Gateshead Council

TITLE OF REPORT: Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 Strategy

REPORT OF: Darren Collins, Strategic Director, Corporate Resources

Purpose of the Report

1. Cabinet is requested to recommend the Council to approve Digital Gateshead 2015-2020, which is the Council's five year strategy to develop and implement digital public services that will support the delivery of the Council Plan 2015 - 2020 and contribute to the overarching council strategy of
   * Maximising growth
   * Reducing costs
   * Increasing collective responsibility

Background

2. Digital Gateshead 2015 -2020 has been developed through the Council's Change Programme and it is one of the key enabling strategies that will underpin the delivery of the Council Plan.

3. The strategy recognises the growing importance of technology in all aspects of daily life and it will incorporate existing technology projects such as Agile Working and Channel Shift.

Proposal

4. Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 identifies six key areas of work for the Council to progress around the development and implementation of digital public services. The six areas are:

   Digital Customers
   * Developing consistent, convenient and easy to use online and mobile services that are the first choice for the majority of council service users
   * Using all digital channels to promote our services and communicate with our residents and customers

   Digital Council
   * Technology to help Councillors and employees work more productively and differently in a broad range of environments (including mobile and remotely)
   * Simplified and streamlined business processes and working practices throughout the organisation, supported by fewer and more integrated ICT systems

   Digital Inclusion
   * All Gateshead residents and service users will have the access, skills, motivation and confidence to use online and digital services. Assisted Digital Services will be provided for those who need them

<u>Digital Partners</u>
- Digital technologies and shared data will support enhanced collaboration, planning, service delivery and communication with partners locally, regionally and across sectors

<u>Digital Business</u>
- Ensuring Gateshead businesses are able complete in a digital world

<u>Digital Place</u>
- Upgrading the borough and building-wide digital infrastructure (including WiFi) to meet the future requirements of the council, residents, public, business, partners and other agencies

5. Of the six areas of work, Digital Customer and Digital Council will have the greatest impact on the way that council services are delivered and the way that the Council operates. The work on Digital Inclusion is fundamental to ensuring that all Gateshead residents and service users can use and benefit from the digital and online services offered by the Council (and throughout society in general), and that appropriate alternatives are established where these are required.

6. There will be a lead officer for each of the six areas. This will include the Digital Gateshead Lead Officer, a new post that is being established for a two year period to provide leadership and pace to the entire Digital Gateshead project and specifically to assist in leading the work around Digital Council, Digital Inclusion and Digital Partners.

Recommendations

7. Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to approve the Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 Strategy as set out in appendix 2.

For the following reasons:

(i) To support the delivery of the Council Plan 2015-2020.

(ii) To extend and enhance the Council's use of digital technologies to deliver services, communicate with residents and service users, simplify business processes and deliver savings and efficiencies.

(iii) To ensure all Gateshead residents and service users have the necessary access and skills to take full advantage of digital services and technology, and to ensure that the appropriate alternatives are available when required.

Policy Context

1.   The Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 Strategy will develop and implement digital public services that will support the delivery of the Council Plan and contribute to the overarching council strategy of
   - Maximising growth
   - Reducing costs
   - Increasing collective responsibility

2.   Digital Gateshead will contribute to all of the policy directions set out within the Council Plan but it is particularly relevant to 'Increasing community, individual and council resilience' and 'working differently', recognising that digital technologies and solutions offer a significant opportunity to develop new services, improve access to existing resources and services, introduce more efficient and effective ways of working and reduce costs.

Background

3.   Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 has been developed through the Ways of Working project within the Fit For the Future Change Project. It builds on and incorporates a number of existing projects that are using digital and mobile technologies to improve service delivery and release savings and efficiencies e.g. Agile Working and Channel Shift.

4.   The development of Digital Gateshead has also been informed by the increasing importance of digital technologies in all aspects of life and society. The 2012 Gateshead Council Residents Survey confirmed that many of our customers are willing to use digital services and in the last 12 months there has been a 26% increase in traffic to the council website (rising to around 3 million visits per year). Research across the public sector indicates that this trend will continue, with significant growth expected in digital self-service over the next 3 years.

5.   The strategy acknowledges the importance of ensuring that all Gateshead residents and service users have the right access, skills and confidence to use online and digital services, and it recognises the importance of providing appropriate alternatives for those who cannot. In 2012 around 80% of Gateshead residents had access to the internet, with around 71% having a broadband connection at home, while current usage data from the website shows that use of smartphones and tablets to access the council website is increasing. Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 will ensure that our digital and online services can be easily accessed via the technologies that our residents and service users want to use and are able to access.

Consultation

6.   The Cabinet Member for Resources, Management and Reputation has been consulted on this report.

Alternative Options

7. The alternative option of not implementing a digital strategy has been discounted as this will have a significant negative impact on the delivery of the Council Plan. Continuing with the implementation of technology projects on an individual basis will reduce the benefits that the Council, residents and service users can achieve from digital technologies and limit the potential to deliver savings and efficiencies.

Implications of Recommended Option

8. **Resources**

   a) **Financial Implications** - The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, confirms that there are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Business cases will be developed on an 'Invest to Save' basis to secure the resources for individual projects to be delivered as part of Digital Gateshead.

   b) **Human Resource Implications** - There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report. Any implications arising from individual projects within Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 will be managed in line with the Workforce Strategy.

   c) **Property Implications** - There are no property implications arising directly from this report. Any implications arising from individual Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 projects will be managed in line with the Corporate Asset Strategy and Management Plan.

9. **Risk Management Implications** - There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report. Risk logs will be maintained for each area of work within Digital Gateshead to monitor and manage the impact of projects as they are progressed.

10. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – One of the key areas of work within Digital Gateshead is Digital Inclusion which will reduce and remove inequalities around digital and online services. Equality Impact Assessments will be completed as required for individual Digital Gateshead Projects, and this will be particularly important for Digital Customer projects.

11. **Crime and Disorder Implications** - There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

12. **Health Implications** - There are no health implications arising directly as a result of this report.

13. **Sustainability Implications** - the MTFS provides a framework for ensuring a sustainable financial position over the medium term and Digital Gateshead 2015-2020 will help contribute to this.

14. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications arising directly as a result of this report.

15. **Area and Ward implications** - There are no area and ward implications arising directly as a result of this report.

Digital Gateshead

2015 -2020

(Front cover to reflect the same format used for the Council Plan / MTFS/ Workforce Strategy)

Contents

1.0   Introduction and context

1.1   Digital Gateshead 2015 -2020 is Gateshead Council's five year strategy to develop and implement digital public services that will support the delivery of the Council Plan 2015 – 2020 and contribute to the overarching Council strategy of
- Maximising growth
- Reducing costs
- Increasing collective responsibility

1.2   Digital Gateshead incorporates a number of existing projects (such as Channel Shift and Agile Working) and is structured around six key areas of work and outcomes that will contribute directly to the delivery of the ambition and challenge set out in the Council Plan. The six areas are
- Digital Customers
- Digital Council
- Digital Inclusion
- Digital Partners
- Digital Business
- Digital Place
The first 3 workstreams will deliver the key outcomes for the Strategy.

1.3   The implementation of Digital Gateshead 2015 – 2020 will be a significant project within the Council's Fit For the Future (FFtF) Change Programme. It will help to transform how, where and when services are delivered and it will provide new opportunities for our residents, service users and customers to help themselves and others, and contribute to better outcomes for Gateshead. Digital technologies will also change the way that our councillors and employees work and it will help to facilitate new ways of working with partners.

1.4   The development of Digital Gateshead has been informed by the following

1.5   **The Council Plan 2015 – 2020** which sets out how the Council will achieve the best possible outcomes for local people within a context of increasing demands for services, reducing resources and changing roles and responsibilities. Within the plan there are four interdependent Policy Directions that ensure that all decisions support the overall council strategy of maximising growth, reducing costs and increasing collective responsibility. The four Policy Directions are
- Increasing community, individual and council resilience
- Promoting early help and prevention
- Targeting our effort, with partners, to those in greatest need and in areas where greatest impact can be achieved
- Working differently
Digital Gateshead will contribute to each Policy Direction but it is particularly relevant to 'Increasing community, individual and council resilience' and 'working differently', recognising that digital technologies and solutions offer a significant opportunity to develop new services, improve access to existing resources and services, introduce more efficient and effective ways of working and reduce costs.

1.6   **The growing impact and importance of technology in daily life**. In early 2015 86% of adults reported that they were recent users of the internet (i.e. within the last 3 months) while the number of adults who said that they had never used the internet reduced to 11%. The figures for the younger generations (our service users of the future) are even more

compelling with 99% of all adults between 16 – 24 years stating that they were recent internet users, while children aged between 12 – 15 years use text based services (such as instant messaging and social media) for 94% of their communications. *(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report)*

1.7 **The acknowledgement that the concept of digital and the digitisation of public services now extends beyond the implementation of technology** (still a key enabler and tool) into organisational values and practices and the implementation of services that are focused around the customer, mobile, responsive and adaptable.

1.8 **The adoption of the 'Digital by Default' approach** i.e. *"Digital Services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded".*

1.9 **The decision to adopt, by default, the Government Digital Service standard as the template for delivering exemplar services**. This will ensure that services are developed and implemented around the needs of the customer and service user and that take-up, usage and performance is actively monitored and managed. (https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/digital-by-default)

1.10 **The understanding that with Digital "*The Strategy is Delivery*".** This recognises the pace at which digital technology, requirements and expectations are changing and evolving, challenging the traditional approach to delivering technology projects and highlighting the need to deliver often, responsively and iteratively and always with a clear focus on the needs of the user. This will be reflected in the governance and performance arrangements that are established to deliver Digital Gateshead.

1.11 **The opportunity to implement SMART Working across the organisation**. SMART Working is a recognised approach to organising work that delivers improved efficiency and effectiveness in job outcomes through the building blocks of 'Bytes, Buildings and Behaviours' (Head of Engagement, Civil Service Transforming The Way We Work). Digital Gateshead will help to deliver the 'Bytes' element of SMART working, providing one of the key foundations for the implementation of new ways of working.

1.12 **The recognition that Digital Gateshead will impact on all of our customers, service users, residents, businesses, visitors, partner organisations, councillors and workforce**. Ensuring that this is a positive and beneficial experience, and that no one is disadvantaged will require active consultation and communication and appropriate and targeted support and assistance.

2.0   Digital Gateshead Workstreams

2.1   Digital Gateshead is structured around six linked workstreams that will provide a focus on the key areas of work and change. These are
- Digital Customer
- Digital Council
- Digital Inclusion
- Digital Partners
- Digital Business
- Digital Place

2.2   The outcomes for each workstream are presented below along with the approach to developing more detailed plans and the timeframe. Governance arrangements are described in section 4.

2.3   Digital Customer
- Consistent, convenient and easy to use online and mobile services that are the first choice for the majority of council service users
- Promoting services and communicating with our customers through all digital channels

2.3.1   Digital Customer will deliver customer-facing digital services that are so straightforward, consistent and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so with confidence, and they will achieve high customer satisfaction ratings. People will find and understand all of the information and services they need online and they will recommend our digital services to others who do not currently use them. Avoidable contact (i.e. contact because the service user cannot locate, use or understand the information and services provided online) will be significantly reduced, saving council resources.

2.3.2   The case for moving as many council services as is appropriate and practical to online digital delivery is strong. Research undertaken as part of the Government Digital Efficiency Report showed that online service delivery can be 20 times cheaper than services provided by phone, 30 times cheaper than postal services and up to 50 times cheaper than services provided face to face. There is also evidence that customers want to use online services, citing reasons such as saving time; sites being clear and easy to use; availability of the service outside of normal office hours. *(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report)*

2.3.3   In 2012 the Gateshead Council Residents Survey confirmed that many of our customers were willing to use digital services with 39% willing to request a service this way, 44% willing to make a payment and 56% willing to check information online. In the last 12 months there was a 26% increase in traffic to the council website (rising to around 3 million visits per year) and it is expected that this will continue to increase.

2.3.4   Over the next 3 years it is expected that digital self-service will grow by 310% across the Public Sector, 89% of councils are planning to increase and improve their digital services to help meet the financial challenges and by 2018 the majority of councils will provide over 50% of their services through self-service (http://www.gossinteractive.com/digital-self-service-survey-2105).   When the move to online self-service is underpinned by a fundamental service redesign based on user needs the expectation is that 80% online self-service can be achieved within five years.
(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report)

2.3.5　Recognising the opportunity this presents to help deliver the Council Plan, and in particular reduce costs and increase collective responsibility, the target for the Digital Customers workstream has been agreed as
"By 2020, 80% of transactions will be carried out online, via a digital service offer that is consistent with user expectations, becoming their channel of choice".
The definition of a transaction will vary within each service but typically includes high volume, low complexity service requests and in some cases the transaction will extend into the fulfilment of the service request.

2.3.6　It is acknowledged that this is a challenging target and that services will need to work at pace, fundamentally review the way that they work, and move to a position where it is the needs of the customer that drives how the service is delivered, rather than the requirements of the council. However the scale of the financial challenge facing the council is equally challenging. Streamlining and digitising transactional services will enable resources to be redirected to areas of greater need and for many of our customers and service users it will deliver services that are more convenient and easy to use.　Some work has already taken place through the Channel Shift project and this project will be absorbed into the Digital Customer workstream to ensure all resources are directed towards the agreed corporate priorities.

2.3.7　Taking into consideration the scale and scope of the work that needs to be progressed, and the commitment to the principle of "the strategy is delivery", the immediate action for the Digital Customer workstream is to implement a digital platform that will
- manage all of the council websites (including the intranet) and customer-facing digital services. At present there are around 40 separate websites providing council information and services
- meet the requirements of new and emerging 'self-service' initiatives such as the e-marketplace within Social Care
- support a customer interface that is accessible, usable, flexible and not determined by the back-office ICT systems used within the council. Current usage statistics show that many visitors to the council website struggle to find the information they want or leave the website without having completed a transaction. This partly reflects the complexity and proliferation of unmanaged web content across the many different websites and the 6,000+ pages that deliver council services
- deliver digital services that function seamlessly on all devices (current usage data shows that at present 43% of our users access the website using a PC or laptop, 40% use a smartphone and 17% use a tablet)
- deliver true end-to-end solutions from point of entry by the customer to the employee who deliver the service thus reducing the requirement for administrative and managerial input
- deliver consistent design, branding and customer experience across all of the council's digital services
- offer "My Account" functionality that will allow residents to easily and securely sign in and track the progress with all of their service requests
- utilise cloud/ hosted technology solutions wherever possible to ensure the maximum level of availability, support, security and maintenance of the latest software
- Provide an opportunity to work in partnership with the supplier, sharing skills and knowledge and getting maximum benefit from the investment in the solutions

2.3.8   The digital platform is a set of common components, assembly methods and technologies that serve as building blocks for a portfolio of digital products and services. Some of the technologies may already exist within the council and work is already being progressed to
- Agree the specification for the digital platform
- Assess whether any of the existing tools can be utilised, taking into consideration the need to move rapidly to implementation and to use solutions that will meet future requirements
- Determine the costs and funding approach
- Procure any elements that are required and commence implementation immediately

2.3.9   The timescale for the implementation of the digital platform will be determined once the requirements and approach have been confirmed. However the intention is to have the digital platform operational by April 2016 at the latest.

2.3.10 While the procurement is being progressed information on current usage, uptake and other data about our customers and services will help identify priorities and inform the development the plan to achieve the 80% target by 2020. Similar data will be used to inform the development and design of the most effective digital self-service options. This process will continue throughout the life of Digital Gateshead and beyond as our digital services will never be finished and will require constant iteration and improvement to fulfil the changing requirements of our customers and technological developments. One of the outcomes of Digital Customer will be that all Service Directors and Managers will know why and how people transact with their service and how much each transaction costs and will constantly manage this to achieve optimum service delivery at the most efficient cost.

2.3.11 Digital Customer will also deliver improved digital communications. We will expand our use of Social Media and digital technologies as a means of communicating and engaging with our residents, services users, customers and businesses and it will be a key resource in developing collective responsibility and strengthening community and individual council resilience. As of June 2015 over 6,000 people 'liked' Gateshead Council Facebook Page and there were over 11,000 followers on Twitter (mainly businesses). The opportunities to increase the usage of these communication and engagement tools   will be explored further through other parts of the Change Programme and in conjunction with the Digital Inclusion workstream.

2.4   Digital Council
- Fewer, more integrated ICT Systems
- Simplified business processes and working practices
- Councillors and employees working with a range of technologies
- Mobile / remote / collaborative / SMART working

2.4.1   The Digital Council workstream will make a significant contribution to the 'Working Differently' Policy Direction, providing our councillors and workforce with the digital technologies, tools and skills to work in the most effective and efficient way; helping groups and services to develop and implement new service models and simplify and streamline working practices; facilitating new ways of working with partners.

2.4.2   The key challenges for this workstream will include
- scoping and prioritising the projects that are to be progressed and grouping them into phases that can be delivered and resourced
- ensuring that there is a comprehensive review and challenge of all working practices (i.e. business process re-engineering) as part of each digital project, to ensure that

every opportunity to remove and streamline activities is taken and that all potential savings and efficiencies are delivered.

2.4.3   Many Digital Council projects will contribute to the delivery of other parts of the FFtF Change Programme and there will be requests from services to implement other technology and business process projects that will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the budget proposals and service improvement.   Another likely source of projects will be corporate initiatives to remove and reduce business process that are now of limited value, opportunities to improve the intranet so that staff can find all of the information they need without having to email or phone colleagues, opportunities to change how employees use information and work collaboratively and projects that will look at how employees could work differently to reduce accommodation and travel requirements. There will also be opportunities linked to technology projects e.g. the current implementation of the new HR and Payroll system; implementation of the new corporate telephone system which could support 'SMART' working through features such as 'follow-me' telephony and presence management; the potential to implement cloud-based office productivity tools such as Office 365 and Google Apps and other opportunities presented by cloud based technologies.

2.4.4   Scoping the full range of projects to be progressed, and agreeing how they will be prioritised and resourced will be the key task for this workstream until October 2015. The focus will be on identifying and progressing those digital projects that will make the greatest contribution to the delivery of the Council Plan, FFtF Change Programme and budget proposals, and ensuring that they deliver all of the savings, efficiencies and other outcomes in the required timescale. All existing projects and plans to deploy mobile and agile working solutions and implement the corporate EDM and Workflow system will also be incorporated into this workstream to ensure that they are progressed in line with the new approach.

2.4.5   This workstream will also ensure that all councillors and employees have the right tools, skills and confidence to work differently with digital tools and systems. This will include the employees who are developing and implementing digital solutions, as well as the employees who are using those solutions to deliver services. This will be progressed in conjunction with the Workforce Plan and it will be an important part of each individual project, with councillors and employees playing a key role in assessing their needs and requirements in terms of tools, systems, skills and training.

2.5   Digital Inclusion
- All Gateshead residents and service users have the right access, skills, motivation and confidence to easily use online and digital services
- Assisted Digital Services are provided for those who cannot use the services on their own

2.5.1   Digital Inclusion is typically defined in terms of
- Connectivity i.e. access to the internet through a range of devices, at an appropriate data / broadband speed and in suitable locations. The 2012 Resident's Survey showed that at that time around 80% of Gateshead residents had access to the internet with around 71% using a broadband connection at home
- Accessibility i.e. ensuring online and digital services are designed to work with all devices (current usage data shows that at present 43% of our users access the website using a PC or laptop, 40% use a smartphone and 17% use a tablet) and to meet the needs of all our users, including those who require additional support and assistance or use different languages
- Skills i.e. the knowledge and confidence to be able to use online and digital services successfully

The Digital Inclusion workstream (working alongside Digital Customer, Digital Place and Digital Business) will address all of these challenges and consider how we can motivate as many of our residents and service users as possible to use the online and digital services so that they become "their channel of choice".

2.5.2 Helping our residents and service users to develop digital skills and confidence, and ensuring that Gateshead as a place has the best digital infrastructure (i.e. high speed broadband services for residential and business use; public access Wi-Fi in council, community and partner buildings and key external locations; public access devices) will enable our residents to engage digitally with a broad range of service providers, agencies, businesses and social media and experience all of the benefits that this can offer. It will also help to deliver the increased collective responsibility that the Council Plan is aiming to achieve, providing an easy way for people to come together to share information, views and experience and help themselves and each other.

2.5.3 The Council (working with partners such as The Gateshead Housing Company) is already involved in a number of projects and initiatives that are contributing to digital inclusion, including the LearningSkills service. Work will take place over the next 3 months to understand what is already being delivered and to obtain the most up to date statistics on connectivity, access and the areas of greatest need. A work programme will then be developed that will consider
- Connectivity through broadband, WiFi and public access devices. This will include regional projects and opportunities through the Combined Authority and North East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Digital skills for all sectors of the community and opportunities to work with partners and regional and national initiatives
- Targeted campaigns and assistance to support the successful transition of specific services to online and digital as part of the Digital Customer workstream. This will include engagement with the service users (and their families and carers where appropriate) and consider all issues linked to their use of the digital services (such as ensuring everyone has access to suitable online payment methods) as well the marketing and promotion of the new services.
- The best way to providing digital assistance to our residents and service users who require additional support

2.6   Digital Partners
- Enhanced collaboration, service delivery and communication with all partners through digital technologies and shared data
- Regional and sector opportunities

2.6.1 The Digital Partners workstream will focus specifically on developing opportunities to work better and differently with partners through digital and cloud technology, and on resolving some of the technology based challenges that have prevented joint working and service delivery in the past. Much of the work will be driven by other projects in the Council Plan and FFtF Change Programme and the workstream will also consider the opportunities to work differently with data at both a local and regional level. This will contribute to the development of early help and prevention models, and assist with the identification of service users and communities with the greatest need, two of the Policy Directions identified in the Council Plan.

2.6.2   The work programme for Digital Partners will be developed as the requirements of the other Change Programme projects become clearer. Discussions will also take place with partner organisations and the NE ICT Partnership (of which Gateshead is a member) to identify any existing opportunities or requirements to develop collaborative digital solutions, even on a pilot basis.

2.7   Digital Business
  - Ensuring Gateshead businesses are able complete in a digital world

2.7.1   Digital Business will address similar issues to the Digital Inclusion workstream, but with a clear focus on the needs of all Gateshead businesses, ensuring that they can fully exploit and respond to the opportunities offered by digital technologies and they can use digital to grow and remain competitive.   The workstream will contribute directly to the strategy of 'maximising growth' and it will be developed and delivered in conjunction with the Economic and Housing Growth Service.

2.8   Digital Place
  - Borough and building-wide digital infrastructure (including WiFi) to meet the current and future requirements of the council, residents, public, business, partners and other agencies

2.8.1   Digital Place will ensure that Gateshead, as a place, has the best digital infrastructure in terms of broadband and wireless technologies. It is a fundamental requirement for the successful delivery of all of Digital Gateshead.

2.8.2   The Council is currently re-letting its Voice and Data Contract and is using this opportunity to develop plans for a single, secure, high-speed, network infrastructure that meets the requirements of Gateshead as a place and is accessible across the borough and in a wide range of council, community and partner buildings. Previously, older technologies and different security regimes from central Government prevented other organisations (and the public) from using the council's corporate network infrastructure. This situation is changing and the council is looking for a partner who will help design and implement a new network infrastructure that will have the potential to offer secure and flexible access to a wide range of organisations and the public. This will make a significant contribution to the delivery of Digital Inclusion and Digital Business.

2.8.3   The procurement of the new contract and partner will be completed in March 2016. Work will then begin on the redesign and reprovision of the network infrastructure (while existing connectivity is maintained) and it is anticipated that the roll-out of the new infrastructure will begin in 2017/18.

3.0   Resources and Savings

3.1   Delivering Digital Gateshead will require significant investment and resources. Although the projects will contribute directly the delivery of the Council Plan, deliver significant transformation and service improvement, and deliver many other benefits for Gateshead as a place and as an organisation, the current challenging financial environment will require that all investment is fully evaluated to ensure that each individual project makes sufficient contribution to the required outcomes, which are likely to include cashable savings as part of budget proposals.

3.2   Further work will take place over the next 2 months to develop the investment plan for Digital Gateshead and consider how the costs could be funded (i.e. existing budgets, opportunities to reallocate existing employee resources etc).   Work to date has identified that funding will be required for
  - the procurement, implementation and support of the Digital Platform
  - the transition of specific services and transactions to online delivery (requiring interfaces into supporting back office systems)
  - promotion and marketing of digital and online services
  - digital solutions and devices for councillors and employees to use (including the more advanced functionality offered by the new telephony system)
  - development and maintenance of a borough-wide network infrastructure.

3.3   Additional employee resources will be required to work on web content and ICT system development, to support the broader deployment and use of digital devices and to assist services and teams with the redesign of business processes. However Groups and Services will also be expected to release some resource on a short-term basis to assist with their projects, providing access to relevant expertise and experience and securing full engagement and buy-in from the relevant teams and services.

3.4   It is expected that any requirement for new or additional budget will only be considered for Digital Gateshead projects that are essential to the delivery of the Council Plan or the FFtF Change Programme, or those projects that will release an appropriate level of savings.

3.5   Potential sources of savings from Digital Gateshead projects will include
  - The opportunity to implement new services within Gateshead and with partners
  - Reducing the usage of more expensive service delivery methods such as phone (up to 20 times more expensive than online), postal (up to 30 times more expensive than online) and face to face (potentially 50 times more expensive than online)
  - Removing and streamlining business processes through business process re-engineering
  - Reducing the number of back office ICT systems used within the council
  - Reducing employee travel requirements
  - Reducing office accommodation

The scale of savings that can be achieved will be determined by how far the council is prepared to change the services it provides and the way it works through technology. Determining how and when savings will be delivered from individual projects will be an essential part of the business case and these will be developed in conjunction with the relevant service.