted. These are services such as Telecare Services, Fire, Burglar and Personal alarms.

This report gives an update on the progress made with the overall Digital Inclusion programme, but also Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk as the initial proof of concept pilot draws to a close. The report also looks at possible options available to expand and fund this service going forward.

Recommendations / Action Required

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. To review and consider progress on delivering the overall Digital Inclusion Strategy set out below and provide views on any additional work which needs to be included within the wider programme's scope.
2. To review and comment on the findings from the proof-of-concept pilot Tech Skills for Life in West Norfolk tackling digital exclusion set out in

Appendix A.

3. To review, comment and advise on the proposed next steps for Tech Skills for Life following the successful bid for funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

1 Background and Purpose

1.1 The reasons people become or continue to be digitally excluded typically fall into one or more of the following 5 categories:

1. **Cost** – people cannot afford devices and / or connectivity.
2. **Skills and capability** – people cannot understand how to buy, set up or use digital devices. They also find it difficult to navigate things like broadband packages and anti-virus software.
3. **Confidence** – people are concerned about the risk of webcams and online exploitation, or they think they will break or damage their device.
4. **Motivation or fear** - people do not think the digital world is for them or that has no perceived benefits.
5. **Access to services** – some people have multiple and complex barriers to access which means they need more help to enable them to become digitally included. This includes certain disabilities (especially sensory and Learning Disabilities), literacy/ language barriers or experiencing multiple inequalities that further compound their digital exclusion.

1.2 People can also move in and out of digital exclusion due to factors outside of their direct control for example, people move in and out of employment, develop long-term health conditions, experience poverty, or face unexpected lifestyle and societal changes.

1.3 The Digital Inclusion Strategy Implementation programme have been working in partnership to provide a range of services, support offers and change initiatives that support Norfolk residents to overcome these barriers to access, become engaged with technology and benefit from the opportunities associated with being digitally included.

1.4 Many of these initiatives have made use of our existing resources, aligning them to make best use of some of the trusted pathways of support available to Norfolk residents, but making them easier to navigate, proactive and targeted at specific groups based on data, for maximum impact.

1.5 Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk is a proof-of-concept pilot funded by the council through the Norfolk Investment Fund 2023/2024. It is an innovative project looking at how the council can support and enable people in the community to use tech more and become more digitally included as a result of this.

1.6 The pilot looked at bringing together all the various support offers provided by the council and its partners through the wider digital inclusion programme.

1.7 It's a community-based model offering a service to anybody in West Norfolk who was digitally excluded by providing a wraparound support package for the individual dependant on their needs.

1.8 The support is provided in the local community in a place the person trusts and where possible with a person they trust.

1.9 The Tech Skills for Life - West Norfolk proof-of-concept pilot runs until 31 March 2024.

2 Digital Inclusion Programme – achievements to date:

2.1 The Digital Inclusion Strategy focusses on a number of strategic themes and objectives which are:

2.1.1 Working in Partnership to target activity and make best use of resources:

- **Single Picture of Digital Inclusion-** There is no specific data to identify those who are digitally excluded, but by using data which indicates factors which contribute to digital exclusion we have built a map showing potential areas of digital exclusion across the county. We are currently testing this map with partners but have already used it, along with local knowledge to successfully identify areas and groups who could benefit the most from digital inclusion support. This formed the basis of choosing West Norfolk for the Tech Skills for Life pilot and also the proposed areas for expansion.
- **Collaborative approach to funding bids** – so far during 2023/24 we have successfully bid for £280k funding to support Digital Inclusion work within Norfolk.
- **Working together in partnership** – partnership working with health colleagues at a number of local events in GP practices and Local Hospitals have engaged and supported a number of residents to download and use the NHS app. An excellent example was a joint event with colleagues from the libraries Digital Health Hubs and the ICB Digital Inclusion and Clinical Systems team at Lawson Road Surgery, Norwich. An in-person event to promote use of the NHS App as an efficient, easy digital option for patients to order repeat prescriptions, book and cancel appointments and view their health records took place on 4 Jul 2023.
- Data collected following the promotional event showed an increase in use of:
 - NHS app registrations – up 185% the following month, figures did drop after that but were still higher than previous months.

- NHS app repeat prescriptions online – increased by 45% which has been sustained.
- NHS app logins’ – increased by 46% which has been sustained.

2.1.2 Enabling Universal Access to Connectivity in the County:

- About 200,000 premises have already gained access to superfast broadband under Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN). The latest phase will deliver FTTP to 8,200 hard to reach premises across Norfolk. The programme is due to end June 2024
- Fixed Wireless Assets (FWA) - This uses the £400K of LFFN underspend from the LEP to deliver wireless based fast broadband into poorly served public buildings in rural areas. This provides a public Wi-Fi service. Seven sites are now live and two further installations have been planned.
- The council won the **Access Innovation Award** at the prestigious Connected Britain awards 2023 for its work to connect hard to reach villages with superfast broadband.
- Project Gigabit (£114M) inward investment enabling nearly all of Norfolk’s residents to have access to fast, reliable Broadband. Its aim is to install gigabit capable broadband to at least 85% of the country by 2025. Norfolk is in the first phase and the contract was awarded to CityFibre in June 2023.
- 62,000 Norfolk premises are in scope and a further significant number of premises across the county, including West Norfolk are being considered for additional funding.
- Planning of phase 1 is now complete, the first installation is expected to commence in February 2024. Planning of phase 2 will then start.
- Continue to publicise social tariffs and how people can access affordable broadband and which package may be the most suitable for them.
- Continue to publicise the Gigabit Voucher Scheme which currently offers £4,500 per eligible premises to upgrade to Gigabit capable broadband. Coverage figures, as of February 2024 are:
 - Superfast (>24Mbps): 97.38%
 - Ultrafast (>100Mbps): 58.6%
 - Gigabit Capable: 57.59%

2.1.3 Supporting Access to Devices and Equipment:

- The council continues to provide the programme of free and refurbished devices aimed at targeted groups such as school children, refugees, people on low income or unemployed. This helps children and young people, and others to access technology they could otherwise be unable to afford, supporting them to learn, progress their careers and become socially included.
- During this financial year as of 26 February our Digital Services colleagues have refurbished 1229 laptops and tablets which have been distributed to the local community.
- Other devices such as over 200 monitors, phones and even projectors have also been refurbished and distributed to the local community.
- Recycling devices back into the community has a significant impact on our carbon footprint. For every refurbished laptop approximately 316kg (700lb) of CO2 emissions are prevented. 1000 laptops are the equivalent of taking 80 cars off the road for a year. Circular Computing (Good Things Foundation).
- The successful school laptop loan pilot to enable children and families to benefit from being able to borrow laptops has been rolled out. The pilot found that parents were able to engage with the schools virtually, apply for jobs and benefits as well as more children being able to do their schoolwork and study from home with their own device rather than having to share a device.
- The pilot for afterschool child and parent clubs focusing on activities for children such as Minecraft for education, coding, stop/start motion filming whilst offering parents the opportunity for drop-in sessions looking at common problems such as keeping your family safe online, form completion etc is being extended wider.
- A laptop and tablet loaning scheme were launched in August 2023 across our library network and as of 5 February 712 loans, over 7000 sessions and 268 borrowers with 62% of borrowers returning to borrow again.
- We continue to promote and provide free data through the National Data Bank via our libraries, free Wi-Fi dongles for connectivity where appropriate.
- We continue to provide valued digital support through the Digital Health Hubs and Digital Buddy schemes throughout libraries.
- A new piece of work has been added to the programme to provide advice and guidance on the landline telephone switchover to digital and the 3G switch off. This advice and guidance are for all of our citizens, staff, and members. The council's website contains information about the [Landline Telephone Digital Switchover](#) as well as [3G switch off](#). There will be an article in the March edition of Your Norfolk focussing on the changes and the potential impacts as well as where you can find further information and support. We will also be providing advice and guidance for our staff who may be working with customers who are at risk as well as promoting internally. We will be sharing this advice and guidance with our partners in health, the Districts and VCSE.

2.1.4 Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts:

- During the last two years 3295 adult learners have been supported with digital skills courses.
- During 2022/23 1142 young people attended a digital technology event such as Digifest” which is held at the Norfolk Libraries, Schools Techathon and afterschool child and parent clubs, inspiring young people to enter into a digital creative career. We are looking to be on track to exceed that figure this financial year.
- We continue to promote and educate on scam awareness and how to be safe online through our Norfolk against Scams partnership, Adult Learning and any gifting or loaning of devices.
- We continue to provide support to the voluntary sector to help them deliver their services online by providing refreshed or loan devices and equipment helping them to support their customers, enabling them to benefit from economies of scale in terms of licence procurement and advice as well as sharing training materials where we can.
- We continue to provide simple to access support for small businesses and start-ups. Since 2021,1029 clients have gone through the Go Digital online support offer. Since April 2023 over 700 businesses have been supported through our Business and Intellectual Property Centres at our libraries and we also offer support through Adult Learning courses.

2.1.5 Develop the digital skills of our staff:

- We continue to develop and implement an ambitious staff digital skills programme.
- In August 2023 a New Starter Induction programme was launched ensuring all of our new starters have the basic digital skills for a successful start at the council. All new starters receive training on basic digital skills such as how to use your laptop and a windows operating system, Teams basics, VPN explanation, Outlook set up, OneDrive, SharePoint, myOracle basics etc.
- Feedback is extremely positive from those attending and their managers.
- Work is now focussing on existing staff as well as developing a Digital Champions network across the council which provides support and opportunities for staff at all levels.
- Continue to ensure our digital technologies such as computer hardware and software are accessible for disabled staff and service users by making accessibility part and parcel of how we manage change at the council.

3. Tech Skills for Life – West Norfolk pilot

- 3.1. Funded through the Norfolk Investment Fund this innovative proof of concept pilot integrated the five aims and ambitions of the council's digital inclusion strategy. The idea behind this pilot was to bring together all of the digital inclusion support offers provided by the council and partners into one community-based, holistic service.
- 3.2. Using data from our digital exclusion map produced as part of the programme along with local knowledge of the absence of digital support offers, West Norfolk was selected for the trial.
- 3.3. The aim was to identify and support people in the community to use tech safely, securely, and confidently. We wanted to help our residents to be able to access services, learn and have the opportunity, if they choose, to interact digitally with the wider community and world.
- 3.4. The primary principle underpinning the pilot is local support in the community and this is provided by a team of four Community Tech Coaches. All four coaches are staff seconded from the council who live in West Norfolk and are therefore familiar with the local communities and challenges as a predominantly rural area.
- 3.5. This new Community Tech Coach role consists of working alongside our partners and the local communities to engage and communicate with our residents as well as organisations that support or interact with them as part of their day to day lives.
- 3.6. We communicated and engaged with a wide variety of partners including:
 - Health colleagues in GP practices, hospitals, social prescribers, midwives, and health visitors.
 - The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk staff and members.
 - Local VCSE organisations i.e. the Food Hubs (Love Downham) and local community and faith groups such as the Salvation Army, Breath easy group, local Housing Trusts, Shaw Trust, MAP etc
 - DWP and CAB
 - Local schools and colleges
 - Barclays Digital Eagles, Digital Cabinet Office, Currys, and Digital Poverty Alliance
 - Our own staff at Family Hubs, social workers, and assistant practitioners at localities
 - Our Customer Services Centre, Libraries and Adult Learning staff, multiply champions the list goes on and on.
 - The basic principle was to talk with local organisations, groups and people explaining what the new service was, how it could help local people and provide a simple referral route into the service as well as support at regular events and drop ins.
 - The idea was that as part of everyday conversations that local people had with individuals in these organisations they may pick up and identify somebody who was digitally excluded and be able to

tell them about and signpost them to the service by completing a referral on the individual's behalf.

- We are also contactable by phone, email or simply walking into a library or regular drop in place.

- 3.7 On 10 July 2023, the new service was officially launched in West Norfolk. Referrals into TSfL can be self-referrals but are more often assisted, being submitted on behalf of someone who would benefit from the service. Once the referral is received, a coach contacts the individual and arranges to meet them in a place they trust along with a person they trust if this makes them more comfortable. The coach works toward building a relationship with the customer, so all parties are able to jointly understand and agree what needs exist, providing one-stop personalised, wraparound tech support.
- 3.8 This support package could comprise of gifting one of our council-refurbished laptops, tablets or smartphones, free data through sim cards, connectivity through MiFi dongles, and/or support and training to give our customers the skills and confidence to use their devices safely.
- 3.9 We have also linked up with the [yoursimpal](#) a charity set up by Chris Lewis to support people with mobile phones and data.
- 3.10 The project runs until 31 March 2024 and its original target was to provide engagement, help and support to a 1000 local people during the pilot.
- 3.11 By understanding our customers' needs and learning what is going to motivate them to try new devices and online services.
- 3.12 As of 23 February 2024, we have so far helped and supported over **3072** people, including **712 referrals' resulting in a 1:1 appointment(s)** with people from **5 – 92** years young! We have gifted **566** refurbished devices so far this year and have enrolled **177** on a short adult learning course.
- 3.13 Because this is a proof of concept, the team have been able to adapt and learn quickly in terms of existing offers, support, and welcome different ways of working with both our customers and partners. We have tried lots of different ways to communicate and engage with our local community, utilising local networks within our voluntary sector, social media, radio, posters, and flyers. During this time, we have found the single biggest way people find out about us is through word of mouth, which validates the service, the novel 'boots on the ground' approach, and the amazing work the team are doing.
- 3.14 We have worked with colleagues in our libraries where we have held regular drop in's, colleagues in adult learning have put on many short basic digital skills courses, often bespoke to the group's needs. Colleagues in the ICT Schools Support (Digital Services) have worked incredibly hard to refurbish hundreds of devices and support the coaches with answers to tech queries as well as delivering an afterschool club in Heacham.

- 3.15 Colleagues in libraries have again supported with engagement work around use of the NHS app as well as colleagues from the N&W ICB.
- 3.16 The West Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership have also provided grant funding for a sub project to support the local migrant community using Tech Skills for Life and this is working well.
- 3.17 At the start of this project, we expected to help people get back into work via improved skills and access to devices, data, and connectivity, which we have done. We expected to help young people and students with devices to enable them to study and complete homework, which we have done. We expected to help people who had never used technology, to gift them a device they can use safely and confidently, which we have done.
- 3.18 But it's the things we didn't expect to happen through this pilot that have had the most impact.
- **Here are some examples of the impact the project has had:**
 - Gifting a tablet and showing a gentleman how to use online shopping so he can be at home with his terminally ill partner. Whilst the coaches were there, they were able to show them how to video call far-away loved ones from the comfort and safety of their home.
 - Gifting a laptop to a young person – the MAP adviser said “Have just checked in with (A) and they're all sorted with the laptop. They asked me to thank you for all your help, it's going to make college life so much easier”.
 - Keeping a family of beloved kittens together by showing the individual how to Google, searching for affordable spay and neutering options. From that, they found out Cat's Protection offers significantly reduced prices for those on low income!
 - Good will – A village hall committee member said it was brilliant that NCC are refurbishing equipment and giving to people who can benefit from it in a straightforward dignified way with no intrusive questions or criteria.
 - Social isolation –J lives in sheltered housing but hadn't been able to communicate with his fellow residents very well as he was unable to talk following an illness. We gifted J a tablet and took several sessions to show him how to use it and the immersive reader function. J was able to type out a shaky “thank you” and squeezed our coach's hand. J is now able to “talk” with his fellow residents using his tablet.
 - Gifting a smartphone and showing an older couple how to use the talk-to-text function, enabling the lady who'd lost her hearing 25 years ago to see her husband, friends and carers respond instantly. No need for a pen and paper (or more recently, whiteboard). She said, “it has given me my life back!” She sent us a short note followed by a rather longer 6-page letter!
 - “Dear (coach), Thank you very much for my wonderful gift. Thanks to you I won't feel or be so isolated now. It is very much appreciated, I'm so grateful to you for your kindness. I feel as if I've won the lottery,

once again, thank you so very much for my wonderful gift, you've made an old lady extremely happy. I can't thank you enough."

- One individual who was working alone who's laptop combusted. They were self-employed and needed this for work. We gifted a reconditioned laptop, and they were able to get back to work the day after the laptop arrived!
- A customer asked for help accessing her money when it became clear she actually needed help with her smart phone, as it was dying slowly and not working properly. She was also struggling financially. She only had the confidence to tell our coach this after several appointments. We ordered a smart phone through YourSimPal and gifted a sim. We then met to organise the transfer of her data from old android to her new one. Our coach talked through the changes of the phone and showed the customer how to use. Quote from customer: "I want to mention your professionalism and kindness ... you made me feel comfortable with everything. ... You're easy to understand. How would I have got through all that bank verification if you didn't show me how to do it? I'd still be trying! I'd be in the mad house by now. ... You answer even my silliest questions! You taught me everything I know now about the phone and internet!"
- Gifting a smartphone" ...Couldn't have done it without you doing it. Change my life! In contact with people that I never would be otherwise. Feel safer as I have it with me. I live alone and sometimes when the phone goes out that's very handy to have a mobile isn't it!"
- A resident with no fixed address was given a refurbished mobile phone and National Databank SIM card (6-months of data/calls/texts) to use as he starts a new job come with a wage and on-site accommodation. "Thank you so much, means so much, it's going to help me no end in moving forward in both my personal life, and my work life."
- Resident struggling with health and loneliness due to being stuck inside so often, was gifted a refreshed laptop, and shown how to do things like online food shopping (they struggle in crowded spaces) and keep in touch with people online."...I wouldn't have been able to afford to buy myself. And I like having the chats, getting out and communicating with people. The more you're in your house, the worse you feel."
- Hamza has a smartphone and a tablet but was locked out of it so could not use it. He was not very confident with using his devices. Our coach restored the tablet to factory settings as there was no other option. However, they did manage to get some precious photos off it first. Our coach has been helping Hamza use both devices, looked at Adult Learning courses and have also given him a MiFi dongle with data as he has no broadband at home. Hamza is very happy and very satisfied with the help he has received. He now has the confidence to use his devices. He doesn't feel so behind in the times. He is looking forward to using it more. He also feels more confident asking for help and he hopes that the project continues so he can continue asking for help when he needs it. Hamza said seeing our coach at Heacham REST

Hub was a real help initially. He has his AA meetings there, so he feels it is a safe space. Coming to the AA meetings gave him confidence to come to groups here and coming to groups here gave him confidence to see our coach.

- 3.19 Tech Skills for Life has already had a huge impact on people's lives. Enabling people to learn new skills so they feel more confident using tech, providing young people with a laptop to study and complete their homework. Showing people how to fill in online forms or attach files to emails. How to video call using WhatsApp or use a tablet to do their grocery shopping online or banking. How to add contact details to their smartphone, access services both social care and health. Tech has been used as a voice and ears and even to maintain their sobriety by accessing online AA meetings. It's been used to combat social isolation and loneliness enabling people to speak to and see family in far off countries, applying for jobs, blue badges, and carers allowance.

4. Benefits of Digital Inclusion and Tech Skills for Life (TSfL)

4.1 Getting back into employment:

- 4.1.1 Over the last few years and even more so since the pandemic there has been a rise in online job postings, applications, virtual interviews, and onboarding as well as the use of social media for networking e.g. LinkedIn. Those without digital access or skills have a more limited access to the job market.
- 4.2.1 A lack of basic digital skills also limits the employment prospects of those looking to get back into employment or for another job.
- 4.3.1 The benefits of returning to work are significant. These range from direct financial benefits to the individual and exchequer but also significant mental health benefits and consequential financial savings.
- 4.1.2 The financial impact on getting somebody back to employment is £45,620 per annum. This includes benefits for DWP/HMT, Health, and the individual. (Greater Manchester Combined Authority) [GMCA Cost Benefit Analysis](#)
- 4.1.3 We know that with the support of this project there are at least 3 individuals who have been able to get back into employment which based on the above figure is approximately £136,860. Although this is not purely through TSfL having a device and being shown how to use it so that they can apply online for jobs, upload forms and their CV and even in one case be contacted by an employer through a refurbished smartphone to hear they had a job.
- 4.1.4 We know that there are at least 11 more individuals who are using the devices and support/training to help them keep their jobs through additional training etc. It can also contribute to efficiency and effectiveness within their jobs.

- 4.1.5 We have organised and run a number of short basic digital skills courses for those seeking employment in Kings Lynn which have been well received.
- 4.1.6 There are at least 4 individuals who were homeless and with the coaches help they are now on the housing register and adequately homed.
- 4.1.7 Figures are calculated from use of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Cost Benefit Analysis Model (GM) [GMCA Cost Benefit Analysis](#)

4.2 Financial wellbeing

- 4.2.1 Lloyds Bank – UK Consumer Digital Index 2023 does show that there is a correlation between having higher digital skills and increased financial wellbeing. Improving an individual’s digital skills does increase their earning potential, improving not just their disposable income but also the money coming back into the local economy.
- 4.2.2 Improved skill levels to a NVQ3 are worth on average £921 on someone's salary. (Note this figure is from 2010 so likely to be higher now).
- 4.2.3 Being confident using the internet means that an individual can manage their money more effectively. This covers everything from opening and managing bank accounts, paying bills, using budgeting tools, comparing, and obtaining better deals on utilities, cheaper social tariffs such as broadband and phone packages, insurance, food, and household goods.
- 4.2.4 They are also more confident of protecting themselves from fraud and scams. Improved digital skills can also help to provide better employment opportunities increasing disposable income for the individual and benefitting the wider community.
- 4.2.5 The coaches have assisted several people to apply online for blue badges, carers allowance, benefits, banking, probate, health as well as online shopping, keeping in touch with family and friends, studying and much more.

4.3 Loneliness and Social Isolation:

- 4.3.1 Anybody can be affected by loneliness or be isolated and digital exclusion from lack of access or poor digital literacy, can also contribute. Those at higher risk are older people, young people, the unemployed, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities as well as those living with a mental illness.
- 4.3.2 Loneliness can have a significant impact on wellbeing such as:
 - A 29% increased risk of coronary heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke associated with poor social relationships.
 - Behaviours such as poor eating and increased alcohol consumption because of living alone as well as tobacco use and lack of physical activity.
 - Suicide/suicidal thoughts
 - A 50% increased risk of dementia linked with isolation, comparable with other dementia risk factors.

- Being more prone to depression, low self-esteem, and an increased stress response
- Comparable impact on mortality same as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Source Norfolk JSNA Briefing Document)
- The wellbeing cost of severe loneliness is around **£9,537** per person annually. The cost to employers of loneliness is around £2.5 billion each year. A paper released by PHE in 2015 shared the impact of social isolation and loneliness over a life-course as having detrimental effects to mental and physical health as well as risks to mortality.
 - Loneliness annual report January 2021: [Loneliness Annual Report January 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/92121/Loneliness_Annual_Report_January_2021.pdf)

4.3.2 Addressing loneliness can reduce demand on services as well as improving health and wellbeing.

4.3.3 We have had many customers who have said how lonely and isolated from friends, family, and the community they have felt. Through the project we have gifted and shown them how to use tech to keep in touch and speak to family and friends. One gentleman had not seen his daughter or her family in Australia for many years, he lived alone and felt very lonely. Seeing the difference this made to his life was incredible and very rewarding, he said it had made his life worth living. We have collected many impact stories as part of this project where this sentiment has been expressed.

4.4 Improved wellbeing:

4.4.1 It's difficult to put a price on improved wellbeing, but on average an improvement in mental health reducing health cost interventions on average equates reduction to a saving of **£4,670** per annum. The impact on the individual and society has been costed at **£13,000** per person per annum.

4.4.2 We have supported at least two individuals with maintaining their sobriety this is a saving of **£3,198** per annum per person. (GM)

4.5 Improved health literacy:

4.5.1 Access to online health and health services, information/resources improve healthy lifestyle choices, early detection, and the use of preventative care. Being able to get online improves access and use of telemedicine services, access to communities and associated support through social media and community websites.

4.5.2 For the individual the benefits are improvement in mental and physical health outcomes, reduced mortality, reduced hospitalisation, increased life years, improved quality of life.

4.5.3 For Health and Social Care there is a reduction in healthcare and social care costs from improved health outcomes.

4.6 Carbon Reduction:

4.6.1 Recycling devices is not only environmentally friendly, but it also has an impact on carbon reduction. Based on calculations by Circular Computing (Good Things Foundation), for every refurbished laptop approximately 316kg (700lb) of CO2 emissions are prevented. 500 laptops are the equivalent of

taking 40 cars off the road for a year.

4.7 Other benefits:

- 4.7.1 Reduced cost of unnecessary attendance at A&E for example we know that there are people in West Norfolk who do not know that they had to or how to register with a local GP and subsequently use A&E - £134 per visit.
- 4.7.2 Reducing incidents of domestic violence £10,738. We know we have supported victims of domestic violence through gifting tech which had been damaged or stolen and making them feel reconnected with the community having had to leave their homes.
- 4.7.3 Reducing the costs of temporary housing which is a growing problem.
- 4.7.4 Reducing drug dependency - £16,382 (2013).
- 4.7.5 Reduced exclusion from school - £9,748 (2005), the project has supported several families where young people were regularly getting detention because they had not completed homework etc. The reason for this was not having a laptop or tablet to do and submit work on.
- 4.7.6 Using NHS app provides a quicker online booking and management of appointments, patient information/records and health information. It also saves time for the local GP practices.

5 Next steps:

- 5.1 We have reflected back on the phenomenal success of the pilot which has surpassed all expectations, in fact the original target of 1000 community engagements is over three times that original target. It is difficult to put a cost benefit on providing such a service, but we can say that there are cost benefits as well as the social benefits and impacts particularly around wellbeing. It should also be noted that there has been a large amount of goodwill from local residents and organisations to the council for this initiative. The variety of different support and uses of technology has been amazing.
- 5.2 We took this model and the lessons learned using this as the basis for an external funding bid.
- 5.3 A bid for **£574k** was submitted with Adult Social Services to the DHSC under the Accelerated Reform Fund to continue the service in West Norfolk for another year.
- 5.4 Under the bid we proposed expansion of this service out into areas of Breckland such as Thetford, Swaffham and Dereham as well as along the North Norfolk coast. We would also look to work in Great Yarmouth and the surrounding area.
- 5.5 The council heard on 12 February that this bid and proposal to expand Tech Skills for Life had been successful. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed and funding will be available from 31 March 2024 for the 2024/25 financial year.
- 5.6 Work is now underway to implement, expand and continue the service.
- 5.7 Although the concept will be the same as in the West, there will be an added focus on identifying and supporting unpaid carers as well as those being cared for.

- 5.8 We already know that a significant number of those who have been helped during the initial pilot have been unpaid carers or those receiving care and support. Supporting people to apply for Blue Badges, or carers allowance which they were unaware of, providing devices enabling both the carer and individual being cared for to connect with the wider community and VCSE support.
- 5.9 Focusing on using digital as an enabler to connecting people to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social, and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.
- 5.10 We want to make sure that people know where and how to access the right care and support as well as their families and unpaid carers and that this is timely. Using our coaches, local networks, VCSE and healthcare we aim to help people find the support they need in their local community, based on their unique situation, background, or needs.
- 5.11 We want to ensure that we reach out to this cohort and other vulnerable residents to also make them aware of the landline to digital switchover which is happening from now until 2025 and the potential impact that this may have on any assistive technology.
- 5.12 Continue to join up and support other initiatives led by the council and other partners such as engaging with online portals and accounts for social care and health, supporting carers, supporting care-leavers, foster carers, Family Hubs, falls prevention, social isolation, and loneliness etc. This provides not just a better service for the individual but also financial savings to the whole system.
- 5.13 Being digital included needs to be seen and recognised for the enabler it is. It needs to be considered and built into new services which are commissioned to enable those who are most vulnerable to benefit.
- 5.14 The project will continue to gather data throughout the support provided looking at somebody's digital skills and knowledge around carers support offers and where to find help. We will also continue to collect impact stories which look at the difference that support made to the individual's life "so what".

6 Alternative Options

- 6.1 It could be decided to increase or reduce the variety and scale of work under the existing Digital Inclusion Strategy, but the recommendation is to continue with the existing programme of work as is and use the learning from the pilot in West Norfolk to help shape the strategy and programme going forward.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 None at present as we have been successful in obtaining external funding from the DHSC to pay for the service for the 2024/25 financial year. Although the dynamic nature of this strategy may mean that further proposals for capital investment will need to be considered. We will seek to maximise funding opportunities and inward investment to Norfolk to support the strategy.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 Staff:

The successful Accelerated Care Reform grant funding enables the 4 existing Community Tech Coaches and Team Manager in West Norfolk to continue their roles for the next financial year (2024/25).

It will also enable the team to expand by 4 to 5 additional Community Tech Coaches and expand the breadth of the scheme to Great Yarmouth and surrounding area, Thetford, Dereham, Swaffham and along the North Norfolk coast.

8.2 Property:

n/a

8.3 IT:

Digital Services will provide capacity to refresh devices as well as the devices themselves to provide to Norfolk residents.

9 Other Implications

9.1 Legal Implications:

n/a

9.2 Human Rights Implications:

n/a

9.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):

An EqIA has been completed by the programme and reviewed with the Equality and Diversity team, whilst it highlights the many benefits of a digital inclusion strategy and approach it notes some key issues affecting those with protected characteristics.

The Digital Inclusion Strategy and Tech Skills for Life seek to address these issues by providing consideration and additional support for those with protected characteristics that result in them being unable to access certain digital services and technology. It has recently been reviewed and updated to take account of the Tech Skills for Life pilot in West Norfolk. The latest version is available to view should members wish to.

9.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):

A DPIA has been completed for the pilot in West Norfolk and can be found on the council's website.

9.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):

n/a

9.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):

Digital technologies, and the ability to access them, can help to reduce carbon footprint. For example, use of digital technology can reduce travel by providing alternative ways to access services. Refurbishing our older devices and equipment is also a sustainable way of reusing technology in an environmentally friendly way.

9.7 Any Other Implications:

n/a

10 Risk Implications / Assessment

10.1 n/a

11 Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. To review and consider progress on delivering the overall Digital Inclusion Strategy and provide views on any additional work which needs to be included within the wider programme's scope.
2. To review and comment on the findings from the proof-of-concept pilot Tech Skills for Life in West Norfolk tackling digital exclusion set out in Appendix A.
3. To review, comment and advise on the proposed next steps for Tech Skills for Life following the successful bid for funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Are we proposing the right areas within Norfolk?

12 Background Papers

12.1 Corporate Select Committee 10 July 2023.

Officer Contact

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**Overview of Norfolk County Councils
Digital Inclusion Strategy Programme
and Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk
pilot for the Corporate Select
Committee 20240311**

Geoff Connell – Director of Digital Services
Sarah Rank - Head of Digital Business Partnering
Gail Harvey – Digital Inclusion Strategy Programme Manager



Context

- Norfolk County Council is committed to reducing Digital Exclusion and this is reflected in the [Digital inclusion strategy - Norfolk County Council](#).
- The [Norfolk's Digital Strategy and Roadmap - Norfolk County Council](#) for the 2020s incorporates Digital Inclusion work.
- The council's approach is a County wide, place-based approach, not just the councils.
- The Digital Inclusion Programme was set up to implement the council's [Digital inclusion strategy - Norfolk County Council](#) it is sponsored by Geoff Connell – Director of Digital Services & Sarah Rank – Head of Digital Business Partnering, led by Gail Harvey – Digital Inclusion Strategy Programme Manager & accountable to elected members and the Corporate Select Committee.
- Various colleagues from the NHS, Voluntary Sector and local councils have collaborated with us helping to deliver the strategy and programme.
- The following slides provide further information on the programme, and highlights some of its achievements over the last 20 months or so.
- This includes over 5,000 laptops to school children during Covid as part of Every Child Online & has been sustained ever since
- Significant funding bid for & won in 2023 through the Norfolk Investment Framework enabled a proof-of-concept pilot to bring all elements of the strategy together in a community-based approach.

The council's Digital Inclusion Strategy – refreshed December 2021

“Every Norfolk resident is provided with the appropriate digital access opportunities to meet their needs and enable them to be digitally included in all aspects of their lives”



Working in partnership to target activity and make best use of resources



Enabling universal access to connectivity in the county



Supporting access to devices and equipment



Increasing digital skills and confidence in key cohorts



Developing the skills of our staff to understand how to support residents to access and use technology to improve their lives

What is digital exclusion?

“The inability to interact with the online world fully, when where and how an individual needs to”.

Digital Poverty Alliance

- Anybody of any age can be digitally excluded to some extent or another.
- If a person lacks:
 - appropriate access to devices or an internet connection, it's difficult to study or apply for jobs if you don't have a laptop or tablet yet alone access services and interact with society
 - the required digital skills to engage in different settings whether education, work or life as defined by the Department of Education
 - the ability to get online more than once a week due to physical space, lack of confidence or motivation (e.g. no safe space in the case of a child) or
 - the financial means to afford devices and broadband/mobile connections.
- A person can also go in and out of digital exclusion at various points in their life due to other factors such as finance or health.

Digital Inclusion Strategy Programme

Working in Partnership

- Single picture of digital exclusion
- Maximise funding opportunities and inward investment to Norfolk
- Clear communicated pathway of support
- Joint working with partners to promote digital inclusion

Enabling universal access to connectivity

- Extend broadband and mobile availability to 100% of Norfolk properties
- Enhance connectivity in Norfolk through strategic relationships with providers

Support access to devices and equipment and increase digital skills and confidence in the community

- Refurbish and Distribute devices, provide subsidised and free connectivity including loaning MiFi dongles
- Implement a loan device suite that can be borrowed from libraries and schools
- Develop and embed a range of opportunities to build digital skills learning opportunities –
- Build on offer of range of community approaches for digital services. Digital programmes of learning include info about purchasing and understanding broadband
- Influence young people on the use of creative digital technologies
- Promote and educate on scams awareness
- Provide advice and guidance on the landline telephone switchover to digital and the 3G switch off for citizens and staff
- Simple to access support from Business Intellectual Property Centres

Developing the digital skills of all staff in Norfolk County Council, NHS, Local Councils and the Voluntary Sector enabling them to better support local citizens with their digital needs

- Develop and implement a basic digital skills new starter training
- Enhanced digital skills training for all staff
- Develop and embed Digital Champions in the council
- Simple to find digital support in Norfolk Community Directory
- Digital technologies are accessible for disabled staff and service users

Communications

- Targeted communications and engagement plan

All outcomes

- NALC to provide support to town and parish council staff who can support residents
 - Digital Web content is accessible
- Provide support to voluntary sector – all workstreams
 - Recruitment of volunteers

Programme Management

- RAIDD log, Milestone plan, stakeholder and communications plan, highlight reporting



Some of our achievements to date

- Collaborative bid through the Norfolk Investment Fund for the pilot - £233k which along with other external investment brings a total of approx. £280K this financial year alone. Previous years external investment was £15,800 that's a 1,772% increase (and we have secured significantly more for 24/25).
- Target for enhanced connectivity was 96% currently 97.38% (February 2024), Project Gigabit - £114m for Norfolk aiming to install gigabit capable broadband to at least 85% of county by 2025.
- Over 1220 devices refurbished and distributed this financial year so far. The annual target is 1000 so already surpassed this! Devices go to a large range of individuals and groups. Good Things Foundation have used Norfolk as an exemplar in their recent report regarding our approach to refurbishing devices.
- Collaborating with Digital Cabinet Office, Aviva, District Councils, NSFT, Norse Group to increase supply of devices and equipment.
- Expanding successful schools' pilot and starting up afterschool digital clubs for children and parents supported by Digital Services, Adult Learning and Libraries.
- Over 500 residents supported with free or subsidised connectivity through Client Hardship Service or libraries.
- Digifest – 112 events held, 719 attendees in February, double the previous year, in total over 1000 young people have benefitted from attending digital technology events. This year we have 146 events including 20 with external partners.

Some more of our achievements to date

- Libraries Lending scheme rolled out August 2023 throughout Norfolk loaning laptops and tablets to residents, 712 loans, 268 borrowers of which 62% are returning users, average age of 38 - February 2024.
- Over 3300 learners have been supported with digital skills courses over the last 2 years.
- Since 2021, 1029 businesses have been supported through the Go Digital Project plus over 900 supported through the Business Intellectual Property Centres at Libraries 23/24 as well as Adult Learning courses focussing on business skills.
- Launched an ambitious staff training and development plan for improving our staff's basic digital skills, induction of new starters successfully started August 2023, over 430 people trained to date.
- Work underway on improving our existing staff's digital skills through a digital upskill quiz and some bespoke training as well as a digital champions scheme to support our staff and encourage use of technologies to drive better more efficient practice utilising the technology and software, we already have available.
- Accessibility built into our digital technologies – hardware and software.
- Digital Web content Silktide WCAG 2.1 AA compliance score has increased to 98.5% target was 95%.
- “Tech Skills for life – West Norfolk” successfully launched providing wraparound support to help residents use technology and improve their digital skills.

Tech Skills for Life – West Norfolk

Digital personas & customer journeys

Inputs/Requirements

Could do multiple pilots focussing on different types of people and needs?

online assessment as part of overall assessment or conversation

Online assistance required



Social prescriber /Community Connectors or GP. Other Health staff

Borough/Town or Parish Council

Nourishing Norfolk/Food Hubs – Food Banks

Schools, Further Education

VCSE/ Faith groups/ community centres/sports clubs/ community clubs i.e. W.I

Care Homes/Day Care Centres/Carers

ASC or CS staff i.e. Development/Social Worker, CSA, LAC,NFR, Libraries (mobile), RVS, Adult Learning, Fire Service, Constabulary, DWP, NCAB

Shops, supermarkets, cafes, Post Office, Banks, Fish and chip shops, Job Centre, takeaways, hairdressers, barbers, pubs etc

Training – technical and knowledge from L&D
 Funding – NIF
 Access and inclusion
 Communication of offer in local community and to staff and partners across pilot area

Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk – Community Tech Coach - offers coordinated regional support/triage signposting and 1:1 support evaluation and feedback

Trusted person in a trusted place provides support to help get someone online



Support offers

Assistive technology

Adult learning

Devices and equipment – gift or loan
 IMT/Libraries

Connectivity and data

VCSE support

Client Hardship Service

scam awareness and online exploitation awareness³⁶

Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk – Went live 10 July 2023



- Up to 23 February we have engaged & supported 3072 people in West Norfolk with information, devices, data & tech skills, this includes 712 individual referrals which are mostly assisted, consisting of multiple sessions with a customer.
- 566 devices have been provided, mainly laptops and tablets but also sims, mi-fi dongles etc .
- 177 people have attended a short- course by Adult Learning, recently started a short 4-week course at Love Downham – Food Hub.
- Word of mouth is most likely way customers are hearing about the service.
- Referrals are predominantly assisted (not self-referrals) and come in from a variety of organisations: tenancy support, DWP, Shaw Trust, Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, faith groups such as the Salvation Army, community groups i.e. Breathe easy, NCC i.e. Family Hubs, Libraries, CSC, Household Support Fund etc.
- Demographic ranges from 5 – 92, younger & older people, students, parents, unemployed, bereaved, those with a disability etc.
- Highest proportion are those identifying as retired followed closely by those who are looking for work.
- Just over 40% of people are identifying as having a disability and about the same have a “Mr” salutation.
- Early indications are showing that confidence levels are improving from a 1 to 2 to 4 to 5 out of 5.

Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk

- Drop-in sessions occurring at food hubs, DWP, Food Hubs, Community Fridges, Salvation Army, Shaw Trust, Mind, Family Hubs, Libraries, Beat the Bills Roadshows, Churches & Faith Groups, Freshers week, pop up coffee mornings in village halls, GP's surgeries, REST hubs etc.
- Community events such as "Tea, Talk and Tech" organised & held with partners such as u3a, Borough Council, Hunstanton Town Hall, Lily, Careline, VCSE etc
- Working with Barclays Digital Eagles and Duke of Edinburgh to pilot an innovative digital champion volunteering scheme. This will be the first in the county.
- Collaborating with Chris Lewis and his SimPal charity, process agreed, and phones and sims now being received for residents in West Norfolk. [SimPal Cancer Charity | Partnerships & Sponsors | Cancer Support \(yoursimpal.com\)](#)
- Run a successful after-school clubs for both young people and their parents/guardians. Working with ICT Schools Support, Adult Learning. Several other schools are interested in this.
- Working with local GPs, Social Prescribers (Vida Healthcare) around encouraging sign up to NHS app and use of online services, also building relationships with midwives, health visitors and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
- Supporting other projects such the portal roll out with the Older People with Physical Disabilities team (OPPD) in West Norfolk as well as Falls prevention work and Social Care Self Service project in West Norfolk.

Tech Skills for Life West Norfolk

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk53OADvTdE>
- [Deaf woman from Norfolk says project made 'life worth living' - BBC News](#)

What next



- The Tech Skills for Life (TSfL) pilot will help to reshape our overall strategy
- Working with colleagues in Adult Social Services we submitted an Expression of Interest to DHSC for Accelerating Reform Funding to expand Tech Skills for Life with an emphasis on unpaid carers and those being supported by them.
- We heard on Monday 12 February that we were successful and have been awarded £574k funding for the 24/25 financial year.
- This will enable us to extend the TSfL service for another year in West Norfolk and expand into parts of Breckland, North Norfolk and Great Yarmouth (prioritised based upon needs).
- Developing implementation plans to roll out service wider.
- Continue development of the business case for a county wide digital inclusion service.

**Any
questions?**



For councils:

- ✓ Clarify the cabinet and senior executive leadership on digital inclusion, and ensure that the respective leadership roles of county and district councils are clear in two-tier areas
- ✓ County/unitary councils or combined authorities should lead development of a local digital inclusion strategy (in collaboration, as appropriate, with district councils and Integrated Care Partnerships) where there is not already one in place
- ✓ Embed digital inclusion throughout the council's other strategies, as a means of helping to deliver their intended outcomes
- ✓ Build capacity in the council's frontline staff and in partner VCS organisations for recognising where digital exclusion is a problem and in helping service users improve their digital inclusion where appropriate
- ✓ Establish mechanisms for cross-directorate information sharing and coordination in digital inclusion initiatives
- ✓ Ensure that national-level resources are effectively leveraged for local benefit

Corporate Select Committee

Item No: 8

Report Title: Continuous Improvement Update

Date of Meeting: 11 March 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr James (Cabinet Member for Innovation, Transformation & Performance)

Responsible Director: Paul Cracknell, Executive Director Strategy & Transformation

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to committee on 3 deliverables:

- A. The implementation of our Continuous Improvement Function, following the consultation last year and the decision to absorb ongoing “Smarter Working” deliverables into this new function.
- B. A review of our Hybrid Working Policy, Guidance and Support Mechanisms for colleagues and leaders, informed by colleague feedback and the resultant action plan.
- C. “Offices for Good” Programme. Initial Collaborative work with other local authorities, coordinated by Local Partnerships and the Public Services People Management Association (PPMA) sharing information and experience on how to drive the best value from property assets post Covid, and in the future.

Action Required

The Select Committee is asked to:

1. Note the change from Smarter Working to Continuous Improvement, in line with recommendations from the 2023 consultation process, and provide steer on important areas of focus over the next 6 months.

1. Continuous Improvement Update

The Smarter Working programme has been familiar to NCC Colleagues and Members since 2018 when it originally formed to focus on the key pillars of People, Property and Technology to optimise employee and service effectiveness.

As a result of last year's consultation, it was felt by senior stakeholders that Smarter Working as a programme had become closely associated with the lockdowns and the introduction of Hybrid Working, and this scope was narrower than what was required going forward. As such it was absorbed into the new Continuous Improvement function with effect from January 2024.

The Scope for this new function was signed off by the NCC Executive Directors on 16th Jan 24, the processes, meeting schedules tools, automated workflow, and documentation to support this change are being developed and embedded during January & February 2024

Continuous Improvement (CI) are responsible for coordinating delivery of an internally focused action plan whose purpose is to incrementally improve the day to day working experience of all officers and members.

CI deliverables will provide at least one of the following benefits:

- Cost reduction
- Internal organisational efficiency
- Improved Colleague and Member experience
- Reduced environmental impact.

It will focus on solving problems that affect colleagues across the organisation and are not owned by a single Exec Director.

Representatives of each service and each enabling function collectively make up the CI Hub, the collaborative forum where new opportunities and suggestions are assessed, prioritised, resources are secured, and delivery is coordinated.

For enabling functions, this means that deliveries which cannot be fulfilled by one team alone (i.e. other subject matter experts and enabling functions also have a part to play in delivery) are centrally coordinated. This ensures solutions fully meet business needs and enabling function are free to focus on their core accountabilities / expertise as efficiently as possible.

Some examples of the work currently being undertaken:

- Research into colleague experience of Hybrid working to identify opportunities and benefits, as the components that deliver hybrid working are owned by multiple enabling services.

- E-signature and print to post solutions, which give efficiency benefits, that are already used in most services, are now being assessed and improved to enable use by as many services as possible.
- Collaborative work between NCC Adult Social Services, NCC Corporate Property team, Norwich City Council and Serco led to the roll out of updated scripts, signposting, and training for NCC reception staff, to ensure they could provide the best possible support to vulnerable service users presenting at County Hall.
- Update to the County Hall Car Parking policy, approved by ELT on 16th Jan 24, to be published in March 2024, which removes sections of the policy that are currently unnecessary following the advent of Hybrid working.

2. Hybrid Working Review

During December and January Executive Directors and their DMTs completed an internal survey to capture their feedback on Hybrid Working. A survey was also conducted by HR with colleagues who were recently new to the organisation, to provide insight from their perspective.

The key findings are summarised below:

Culture / Connectedness

- All respondents expressed positive sentiment, for colleagues who are able to work in a hybrid fashion; with flexibility, work life balance, cost / time savings and recruitment being the most common reasons given.
- Leader / Manager sentiment reflects the need for new approaches in several areas, including induction for new colleagues, agreeing hybrid working patterns with their teams, ability to monitor wellbeing, ability to develop interpersonal skills, knowledge transfer and learning from more experienced colleagues through proximity and observation.
- Colleagues whose role does not afford them the ability to take advantage of hybrid working feel left out and that the focus on hybrid working in corporate communications is frustrating for some.
- Social care teams feel there are unexploited opportunities for multi-agency working in the context of hybrid working.

Physical Space

- Focus is required on smaller office locations around the County, in addition to the current focus on our 3 main office hubs; County Hall, Priory House and Havenbridge House.
- Availability of meeting rooms for larger groups (20+, 50+) is seen as a key barrier at County Hall.

- Smaller meeting rooms for 1-3 people are seen as being too few in number, meaning there are not enough appropriately sized rooms for 121s or confidential conversations (1-3 people), meaning larger rooms are often used by only 1 colleague.
- The lack of Hybrid Meeting room (Teams) technology in every meeting room and location was consistently raised by respondents as an issue. The addition of a monitor that can be connected to a laptop was seen as a minimum requirement for every meeting room in lieu of full hybrid technology.

During February and March further analysis will be conducted to identify relevant sentiment and feedback from free text responses in the 2023 all-staff survey, with a particular focus on issues and suggestions raised by colleagues and leaders on how Hybrid Working can work better for them.

The combined outputs of these analyses will be used to inform a review, during March and April 2024, of our Hybrid Working Policy, Guidance and Support mechanisms, for colleagues at all levels, which will lead to an implementation plan that will be agreed and delivered via the Continuous Improvement Hub.

The purpose of this plan is to evolve our approach and find the optimum balance between service delivery, flexibility and wellbeing; with a particular focus on preventing feelings of isolation for colleagues and leaders.

3. “Offices for good” programme

In October 2023 the NCC Corporate Property team began working with a collaborative group of local authorities, coordinated by Local Partnerships (jointly owned by the Local Government Association, HM Treasury and the Welsh Government) and the Public Services People Management Association (PPMA), aimed at developing and sharing information, insights and experience on how to drive the best value from Property assets post Covid and in the future.

There are a series of seminars and workshops taking place through summer 2024, culminating in the definition and provision of support to participating authorities in the autumn.

The work will focus on 4 key areas

- Culture, wellbeing, and productivity in the workplace
- The role of offices in sustaining the vitality of towns and city centres
- Securing operational efficiencies – retrofitting, rationalisation and digitalisation

- Enablers for change – data, capacity and capability

Whilst still in its infancy, it is hoped our engagement in the programme will provide us with deeper more formal networks, collaborative learning, and continue to enhance our evidence base to ensure we maintain the correct balance between efficient estate use, colleague experience and service effectiveness.

4. Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to note the change from Smarter Working to Continuous Improvement, in line with recommendations from the 2023 consultation process, and provide steer on important areas of focus over the next 6 months.

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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If you need this report in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

CORPORATE SELECT COMMITTEE – FORWARD WORKPLAN 2024

Corporate Select Committee	11 March 2024	13 May 2024	Future/to be scheduled
	<p>Part A –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smarter Working • Digital Inclusion delivery model <p>Part B – Committee forward plan</p>	<p>Part A –</p> <p>Part B – Committee forward plan</p>	<p>Part A –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Strategy • Wellbeing Strategy (<i>review tbc</i>) • Digital Strategy update (<i>tbc</i>) • Customer Experience programme (<i>tbc</i>) • EDI (Jan 25) • Budget (Nov 24) <p>Part B – Committee forward plan</p>