

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM ONLY

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 25/09/2025

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

Digital and Customer Services - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Norma Stephenson

AI Strategic Approach

Summary

The Council is embarking on the development of an updated Digital Strategy, designed to harness technology and innovation to improve services, efficiency, and public engagement across the council. This will be scheduled for presentation to Cabinet at a forthcoming meeting.

Recognising that artificial intelligence is a rapidly emerging and evolving area of our work, the AI Strategic Approach has been developed to promote the safe, appropriate, and responsible use of these technologies. It aligns AI initiatives with the council's broader transformation agenda, supporting the Powering Our Future Programme and helping to maximise resources to deliver better services for our communities.

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the council's strategic approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI). It outlines the vision, objectives, and key initiatives that will guide the responsible and ethical implementation of AI across services. The strategic approach aims to enhance service delivery, improve operational efficiency, and support data-driven decision-making while upholding transparency, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.

Recommended that the report be noted.

Detail

1. The AI Strategic Approach sets out a vision for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to become an AI-enabled organisation, empowering staff and improving services through ethical and sustainable AI use.
2. Strategic objectives include:
 - Enhancing service delivery through automation and personalisation,
 - Improving operational efficiency and achieving cost savings.
 - Supporting data-driven decision-making with robust governance.

- Promoting ethical, transparent, and inclusive AI practices.
 - Developing staff skills and fostering a culture of innovation.
3. Key initiatives include:
 - AI-powered customer service (e.g. chatbots, voice recognition).
 - Intelligent Process Automation (IPA) for back-office functions.
 - Predictive analytics for service demand and risk management.
 - AI tools for compliance, decision support, and staff empowerment.
 4. Implementation will follow a phased roadmap: Discovery, Pilots, Scaling and Integration, and Continuous Improvement. Projects will be governed and reported through the Powering Our Futures Programme, Technical aspects managed through Digital Service Group (DSG), ensuring strategic council-wide oversight of AI developments.
 5. The AI Strategic Approach is fully aligned with the Council's Powering Our Future Programme. Its primary driver is to ensure the best use of resources to deliver improved, efficient, and responsive services to our communities.

Consultation and Engagement

6. The strategic approach has been developed in collaboration with the Digital Services Group (DSG), Corporate Management Team, and key service leads. Staff and stakeholder engagement will continue through pilot projects and targeted training programmes, ensuring ongoing involvement at every stage.

Next Steps

7. The next steps include identifying pilot projects that align with the objectives set out in the strategic approach and launching these pilots within identified service areas. Alongside this, the establishment of the AI Ethics Group and a governance framework will ensure responsible oversight. Aligned with the Colleagues Mission, the council will support staff ensuring the workforce is equipped with the skills needed for the future. This includes upskilling staff to work confidently with new technologies and adapt to changing ways of working, fostering a deeper understanding of the technology's uses and implications. Alongside this, as part of the council's wider transformation agenda, we will work with communities ensuring that the benefits of AI are inclusive and contribute to reducing digital inequality.
8. The strategic approach will be reviewed annually, with updates presented to Cabinet as required, ensuring that the council's AI initiatives remain aligned with broader objectives and adapt to emerging needs.

Please see AI Strategic Approach document distributed with this information item.

Name of Contact Officer: Corinne Moore
Post Title: Head of Digital Services and Systems
Telephone No. 01642 524486
Email Address: corinne.moore@stockton.gov.uk