

DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Summary and Recommendations

This paper sets out plans for publishing a progress report which will provide a summary of the achievements to date for delivering the current Scottish Government/COSLA Digital Strategy for Scotland (published in 2021), and plans for developing a new Digital Strategy for Scotland during 2024. The progress report will be jointly published by Scottish Government and COSLA, and will be submitted to the Leaders' Meeting in May prior to its publication.

The paper also provides an update on some of the key digital programmes that underpin the current Digital Strategy which benefit Local Government. Further detail will be provided on these at future Leaders' Meetings.

This paper invites Leaders to:

- i. Note the work underway with Scottish Government to prepare a progress report for the current Digital Strategy, which is expected to be presented at the Leaders' Meeting in May prior to publication;
- ii. Note the intention to work with Scottish Government to publish a new Digital Strategy later in 2024; and
- iii. Note the updates on key digital programmes in Local Government.

References

Previous reports to Leaders:

- 21-02-26, Item 21 - Digital Strategy for Scotland (paper **LD/21/481**)
- 21-10-29, Item 10 - Proposed Transfer of Digital Office into COSLA (paper **LD/21/190**)

For general background:

- A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world – <https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-changing-nation-how-scotland-will-thrive-in-a-digital-world/>

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Purpose

1. This report provides COSLA Leaders with an update on plans to publish a progress report for the current Scottish Government/COSLA Digital Strategy for Scotland, provides information on plans to jointly develop a new Digital Strategy for Scotland during 2024 and provides an update on some key digital initiatives supporting the current Strategy of benefit to Local Government.

Current COSLA Position

2. Leaders have previously agreed:
 - Digital transformation is of central importance to Local Government, and this was only reinforced by the work conducted in response to Covid-19, which accelerated the pace of transformation.
 - A series of principles to guide COSLA's strategic approach to digital transformation.
 - The development of a refreshed Digital Strategy for Scotland and, following Leaders' input, it be finalised for publication

Current Context

3. Scotland's Digital Strategy "*A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world*" was published on 11 March 2021. It was published jointly by Scottish Government and COSLA, with support from the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government. The strategy is structured around three broad aims;
 - a. "People and place" – all people should have access to good quality connectivity; the skills and confidence to use digital technology and be reassured that digital technology is used in an ethical way;
 - b. "A strong digital economy" – help all businesses become digital businesses, and to support our digital technology sector; and
 - c. "Digital Government and Services" – create the environment for public service organisations to provide digital services that are resilient, cost-effective, accessible, and easy to use.
4. Cllr Katie Hagmann, COSLA's Spokesperson for Resources co-chairs the Digital Strategy Joint Leadership Board with Richard Lochhead, Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade. It oversees delivery and recently agreed that Scottish Government and COSLA work together to prepare a public-facing progress report for the strategy. The aim is to publish the report in May 2024; it will summarise the progress that has been made to date and will include case studies, statistics, and quotes from Scottish Government and Local Government that evidence the impact of what has been achieved. The report will be brought to COSLA Leaders in April. The Board further agreed that Scottish Government and COSLA work in partnership to progress plans for engaging stakeholders in the development a new Digital Strategy during 2024.

Updates on Key Initiatives

5. There are a number of key initiatives underway that support the Digital Strategy and benefit Local Government. Further detail will be provided on these at future meetings:
 - a. Digital Inclusion – Scottish Government launched the Connecting Scotland Programme in 2020 in response to the acute impact that digital exclusion had on social inclusion, access to public services, and economic opportunity for people during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result of the programme 61,000 devices have been issued to communities through collaboration between Scottish Government, Local Government and the Third Sector. Post-pandemic, the approach for Connecting Scotland has evolved and it has recently been adapted to become more of a programme of grant funding that can support wider, yet more targeted, digital inclusion interventions. This will be supported by a new Digital Inclusion Alliance which aims to better align all organisations involved in tackling digital exclusion and enabling better sharing of resources. Work is ongoing as to how such an Alliance might best operate in practice.
 - b. Common Digital Solutions – One of the key priorities set out in the Digital Strategy, is the investment in common digital solutions that are designed to be re-used across the public sector to avoid duplicative investment, reduce costs, reduce risks, and improve customer experience. Appendix A provides examples of common digital solutions that already exist or are currently being developed.
 - c. Digital Planning – Focused specifically on how digitisation could support the transformation of planning and development to increase investment and provide Planning Authorities with opportunities to reduce costs, Scottish Government launched the Digital Planning Strategy “*Transforming Places Together: digital strategy for planning*” in 2020 and announced a £35m programme to deliver against the objectives set out in the strategy shortly after in March 2021. Funding for the programme has been withdrawn and the programme will be closed prematurely in March 2024 without fully realising its expected benefits. COSLA and the Digital Office are engaged with Scottish Government to seek clarity on what aspects of the programme might still be taken forward, develop alternative plans for delivering the objectives of the Strategy, and to develop plans for working together to progress revised business cases.
 - d. Digital Health and Care – Scottish Government and COSLA published Scotland’s Digital Health and Care Strategy in October 2021, and subsequently published Scotland’s first ever Health and Care Data Strategy in February 2023. Both of these strategies set out goals for greater integration of health and care information for people receiving care (and their carers), and professionals in Health and Social Care in order to improve the (digital and non-digital) customer experience and improve outcomes for people.
 - i. Work is underway by COSLA and the Digital Office to develop a business case for a national programme that could support Health and Social Care Partnerships to improve the quality of data about citizens held within social care case management systems and for it to be more integrated with the Community Health Index (CHI) that is used to identify people in Health. The work would underpin the development of an integrated health and Care record.
 - ii. The Digital Office is supporting Health and Social Care Partnerships and Housing Associations to migrate telecare services to digital in advance of the analogue telephony network being switched-off by telecommunications companies at the end of 2025. There are now almost 35,000 telecare alarms that are digital-ready out of a total of 140,000.

- iii. The required migration from analogue to digital telecare has meant that Health and Social Care Partnerships and Housing Associations have need to upgrade the software use within Telecare Alarm Receiving Centres. In order to reduce costs within Local Government, and to provide a platform for greater collaboration and innovation, the Digital Office worked in partnership with Scotland Excel during 2023 to procure a solution that could be shared by councils and a contract was awarded in November 2023. The first customer (cne-siar.gov.uk) is now live on the new shared solution, and a further 11 have plans underway.
- e. Visitor Levy – The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government is working with COSLA and Directors of Finance to explore opportunities for shared digital solutions that can help councils to introduce visitor levies. This will explore opportunities for shared back-office systems and/or shared online services for businesses.
- f. SOLACE/IS Transformation – The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government is supporting the SOLACE/Information Service transformation work by acting as the Project Director on behalf of SOLACE for the development of a Digital-Enabled “To Be” State for Local Government. The aim is to produce a short compelling vision for how digital can transform Local Government, and some key principles for how it might be realised. A project kick-off has been held on 6 February with representation from SOLACE, Digital Office, Improvement Service and staff from councils that have volunteered to be involved. It was agreed that the vision will bring together policy, transformation, skills and capability, as well as data and enabling technology (such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)) and will be structured into the three types of benefit that can be realised through digital technology:
 - i. Better Operations (improved efficiency, quality, and resilience, etc);
 - ii. Better Customer Service; and
 - iii. Better Outcomes.

What is changing?

- 12. The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government within COSLA is working in collaboration with Scottish Government to prepare a public-facing progress report of the current Digital Strategy.
- 13. COSLA policy colleagues, supported by the the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government are working on the development of a new Digital Strategy for publication later in 2024, which meets the needs of Local Government into the future and aligns with the ambitions set out in the COSLA Plan 2022-2027.
- 14. Through COSLA’s Innovating, Developing, Transforming Special Interest Group, COSLA politicians will have the opportunity to feed into what should be considered for adoption into this new refresh of the Digital Strategy for Scotland, for the benefit of future service delivery across Local Government in Scotland.
- 15. Leaders will receive a report in May 2024.

Proposed COSLA Position

- 16. Leaders are asked meantime to note the breadth of work ongoing on Digital and that further detail will be provided in due course, specifically the refreshed Digital Strategy for Scotland in May.

Next Steps


- 17. COSLA policy colleagues and the The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government will

continue to work in partnership with Scottish Government to draft the progress report for the Digital Strategy, and to develop plans for the new Digital Strategy.

18. The draft of the Progress Report will be presented for consideration to the Leaders' Meeting in May prior to publication.

Date Considered: 23rd February 2024

Contribution to agreed COSLA Plan and Verity House Agreement:

<p>COSLA Plan 22-27</p> 	<p>Priority Areas</p> <p>Strengthen Local Democracy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Secure Sustainable Funding <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Improve the Wellbeing of Individuals, Families and Communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Enhance Education and Support for Children and Young People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Deliver a Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Support the Most Vulnerable in our Communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Verity House Agreement</p>	<p>Shared Priorities</p> <p>Tackling Poverty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Just transition to net zero <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Sustainable Public Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

APPENDIX A – Existing Examples of Reuse and Collaboration within the Public Sector

Examples of Common Digital Services

Examples of end-to-end digital services that are designed to be re-used by multiple organisations: -

Digital Service	Hosted By	Description	Current Status
eDevelopment Portal	Scottish Government	eDevelopment is the Scottish service that enables users to apply online for planning permission, building warrants, appeals, and a range of other forms, to their local and planning authority. It is managed by the Scottish Government in partnership with all Scottish local and planning authorities.	Live
SEEMiS	Local Government (SEEMiS)	As the standard MIS within Scottish Education, all local student data is processed and managed by SEEMiS software offering interfaces with external agencies such as ScotXed and SQA.	Live
Parent Portal	SEEMiS/Improvement Service	An online service designed to transform communications between schools and parents/carers, giving online access to a range of school-related services.	Live
MyJobScotland	Local Government (COSLA)	A shared digital service for advertising and managing recruitment that is used universally across central and local government, and more widely across the public sector.	Live
GetYourNEC.Scot	Local Government (Improvement Service)	Used by all 32 Local Authorities to provide an end to end online application channel for citizens to apply for over 60s concessionary travel, disabled concessionary travel, Young Persons' Free Bus Travel and Young Scot cards. Facilitated 469,760 online applications since July 2022, that would otherwise have been processed manually by Local Authority staff.	Live
TURAS	NHS NES	Online learning journey for staff allowing Access to health, wellbeing and social care tools, appraisal or learning resources	Live
SEER	NHS NSS	Data sharing Platform – recent use for LA access to SEER Data for Health – Local Covid Resilience Planning and Dashboards for use across NHS and SG/LA for COVID Outbreaks	Live

Examples of Common Digital Components

Example of discrete components that can be re-used within end-to-end digital services by multiple organisations: -

Digital Component	Hosted By	Description	Current Status
Digital Identity Scotland	Scottish Government	a sign on, which will enable users to use one account to securely log in to a variety of public services, using an email address, password, and two-factor authentication and provide users with a choice to reuse verified personal information to apply for other services	In Development
Gov.Scot MyAccount	Local Government (Improvement Service)	A common digital component that allows people to manage their online identity in order to access local government services with over 2 million people registered.	Live
BisAccount.Scot	Local Government (Improvement Service)	Used by all 32 Local Authorities for business authentication for Childcare Providers applying for COVID grant funding.	Live
Payments	Scottish Government	the SG Payments Service administering the batches of regular, weekly payments on behalf of ILF Scotland to recipients of the Transition Fund initially.	Live (Outbound Payments only)
Planning Payments	Scottish Government	A new service for managing inbound payments for planning and development, including reconciling payments with planning authorities (built using Gov.UK Pay)	In Development
Planning Applications	Scottish Government	A new service that will improve the quality of planning applications by embedding rules that can guide the applicant.	In Development
Gov.UK Pay	UK Government	A payment service that is available for any government or public sector organisation that wants to take credit card payments online.	Live
Online School Payments	Local Government (Scotland Excel)	A second generation national procurement framework that increasing its scope from just offering online school payments.	Live

Examples of Common Platforms

Underlying technology and toolkits that make it easy for public digital staff and third-parties (e.g. industry) to develop new innovative digital components and services.

Digital Health and Care Platform	NHS (NHS NES Digital)	The National Digital Health and Care Platform brings together cloud-based digital components and services. Making it easier to build or enhance technology solutions for the public sector in Scotland.	Live
Cloud	Scottish Government	A common platform for hosting services for organisations across Scottish Government and wider public sector bodies	Live
Spatial Data Hub	Local Government (Improvement Service)	A common platform for publishing (and gaining access to) local government (geo-spatial) datasets at a national level	Live
Spatial Data Gov.Scot	Scottish Government	A common platform for publishing (and gaining access to) open public sector (geo-spatial) datasets at a national level	Live

Examples of Common Licensing

Commercial licensing arrangements that allow public bodies to procure common solutions using economy of scale.

Digital Component	Hosted By	Description	Current Status
Social Work Case Management Framework	Local Government (Scotland Excel)	A national procurement framework for allowing Health and Social Care Partnership to procure solutions for managing social work cases	Live
Digital Telecare Framework	Local Government (Scotland Excel)	A national procurement framework for allowing Health and Social Care Partnership to procure solutions for digital telecare alarm receiving centres and equipment.	Live
IoT Dynamic Purchasing System	Scottish Government	The aim of the IoT Dynamic Purchasing System is to provide a wide range of suppliers who can deliver Internet of Things technologies and services requirements for Scottish public sector bodies.	Live
M365 Licensing in Health	NHS NSS	A framework for Microsoft 365 available to NHS in Scotland (MSI Training Agreement also in place)	Live
M365 Licensing in Scottish Government	Scottish Government	A framework for Microsoft 365 available to Scotland Government Bodies (MSI Training Agreement also in place)	Live
M365 Licensing in Local Government	Local Government (Digital Office, Scotland Excel)	The Digital Office and Scotland Excel work in partnership during 2023 to manage a collaborative procurement of Microsoft 365 licenses for 7	Live

		councils, delivering almost £1M saving to the councils involved. A further process is currently underway for another four councils	
Shared Telecare Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) Solution	Local Government (Digital Office, Scotland Excel)	The service has a dedicated responder team that respond to all activation calls 24/7 every day of the year. If preferred activation calls can be routed directly to a family or carer as an alternative to a responder response.	Live