1. Introduction

At the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 17 July 2017, Members asked for a session to be allocated to exploring ICT related matters. Members have provided questions via the Chair and this briefing note is intended to provide Members with a strategic overview of the Council's direction for ICT and digital services.

2. Strategic context

The Council operates a largely in-house model for ICT service provision, which follows the return of the service from outsourced provision in 2012. This is in line with best practice across the sector and provides a more responsive and better value service model than the traditional outsourced alternative.

Over the last 10 - 15 years the ICT service has delivered many important achievements including:

- Successful return of services to in-house provision.
- Investment in information and digital assets, including the Citizen Index and One Account. These are already playing a key role in the delivery of online services to Hackney's residents and businesses and enabling substantial savings, and will provide a vital foundation to enable future transformation.
- Modernisation of the Council's ICT infrastructure and technology, providing robust and flexible access for all users of the Council's systems.

Reflecting Hackney's remarkable journey of improvement, the Council's expectations of performance and its future potential continue to be ambitious for the borough. As a result there is an increasing need for ICT and digital services which can enable that through the effective use of modern technology and service design.

3. Strategic direction

This is an exciting time for ICT at Hackney. Hackney remains committed to the importance of investing in its ICT provision and the in-house service model, in which it stands out from many other local authorities. It is, however, essential to maximise the impact that this investment has on the services the Council provides to the borough's residents and businesses.

Even in the relatively short period of time since ICT was brought back in-house technology has continued to change dramatically, with mobile and cloud computing becoming mainstream and artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics showing enormous

potential. This has resulted in a very different technology environment, a transformation of the possibilities of ICT and digital, and a need for continued modernisation of the ICT service and the way that the Council as a whole approaches the opportunities that digital presents. The rapid pace of technology change also means that the Council needs to design its technical and information architecture so that it is best able to adapt to new technologies (identifying the priority areas for replacing legacy technologies with modern platforms based on open standards, providing the Council with greater agility in future).

The ICT service's strategic programme has been organised into six thematic areas which are illustrated below. These provide the framework for the division's work with other Council services and external partners. More detail about each of these themes is set out in section 4 below.
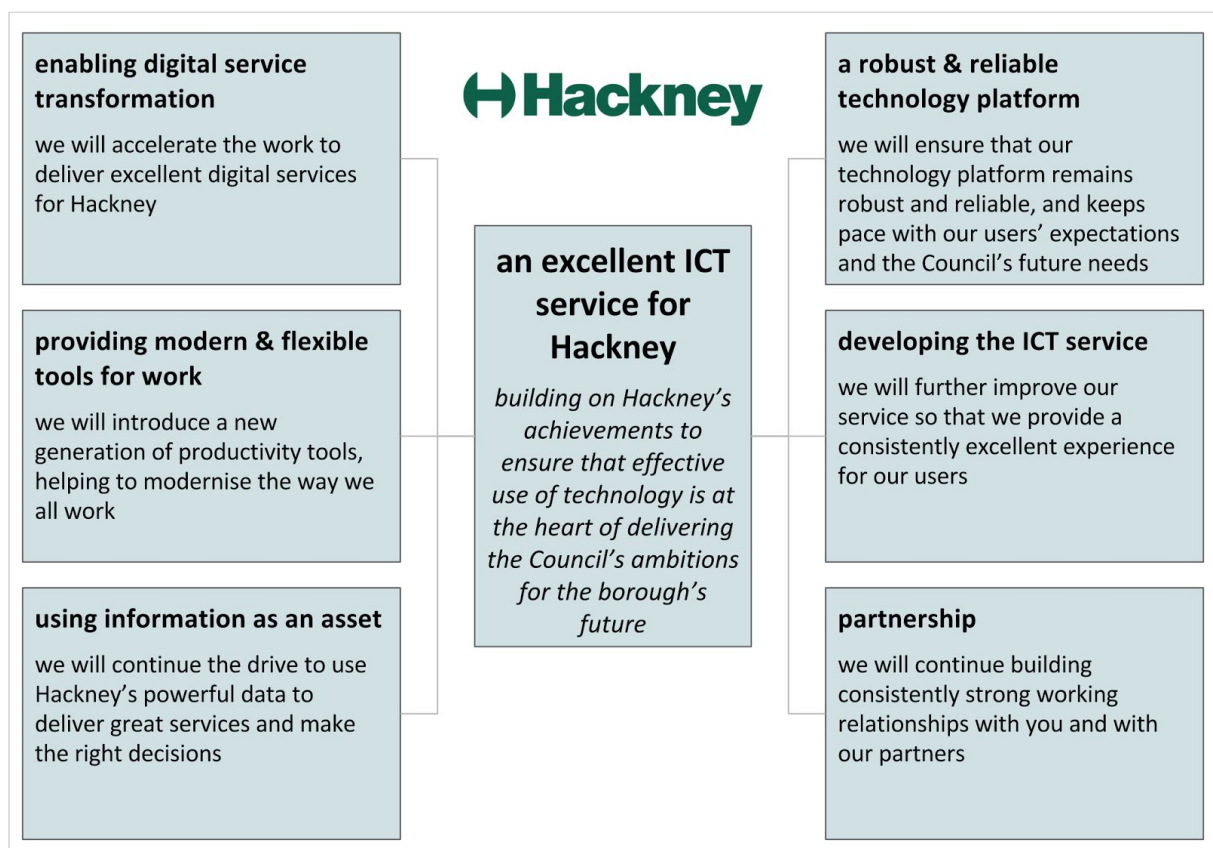

Figure 1: strategic themes

4. Delivery programme

4.1. Enabling digital service transformation

This theme is designed to provide digital services for Hackney's residents and businesses so good that people prefer to use them. Where possible we will develop reusable digital capabilities and using these to drive simplification and digitisation across the Council's services, building on existing successes such as the launch of the *One Account* service and improvements to the online parking service (both of which have contributed to significant savings and improvements to the customer experience of Council services).

Work in this theme also includes investment in feasibility analysis of emerging digital technologies such as voice activated services (eg Amazon Alexa), chatbots and artificial intelligence - helping to inform Hackney's longer term strategy of digital service design and delivery.

Reflecting leading practice in digital service design, Hackney are developing modern digital approaches including user research (working closely with residents and other service users to better understand how they experience the Council's digital services), end-to-end service design and Agile development and delivery. Examples of work that is in progress includes:

- Redesign of the *Hackney Works* service, developing new digital services to help residents into employment opportunities, apprenticeships and work experience.
- New digital services to give Council tenants the ability to check their rent accounts online instantly from any device and report and track repairs requests.
- Further development of the *One Account* service to provide an excellent user experience and add additional services (eg the ability to check voter registration, a first for the UK, which launched this summer).
- Development of end-to-end digital services for Public Realm (eg access to bulky waste collection etc).
- Exploring the potential for digital to improve the fostering service, working to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and reduce cost pressures.
- A pilot of 'robotics process automation' to handle back office data processing more efficiently and accurately, freeing up staff time to deal with more complex cases.

Importantly, this work is not led by a standalone 'Digital Strategy'. Alongside the development of the underlying technology strategy, the work to scope, design and deliver further improvements to Hackney's digital services is embedded within the strategies for each of the Council's services. This is important as it ensures that the approach remains joined up, supports the Council's overall strategic priorities and that delivery is co-designed with services and service users (not just a technical initiative).

To ensure that Hackney provides digital services for everyone, the work in this theme is being complemented by a range of activities to ensure that accessibility and digital inclusion considerations are designed in as core priorities. These include:

- Work with the Council's libraries to support residents in learning how to use digital technology.
- Work with Healthwatch Hackney to learn from the experience of partially sighted users in accessing the Council's online services.
- Pilots of wifi provision in temporary accommodation hostels, exploring how this can support the Council's digital inclusion goals.
- Collaborative work with other Council services to design further digital inclusion initiatives.
- Scoping work to explore ways to influence market provision of wifi and superfast broadband access across the borough.

4.2. Providing modern and flexible tools for work

Modern technologies provide significant opportunities for Hackney's workforce to work more productively and more collaboratively, increasing the benefits from the Council's existing investment in modern tools and workspace.

Activity in this theme includes:

- Upgrades to the wifi service across the core office campus, providing simple, fast and consistent access (including access for guests visiting the Council).
- Plans to migrate to Google G-Suite for Business in spring 2018, which will provide Council staff and Members with modern productivity tools that will enable them to communicate and work together seamlessly from *any device, anywhere, anytime*, modernising the current 'desktop' based working tools and making full use of mobile and web based technology.
- Development of plans to refresh the Council's laptops and PCs, which currently include over 2,000 devices which are more than seven years old. This will be a critical part of properly equipping the Council's staff so that they can work efficiently and it is expected that the strategy for this will be set over the winter with refresh taking place in spring / early summer 2018.

4.3. Using information as an asset

Effective use of information presents an important opportunity for the Council to join up service delivery, improve service efficiency, reduce the risk of fraud and provide a strong evidence base for future policy and service design decisions. Hackney has unusually strong foundations due to its longstanding investment in critical information assets such as the Citizen Index, Children's Index, Land & Property Gazetteer and management of digital and paper records. Work is also in progress to establish a Business Index, providing a definitive register of businesses in the borough that can be used to support the Council's economic growth ambitions.

To maximise the benefits from these information assets, the Council has invested in Business Intelligence technology, and work over the last year has started to demonstrate how this can be used to improve service design and delivery. This will be an ongoing priority and the ICT Services team are working with colleagues across the Council's services, as well as specialists in the field, to further explore the potential that this offers.

Work in this theme includes:

- Delivery of performance dashboards, such as those that have already been delivered for services such as Housing Repairs, Planning and Parking, which are being used by service managers to improve service efficiency and quality.
- Development of analytics capabilities, which can be used to inform analysis of service demand and shape strategic decisions - for example, providing a single view of the debt that our residents owe the council across a variety of services.
- Action to ensure that the Council is ready for the introduction of the new General Data Protection Regulation requirements which will become mandatory from May 2018 and will provide the legal and regulatory framework for responsible use of people's data (with the emphasis on maximising the opportunity that this presents for enhancing the disciplines for management and use of data).

4.4. A robust and reliable technology platform

Over recent years Hackney has made significant strides forward in modernising its core infrastructure, ensuring that the Council is using modern, supported and reliable technology. Work is currently close to completion to deliver a major refresh of the Council's server and storage hardware and telephony systems, providing firm foundations and enhanced resilience for the Council's services, and further investment is planned during 2018 to ensure that the Council has a robust and high performing network infrastructure.

Moving forwards, design work is in progress to shape the future direction of the Council's technology platform, making sure that the fullest benefits are achieved from cloud based services and reducing 'on-premises' infrastructure.

4.5. Developing the ICT service

To ensure that the Council maximises the benefits it receives from investing in an in-house service model, significant focus is being given to ensuring that the service is performing effectively. This includes:

- Review of the service structures and skills development to ensure that we are able to attract and retain high calibre staff and have the skills needed to benefit from technology change. (Restructure proposals are currently being consulted on with staff)
- Investment in apprenticeships and other 'Hackney Works' opportunities, supporting the Council's ambitions of increasing employment opportunities in the borough and helping to build a sustainable talent pool for the longer term.
- Driving out efficiencies through contract and spend reviews to maximise reinvestment in support for the Council's services and digital service improvements.
- Review of the strategic approach for commissioning ICT and digital services, using modern frameworks such as the Government's G-Cloud Digital Marketplace and increasing the proportion of spend that is with Small & Medium Enterprises (including SMEs in the borough).
- A full survey of all users of the Council's systems, followed by regular monthly satisfaction surveys, to ensure that we are responding to users' needs.
- Development of a more personalised support offer, including 'pop up' support surgeries across the Council's offices (including locations beyond the core campus), bookable advice appointments, and making online access to ICT support available from *any device, anywhere, anytime* (even when working away from the office).

Work is also in progress together with other support services (eg finance and HR) to develop 'digital support services' which apply the principles of digital service design to internal support provision. This will provide staff across the Council with simplified online access to support services based on user-centred service design; reducing bureaucratic hurdles - supporting the Chief Executive's *Change for Everyone* programme goals; and giving greater transparency of service delivery for staff (eg by making it easy to check on the progress of a new starter request).

4.6. Partnership

Effective partnership working is key to the strategic approach that Hackney is taking for ICT and digital.

The key difference in approach is our relationship with Hackney's residents and businesses. All teams are expected to spend time observing residents and understanding their experiences of using our technology to help them design solutions that better meet their needs. We've also adopted the Local Government Digital Service Standard (which was developed collaboratively by a group of councils to set the standard for local digital services), to make a clear commitment to producing high quality services, and so that suppliers understand what we expect of them.

This complements the digital engagement that is led by the Council's communications teams, including engaging with residents through e-panels and extensive use of social media.

The second important aspect of this is the relationship between the ICT Services division and other Council services. Reflecting the shift from a standalone ICT or 'Digital' strategy to closer partnership working, the focus for scoping, designing and delivering work is now being embedded in the existing governance for delivery of service strategies, reducing the emphasis on 'corporate ICT' programmes and increasing the focus on services.

Partnership working also extends to other local, regional and national partners, including:

- The NHS, with strong progress to enable information sharing with the Homerton enabling social workers and health practitioners to provide more integrated health and social care services.
- Local business and Hackney's technology sector, through co-designing our apprenticeship programme and engagement to inform the development of our commissioning strategy.
- Other London boroughs, including participation in the work to scope a possible *London Office of Technology & Innovation* that is being led by the Mayor of London's new Chief Digital Officer Theo Blackwell (formerly of Camden Council).
- Sharing as much of the work we do as possible, and making it available for partial or full re-use, free of charge, for other councils or public bodies.

5. Financial implications

The Council's approach to ICT investment is focused on maximising the efficiency of ICT spend (for example, through the adoption of the in-house delivery model and ongoing review of contracts to identify opportunities for efficiencies) and using this investment to support service directorates in delivering improved services for residents and achieving savings through more efficient delivery models.

Examples of where ICT and digital investment has delivered benefits include:

- Increase of online requests for parking permits from 39% to 73% following the launch of the new digital service for parking, which has helped the service to realised £200k

of savings and been an important enabler of the closure of the cashiers service. (This work was led by the Parking service, working together with the ICT service)

- Significant reduction in face-to-face access to customer services (a 31% decrease between 2013/14 and 2016/17) through shift to online channels, which has contributed towards savings of > £1.5M made by the Customer Services division and a further £0.5M in efficiency savings resulting from improvements in processing housing benefit cases.

Looking forward priorities will include exploring how digital design and analytics can help mitigate cost pressures in critical areas such as social care, SEN support and the expected impacts of Universal Credit.

Rob Miller, Director of ICT
23 October 2017