



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Cabinet

Committee date: 06/03/2024

Report title: Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-2029

Portfolio: Councillor Packer, cabinet member for customers and digital

Report from: Head of customers, IT and digital

Wards: All wards

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Purpose

To seek approval from Cabinet for the Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29.

Policy framework

The council has five current corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report incorporates the ambition of all of the above under a new set of priorities that have emerged following a full and extensive period of consultation with both internal and external stakeholders during the formation of the new Corporate Plan: They are:

- A Prosperous Norwich
- A Fairer Norwich
- A Climate Responsive Norwich
- A Future-Proof Norwich
- An Open and Modern Council

Report details

Background

1. Norwich City Council's vision, as set out in the corporate plan 2024-29 is to become a fair and thriving city, full of ambition. Delivering on key priorities, being an open and modern council and doing the basics well in an efficient, timely and well-informed way is key towards achieving this.
2. The Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24 focussed on developing modern, agile workforce tools and the building blocks for better data management. The new Customer and Digital Strategy will build on the work delivered to date.
3. Consumer research (customer digital index 2022) suggest that 99% of the UK are now online. In the east of England 89% (UK average 88%) have essential full or partial digital skills for life.¹ We recognise that customers have varying needs, and the council will continue to provide traditional contact options for those that need to access services in a different way. These options include, a telephone service, a face-to-face appointment service and translation assistance.
4. The majority of our customers have access to online and are digitally enabled and they expect our services to be easy to access and available 24/7. Our data shows that there is great opportunity to increase take up by improving their experience of using our services. Increasing the take up of online services will make council services more cost effective, enabling the council to focus resources on those who need them most.

Customer and Digital Strategy (appendix A)

5. The purpose of this document is to inform how the teams across the council are going to collaborate to deliver effective experiences for our customers. It will demonstrate how the council will continue to develop as a digital organisation, providing easy to access services that our customers want to use by default. We will support our workforce to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.
6. Within the context of this strategy customers are defined as anyone who lives, works or visits the city council area, councillors and our workforce. Our workforce will be supported to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.
7. The council has less funding available to meet demand for services, needs to transform and be efficient. Easy to access, end-to-end digital services, which deliver positive outcomes, are a key enabler in meeting the requirements to deliver effective and efficient continuous service improvements.

¹ The Essential Digital Skills Survey, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Lloyds Bank, is the UK's benchmark for digital skills. It measures the fundamental tasks needed to access the online world and the essential digital skills needed for life and work. The most recent survey conducted in 2022, suggests that 99% of the UK are now online. In the east of England 89% (UK average 88%) have essential full or partial digital skills for life.

8. The strategy vision is for the council to become a digital organisation, providing easy to access services that our customers want to use by default. To support the workforce to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.
9. Three objectives will ensure that the strategy delivers this vision. These objectives are:
 - a) Provide services which are easy to access.
 - b) Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a digital service by default.
 - c) Ensure IT and digital solutions are reliable and secure.
10. This is a council-wide strategy and has been informed by a number of different sources:
 - a) the Corporate Plan 2024-29
 - b) EDI Strategy 2024-27
 - c) Norwich 2040 Vision
 - d) outcomes from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24
 - e) performance data
 - f) best practice
 - g) website analysis
 - h) contact analysis
 - i) channel shift data
 - j) focus groups
 - k) equality data obtained from our strategy team

Feedback from:

- a) consultation survey and workshop report
 - b) councillors
 - c) colleagues
 - d) residents
 - e) voluntary and community groups
 - f) business
 - g) IT services survey
 - h) corporate plan consultation
 - i) EDI strategy consultation
 - j) customer user experience/satisfaction feedback
11. Once approved, the strategy will be shared and promoted across the organisation. The strategy will be supported by a strong governance structure and roadmap. The delivery status of our objectives and subsequent themes will be supported by a detailed action plan that will measure and assess against the strategy and outcomes. The outcomes will be measured by a set of indicators that will be considered and developed as part of the new performance framework, that will be developed upon approval of the new Corporate Plan.

Consultation

12. Consultation has been carried out which informs the strategy. This has comprised of a series of workshops which were delivered to colleagues,

councillors and voluntary sector organisations in October and November 2023.

13. A customer survey was published on the Get Talking Norwich Platform from 17 October to 16 November 2023. No creation of account or login was required to access the survey.
14. A key driver behind the delivering the new customer and digital strategy in 2024 was to ensure that the feedback from extensive corporate plan engagement could be fully utilised to inform the strategy. Over 900 individuals and organisations were engaged as part of this process, including Norwich residents and tenants' groups, councillors and officers, voluntary sector and community organisations, and local businesses and business networks.
15. The Customer and Digital Strategy will form part of a suite of strategies which underpin the Corporate Plan. The EDI Strategy has recently been completed and feedback from the strategy consultation (surveys and workshops) has been used to inform the Customer and Digital Strategy.
16. A report has been produced which details the consultation process and how this has informed strategy (appendix B)

Implications

Financial and resources

17. Delivering the strategy and intended outcomes will require significant future revenue and capital investment. Funding for specific proposals will be subject to a separate approval process for inclusion the council's capital and revenue budgets at the appropriate time. Investment will be based on a business cases assessment and detailed review of system and resource requirements. There are no specific proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources. Delivery of specific solutions will include an assessment of what is required.

Legal

18. If there is to be greater interaction with digital services, the Council will need to consider the impact on any current contractual arrangement, business continuity, security requirements, confidentiality and the collection and storage of data (including considering whether privacy notices need to be refreshed). This will be picked up as part of the action plan.

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	<p>An equality impact assessment has been completed (appendix C)</p> <p>No one group will be disproportionately affected by the delivery of the strategy, including those with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Whilst a key objective of the strategy is to provide digital services by default, this is for those customers who wish to access services in this way.</p> <p>The council will continue to provide traditional contact options for those who want and need to use these options, including a telephone service with an option to request a call back, a face-to-face appointment system or translation assistance. The council website has an accessibility function.</p>
Health, social and economic impact	<p>Positive - improving access to online services and enabling more customers to self-serve.</p> <p>Continue to provide customers with non-digital access to council services.</p> <p>Flexible working has a positive impact for the workforce.</p>
Crime and disorder	Neutral impact
Children and adults safeguarding	Neutral impact
Environmental impact	<p>Positive - providing customer information digitally reduces the need for printing and postage and a digital workforce that has the right tools for a flexible and virtual working helps reduce our carbon footprint.</p>

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
<p>Not providing fit for purpose digital solutions.</p> <p>A high volume of in person/telephone contact as digital services are not easy to access.</p> <p>IT solutions are not secure and reliable</p>	<p>Customer expectations will not be met.</p> <p>Administrative burden on the workforce and increased costs.</p> <p>Council resources will not be able to meet demand. High volumes of individual contact will result in the workforce being unable to focus on complex cases and customers who need tailored assistance.</p> <p>Data will be insecure and at risk of cyber-attacks.</p> <p>Data will be inaccurate and will not provide a true record of each customer.</p> <p>Unable to use data for customer insight.</p> <p>Workforce and customers will not have confidence in IT solutions.</p>	<p>Ensure digital solutions are co-designed with users so the user experience is paramount.</p> <p>Review existing processes and redesign where required to ensure processes are streamlined and efficient and result in positive outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure digital solutions are as wide reaching as possible and meet the needs of the majority of customers who want to use digital solutions.</p> <p>Engage with the workforce and customers to ensure that digital solutions are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Information and Data Strategy and associated IT governance framework will support secure and reliable systems.</p> <p>Regular cyber assurance reporting.</p> <p>Master Data Management systems will contribute to safe storage of accurate data.</p> <p>Joined up working within IT services and across the organisation will ensure that solutions continue to be fit for purpose and meet the needs of internal and external customers.</p>

Other options considered

19. The options considered were:

- a) Do Nothing.
- b) Deliver solutions as requested and when resources allow.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

20. Delivering solutions as part of an overall strategy is the best way of ensuring that well designed and accessible services are available for customers and the council.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29

Appendix B – Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29 consultation report

Appendix C - Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29 Equality Impact Assessment

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account

APPENDIX A

process
inclusive

confidence
customers

modern
support

efficient
easy to use

informed
website

process

reliable
simple

easy-to-access

accessible

2024 - 2029

Customer and digital strategy

for Norwich City Council

Contents

1. Foreword	3
2. Vision	4
3. Our customers and services	5
4. Shaping the strategy	6
5. Governance	6
6. Objectives – summary	6
Objective 1 – Provide services which are easy to access	7
Objective 2 – Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a digital service by default.	8
Objective 3 – Ensure IT and digital solutions are reliable and secure	9

Foreword

Norwich City Council's vision, as set out in the corporate plan 2024-29 is to become a fair and thriving city, full of ambition. Delivering on key priorities, being an open and modern council and doing the basics well in an efficient, timely and well-informed way is key towards achieving this. This strategy outlines how we will support this vision through the development of our customer and digital services.

Our customers are increasingly wanting to access our services digitally and at a time that suits them. By making our services straightforward, intuitive, and available 24/7 – in the way that we now expect from other organisations – will mean more customers use digital services by default.

By increasing the take up of online services, we will make our services more cost effective, enabling the council to focus resources on those who need them most. But we recognise that it is

not one size fits all and that customers have varying needs, so we will continue to provide traditional contact options for those that have challenges with accessing digital services.

This new strategy will build on the work delivered from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24 that focussed on developing modern, agile workforce tools and the building blocks for better data management.

Talking and engaging with those that use our services while we developed this new strategy has provided us with the insight needed to refocus where we will make improvements. Going forward we will continue with our customer engagement, gathering feedback as we put this strategy into action, to make sure that our digital services are accessible and easy to use. We will also work with other organisations to benchmark our success, share best practice, and develop modern innovative services.



Councillor Matthew Packer
Portfolio holder – customers and digital

2. Vision

Our vision is to become a digital organisation, providing easy to access services that our customers want to use by default.

Our workforce will be supported to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.



Our strategy will be led by the Government Digital Service Design principles

- Start with user needs
- Do less
- Design with data
- Do the hard work to make it simple
- Iterate. Then iterate again
- This is for everyone
- Understand context
- Build digital services, not websites
- Be consistent, not uniform
- Make things open: it makes things better.

3. Our customers and our services

Consumer research (customer digital index 2022) suggest that 99% of the UK are now online. In the east of England 89% (UK average 88%) have essential full or partial digital skills for life*.

We understand that the experience of using our online services will be compared with others such as banking, retail and central government therefore moving forward with continuous development and improvement is essential to keep pace with growing customer expectations.

The majority of our customers have access to online and are digitally enabled and they expect our services to be easy to access and available 24/7. Our data shows that there is great opportunity to increase take up by improving their experience of using our services.

It is recognised that some customers cannot access services online and not all enquires are suitable to be accessed in this way.

We continue to provide a:

- telephone service with an option to request a call back and not wait in a queue, with a focus on a quality service with targets achieved for the success of calls.
- face to face appointment service that it is arranged with the most suitable officer to deal with the enquiry to ensure the best outcome and service.
- translation assistance for those who are not able to access information about our services or communicate with us easily. For example, may not be fluent in English, either written or verbal; may need a British Sign Language interpreter or lipreader; or need documents in Braille, or information on audio tape.
- the council website has an accessibility function

Our definition of customer

Within the context of this strategy customers are defined as anyone who lives, works or visits the city council area and our internal workforce and councillors.



*The Essential Digital Skills Survey, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Lloyds Bank, is the UK's benchmark for digital skills. It measures the fundamental tasks needed to access the online world and the essential digital skills needed for life and work. The most recent survey conducted in 2022, suggests that 99% of the UK are now online. In the east of England 89% (UK average 88%) have essential full or partial digital skills for life.

4. Shaping the strategy - consultation and engagement

This is a council-wide strategy and has been informed by a number of different sources:

- the Corporate Plan 2024-29
- Norwich 2040 Vision
- outcomes from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24
- performance data
- local government best practice
- website analysis
- complaints
- channel shift data
- equality data obtained from our strategy team.

Feedback from:

- consultation survey and workshops
 - councillors
 - colleagues
 - residents
 - voluntary and community groups
 - businesses
- IT Services Survey
- corporate plan consultation
- EDI strategy consultation
- customer user experience/satisfaction feedback.

5. Governance

Our strategy will be supported by a strong governance structure and a **roadmap**.

The delivery status of our objectives and subsequent themes will be supported by a detailed **action plan** that will measure and assess against the strategy and outcomes. This will be shared at directorate, internal boards and with the organisation.

The outcomes measured through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be published externally.

6. Objectives - summary

Our strategy objectives are summarised below. We want to:

- Provide services which are **easy to access**.
- Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a **digital service by default**.
- Ensure IT and digital solutions are **reliable and secure**.

Environmental impact

Digital technology will aid the environmental agenda and is a key enabler in supporting low carbon activity:

- Increasing the percentage of digital-led services will reduce the council's environmental footprint, contributing to reaching our 2030 net-zero target. The sending of paper letters has a considerable environmental impact, and so moving towards digital-led services will reduce this*.
- The vast majority of emissions linked to digital services are connected to electricity use; these emissions will further decline as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise and the council ensures its continued procurement of green electricity.

*www.sciencefocus.com/planet-earth/the-thought-experiment-what-is-the-carbon-footprint-of-an-email

Objective 1 – provide services which are easy to access.

We will provide accessible services that are on time, right first time and delivered professionally and inclusively.

We will develop and enhance our online services so that customers will choose to use them by default. Increasing digital services means that we are more cost-effective and enables us to focus our resources on those who need them most.

To achieve this, we will:

- Implement and publish co-designed service standards to ensure that we together we agree these with our customers.
- Implement and publish service standards for key services.
- Review and rewrite customer communications so that they are accessible and understood.
- Promote our online services so that our customers are aware of options available.

- Develop and enhance our customer relationship management (CRM) system and create a dashboard of corporate performance so that standards can be monitored and shared across the organisation.
- Engage with customers and the voluntary sector in the development of our new website and our online services making sure that they are easy to access and use.

Measuring outcomes

As part of the **action plan** development we also need to develop reporting and establish baseline data to create meaningful targets.

We expect to achieve our outcomes across the following areas:

- service standards and performance measures
- customer satisfaction
- enquiries dealt within agreed timescales
- feedback from website customer engagement panel
- online content meets or exceeds web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG 2.1)



Objective 2 – develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a digital service by default.

We will improve the experience of our digital online services so that customers will use them by choice and ensure they are accessible.

We will develop modern, inclusive technology to provide our workforce with the skills and tools to empower them to work efficiently, collaboratively and creatively.

To achieve this, we will:

- Put user experience and customer focus at the heart of our services and design them to be fully digital.
- Implement a new council website that makes it easier for customers to find information and access services.
- Review and redesign all digital webforms/ service requests so that the design is consistent, accessible and easy for customers to request services.

- Simplify access to customer accounts to make the process of creating an account and accessing information more streamlined.
- Deploy automation where required and appropriate, for example exploring use of AI and chat-bot/virtual assistant internally and on the website.
- Monitor customer feedback and engagement on our website and use this information to make improvements as a result.
- Provide easy to request paperless bills and communications for our customers.
- Develop our workforce systems that includes the project to migrate shared folders to Microsoft 365.
- Develop the use of Microsoft apps and streamline internal processes to support collaborative, agile working for the workforce.
- Provide IT induction training for the workforce to give an overview of the service and how support can be accessed.
- Develop apps that can be used on mobile devices that support more efficient, agile working.

Measure of success

As part of the **action plan** development we also need to develop reporting and establish baseline data to create meaningful targets.

We expect to achieve our outcomes across the following areas:

- Satisfaction with website services.
- Number of unique visitors to our website.
- Percentage of service requests made online (channel shift).
- Registration and usage of customer accounts
- Regular review of website information to ensure it is up to date.
- Reduction in telephone volumes.
- Decrease in carbon footprint.
- Reduction in print, post and cost of communications, both in actual volumes and as a proportion of outbound communications.
- Successful delivery of Microsoft 365 project.
- Implementation of new Microsoft tools and techniques to improve process.
- Take up, completion of and satisfaction with IT induction training for staff.
- Workforce satisfaction with IT services.

Objective 3 – ensure IT and digital solutions are reliable and secure.

We will provide safe and secure services that customers and the workforce can have confidence in using and which are supported by a strong governance framework.

We will be informed by accurate and secure data.

To achieve this, we will:

- Publish an information and data strategy.
- Develop a framework to provide effective governance for all council used IT systems.
- Ensure new and existing systems are safe and secure in line with best practice guidelines.
- Effective disaster recovery procedures are in place and regularly reviewed to minimise disruption.
- Standardise our approach to renewing new and existing systems to ensure effective functionality and governance is in place.

- Migrate to cloud solutions by default.
- Better utilise our IT systems, and where possible, rationalise to realise cost efficiencies.
- Improve the data quality of customer data, including contact details and the development of our master data management solution.
- Use data to proactively support customers and inform strategic planning.
- Support the City Hall project by providing innovative IT solutions that are fit for purpose in a modern working environment.
- Develop the IT service function to enhance support and first time resolution of requests.
- Ensure availability of our systems within core working hours and 24/7 for online services.

Measuring success

As part of the **action plan** development we also need to develop reporting and establish baseline data to create meaningful targets.

We expect to achieve our outcomes across the following areas:

- First time fix for workforce IT requests.
- Reduction in the number of contacts to the support team.
- Workforce satisfaction with IT services.
- IT solutions availability.
- Delivering IT audit actions within agreed timescales.

We will deliver the following and monitor to ensure success:

- Action plan to monitor information and data strategy.
- IT governance framework and change management procedures.
- IT business continuity plans – review regularly.
- Produce a dashboard providing cyber assurance to senior leadership and audit committee.
- Standardised approach to delivery and development of systems.
- A single version of the truth for each customer, contact details and property in our systems.
- Public Services Network (PSN) compliance and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) certification



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Customer and Digital Strategy 2024 -29

Consultation Report

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1 Introduction	4
2 Methodology	5
3 Survey response rate and respondent characteristics	7
4 Feedback - consultation workshops	10
5 Feedback – survey (measures of importance)	13
6 Feedback – survey (free text responses)	14
7 Corporate Plan 2024-29 and feedback	15
8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Feedback	16

Executive Summary

ES1 The Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-2029

The Customer and Digital Strategy vision is to:

Become a digital organisation, providing easy to access services that our customers want to use by default.

Be an organisation which supports our workforce to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.

ES2 Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29 Consultation

The consultation was undertaken in October and November 2023. This consisted of five workshops and a survey which was available via the Get Talking Norwich platform. Paper copies were available.

Workshops were delivered in person and online for the following groups:

- colleagues
- councillors
- voluntary sector organisations

The survey was open between 16 October 2023 and 17 November 2023. Survey respondents were asked to identify which of the following groups they belonged to:

- resident
- colleague
- councillor
- voluntary sector organisation
- business

The survey questions focussed on emerging themes which were a result of best practice from local authorities and government guidance, corporate plan aims, the Norwich 2040 vision, initial stakeholder interviews with officers from across all directorates of the council and the Customers, IT and Digital Portfolio Holder.

These emerging themes were:

- Provide services which are **easy to access** for all customers.
- Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a **digital first** service.
- Ensure our systems are **reliable and secure**.

Respondents were asked what was most important to them in relation to the three themes. They were also asked to share their ideas to help the council deliver these emerging themes.

The survey was published online on the Get Talking Norwich Platform. Respondents did not have to register with an account to complete the survey.

The survey was widely publicised through social media, Citizen Magazine, BIDS online, The intranet and by email.

ES3 Scope of this report

This report describes the methodology and presents the findings of the Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-29 consultation.

It includes:

- Feedback from the workshops, including the result of a SWOT analysis exercise.
- Quantitative data and analysis of free text comments from the 274 responses to the survey.

ES4 Response Rate - survey

A total of 274 respondents completed the survey. All respondents completed the survey online.

The results of the survey were individually analysed, and it was found that feedback from all categories of respondent were consistent. Therefore survey analysis considered all respondents as a single group.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The strategy will underpin the emerging Corporate Plan 2024-29 vision:

Norwich: a fair and thriving city, full of ambition.

The vision contained in the draft Customer and Digital strategy is for Norwich City Council to:

- Become a digital organisation, providing easy to access services that our customers want to use by default.
- Be an organisation which supports our workforce to develop modern and innovative ways of working, delivering inclusive, cost effective and efficient services.

This vision links with the emerging Corporate Plan aim to be an open and modern council which is data and insight driven and people focused.

The Customer and Digital Strategy demonstrates how this vision will be achieved, by delivering these three key objectives:

- Provide services which are **easy to access**.
- Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a **digital service by default**.
- Ensure IT and digital solutions are **reliable and secure**.

It will be underpinned by an action plan which will support its delivery and measures success. The consultation was undertaken in October and November 2023 and consultation consisted of workshops and a survey.

This consultation report describes the consultation methodology and the feedback received as part of the development of the strategy – feedback specific to the strategy and in addition, feedback to the emerging Corporate Plan 2024-29 consultation and feedback which informed the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy.

2 Methodology

2.1 Workshops

A series of workshops were delivered in October and November 2023.

Workshops were delivered in person and online for the following groups:

- colleagues
- councillors
- voluntary sector organisations

2.1.1 Workshop content

Workshops focussed on several discussion topics, which workshop groups were asked to discuss and feedback on.

These included:

- Where should the council be in terms of customer and digital services?
- How can service areas contribute to good, timely service delivery and communications?
- How will the success of the strategy be measured?

All senior leadership and all councillors were invited to at least once workshop.

In the workshop, councillors and senior leadership were asked to complete a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

Workshop feedback was collated and shared with workshop attendees. It was used to contribute to this report and to the development of the draft strategy.

2.2 Survey

The survey was open between 16 October 2023 and 17 November 2023.

The survey was available on the Get Talking Norwich Platform.

Respondents did not have to create an account or log into an account to access the survey.

2.2.1 Survey information

The survey contained the following information as context for the survey questions:

- Background on the development of the Customer and Digital Strategy and the consultation process.
- Customer and Digital Strategy Emerging Themes
- Strategy development timeline

2.2.2 Survey questions

The survey asked respondents how they usually contacted the council and how they would like the council to correspond with them and why.

During the development of the survey questions, we carried out a benchmarking exercise to understand how other authorities had engaged when developing strategies with their stakeholders.

Further questions focussed on emerging themes which had emerged from initial stakeholder interviews.

These emerging themes were:

- Provide services which are **easy to access** for all customers.
- Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a **digital first** service.
- Ensure our systems are **reliable and secure**.

Respondents were asked to rate statements about each of the above themes based on their importance. Respondents could select an option from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).

Respondents were also asked to share free text comments about each of the three emerging themes.

Respondents were asked to provide information about themselves so that the council could check if the responses are representative of people across the city who may have different needs.

2.2.3 Alternative formats

Paper copies and alternative formats were available on request. The survey was advertised in Citizen Magazine, which is delivered to every property in Norwich in a hard copy.

2.3 Promotion of the survey

The survey was widely promoted through social media, Citizen Magazine, BIDS online, the intranet and by email.

2.5 EDI Strategy engagement

The Customer and Digital Strategy will form part of a suite of strategies which underpin the Corporate Plan. The EDI Strategy has recently been completed and feedback from the strategy consultation (surveys and workshops) has been used to inform the draft Customer and Digital Strategy. Details of this can be found in **chapter 8**.

2.6 Consumer research

The Essential Digital Skills Survey, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Lloyds Bank, is the UK's benchmark for digital skills. It measures the fundamental tasks needed to access the online world and the essential digital skills needed for life and work. The most recent survey conducted in 2022, suggests that 99% of the UK are now

online. In the east of England 89% (UK average 88%) have essential full or partial digital skills for life.

2.7 National Guidance

The strategy is informed by national best practice guidance. Specifically the Government Digital Service Design principles¹. These principles are included on page 3 of the draft strategy and contribute to the objectives the strategy aims to deliver.

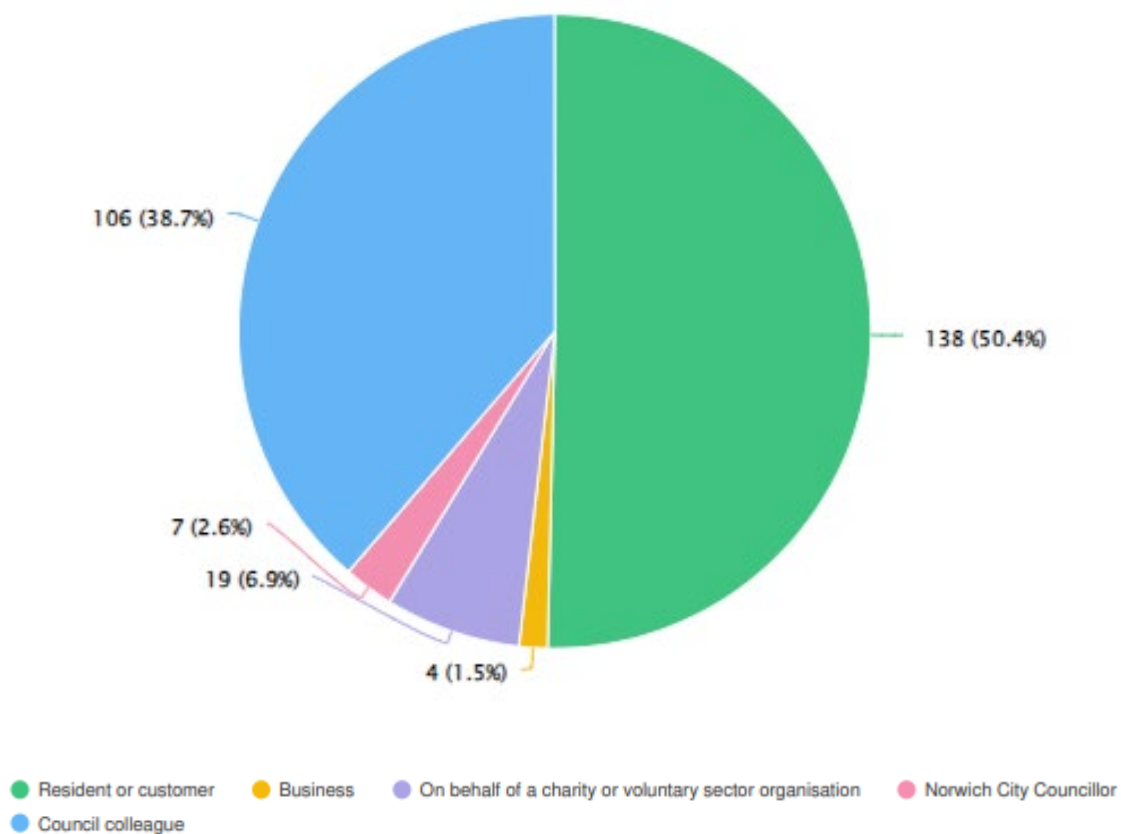
3 Survey response rate and respondent characteristics

3.1 Response rate to the survey

A total of 274 respondents completed the survey.

3.2 Respondent groups

Respondents were asked to categorise themselves one of the following groups. These groups are shown below:



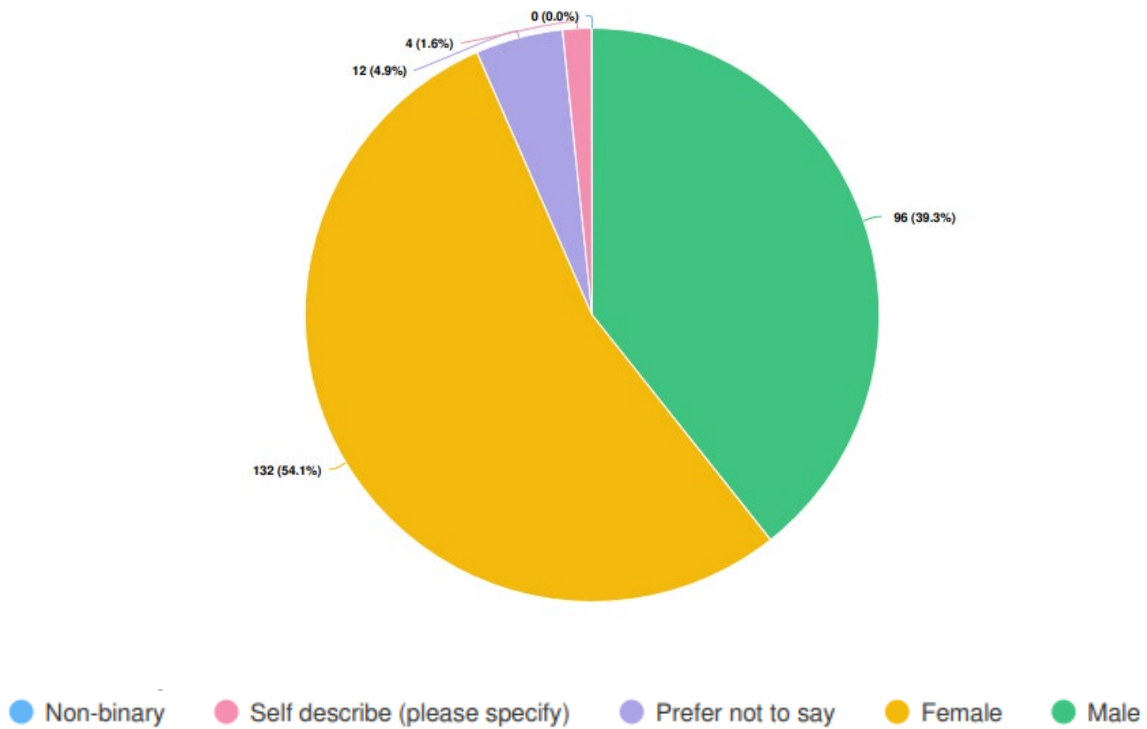
- Residents - 50.4%
- Colleagues - 38.7%
- Representatives of voluntary sector organisations - 6.9%
- Councillors - 2.6%
- Representatives of businesses - 1.5%

¹ [Government Design Principles - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

3.2.1 Gender

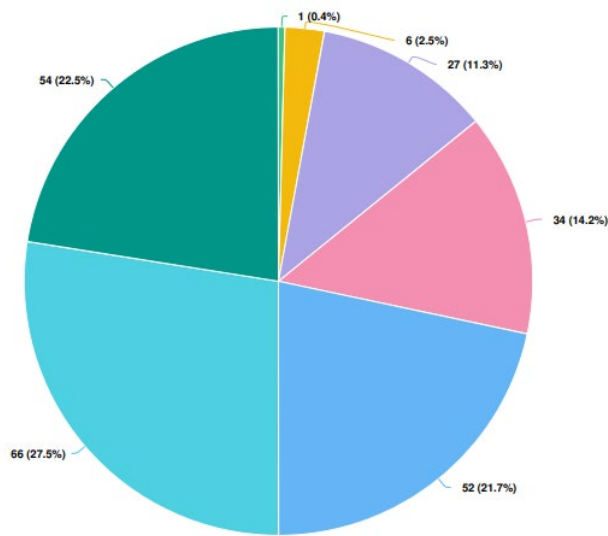
54.1% of all responses identified as female, 39.3% identified as male. 4.9% prefer not to say and 1.6% identified as other groups.

The proportion of responses from females was higher than the proportion of female residents in Norwich (50.6%)



3.2.2 Age

Respondents aged over 45 were over-represented in this survey. Respondents over the age of 45 make up 35.9% of the population of Norwich and 71.7% percent of survey



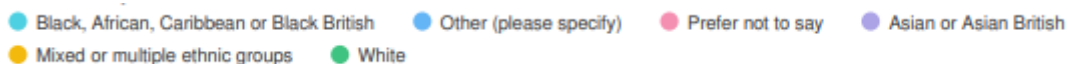
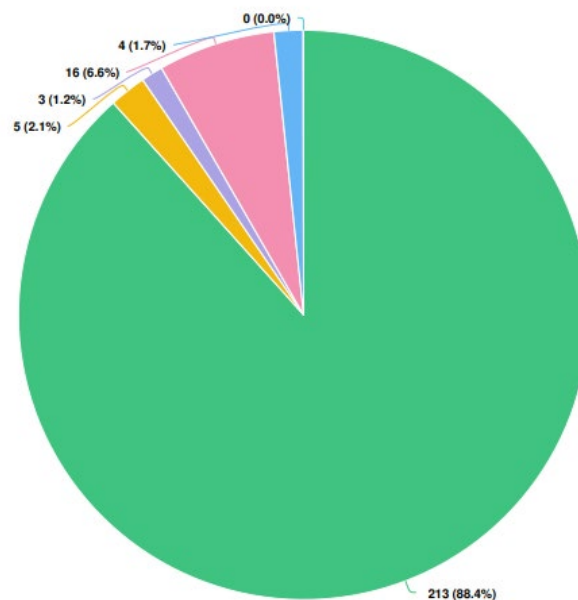
respondents.



Respondents below the age of 45 made up a total of 28.4% of respondents, whereas this group makes up 45.8% of the population of Norwich.

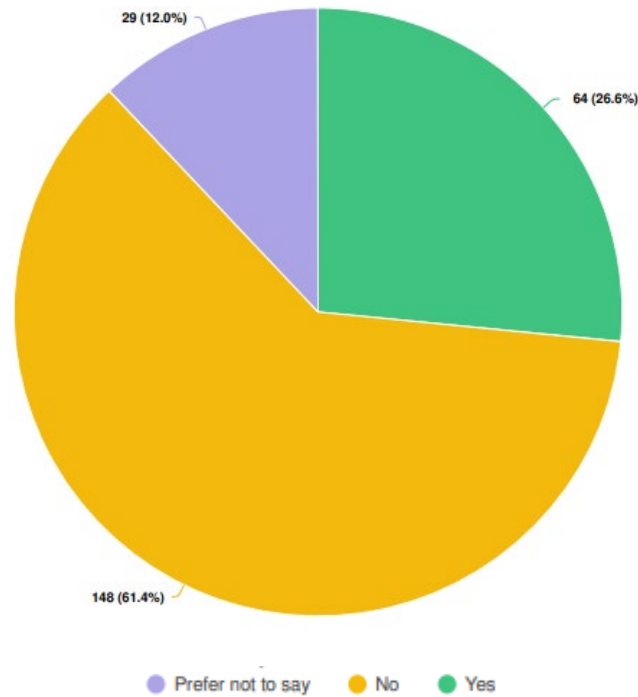
3.2.3 Ethnic Group

The majority of respondents (88.4%) identified as white. This is representative of the population of Norwich as a whole (87.1%).



3.2.4 Long-term health conditions, disability, accessibility need

Respondents were asked if they had a long-term health condition, disability or accessibility need. 61.4% of respondents stated that they did not, 26.6% stated that they did and 12% stated that they would prefer not to say.



4 Feedback - consultation workshops

A number of workshops took place in October and November 2023.

Two in person workshops were held for colleagues, one in person and one online workshop was held for councillors and one online workshop was held for voluntary organisation representatives.

Workshops focussed on a number of discussion topics, which workshop groups were asked to discuss and feedback on.

Workshop feedback was collated and shared with workshop attendees.

4.1.1 Where does Norwich City Council want to be in terms of customer and digital services?

Workshop attendees were asked to work in groups to produce statements in answer to the above question. The following themes were identified.

1. Right first time services
2. Inclusive and resilient services

3. Fully utilised systems
4. Digital first services
5. Supportive services

4.1.2 Inclusion of feedback in the strategy

The feedback above has informed the key objectives of the draft strategy. Points 1,2,3 inform the objective **easy to access**. Point 4 informs the objective **digital by default** and point 5 informs the objective **secure and reliable solutions**.

4.2 SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis was undertaken by colleagues and councillors attending workshops. Common themes were identified – see 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 for these themes.

4.2.1 What strengths and opportunities should the council include in the Customer and Digital Strategy?

Workshop attendees identified that the following strengths and opportunities should be included:

1. Maximise use of existing systems rather than replace by default.
2. Implement cloud hosted solutions.
3. Website redesign.
4. Digital services which reduce carbon footprint.
5. Increase amount of accurate information available digitally.
6. Interactive digital service – two-way comms and progress chasing
7. Increase service efficiency and outcome for customers.
8. Change to process and culture.
9. Work in partnership with organisations to include outcomes for all customers.
10. Redesign and simplify communications.

4.2.2 Inclusion of feedback in the strategy

The feedback above has informed the key objectives of the draft strategy and are included as examples of how we will meet these objectives. Points 1 and 2 inform the objective **secure and reliable solutions easy to access**. Points 3 -6 inform the objective **digital by default**. Points 7-10 informs the objective **secure and reliable solutions**.

4.2.3 What weaknesses and threats need to be considered when we are delivering the new strategy?

Workshop attendees identified that the following weaknesses and threats needed to be considered:

- Attitudes towards change
- 4G Coverage across Norwich
- Level of internet access for residents
- Reducing budgets
- Limited resources
- Cyber security threats

- Standard of communications
- Ensuring high levels of customer service for those who don't access services digitally.

4.2.4 Inclusion of feedback in the strategy

The weaknesses and threats fed back in the workshop have been considered when forming the draft strategy. For example, it is key that digital solutions can be delivered in the context of reducing budgets and resources.

4.3 Reducing customer contact relies upon good timely service and effective communications. What can you do from your service area to contribute?

Colleagues were asked to think about how service areas could contribute to the delivery. Common themes were identified and these are listed below:

- Increase understanding of how customers are currently accessing digital services.
- Website redesign contributions - service area ownership.
- Communications review and redesign - communicate effectively with customers.
- End to end redesign of service area processes/systems.
- Service area commitment to change.
- Provide a clear and realistic set of service standards - manage expectations.
- Increase digital services available to customers.

4.3.2 Inclusion of feedback in the strategy

The suggestions shared by the colleagues have contributed to actions within the draft strategy which will contribute to the three objectives. For example, 'provide a clear and realistic set of service standards will contribute towards the delivery of the **easy to access** objective.

4.4.1 How can we measure the success of our strategy?

Workshop attendees were asked to identify how the success of the strategy could be measured. Common themes were identified and are listed below:

- Customer satisfaction with the services that they receive from us.
- Providing targeted services informed by accurate data.
- Increase in queries getting resolved right first time.
- Reduction in carbon footprint.
- Dealing with customer queries in agreed timescales and providing updates.

4.4.2 Inclusion of feedback in the strategy

The above measures are all included as measures of success in the draft strategy.

5 Feedback – survey (what is most important)

Respondents were asked to rate statements about each of the above themes based on their importance. Respondents could select an option from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The responses obtained from the survey are analysed in in this section of the report.

5.1 Easy to Access

5.1.1 Identified Priorities

Respondents stated which of the listed priorities were most important to them. The top three priorities for all respondent groups were:

1. Dealing with my query within a reasonable timescale
2. The service is professional and friendly.
3. Communication received from us is simple and easy to understand.

5.1.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

The feedback above has informed the key objectives and are included within the draft strategy as examples of how we will meet these objectives. All three priorities are included in the **easy to access** objective.

For example, the action to review and rewrite customer communications so that they are accessible and understood' will result in simple and easy to understand communication being sent to customers.

5.2 Digital First

5.2.1 Identified Priorities

Respondents stated which of the listed priorities were most important to them. The top three priorities for all respondent groups were:

- A website that makes it easy to find information and request services
- Ability to access online services using a phone/tablet
- Ability to access your information through accounts online

5.2.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

The feedback above has informed the key objectives and are included as examples of how these will be met. All three priorities are included in the **digital by default** objective.

For example, the action to 'implement a new council website that makes it easier for customers to find information and access services' will result in a website that makes it easy to find information and request services.

5.3 Solutions that are reliable and secure

Respondents stated which of the listed priorities were most important to them. The top two priorities for all respondent groups were:

- Your personal data is secure and safe
- A fast and responsive website

5.3.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

The feedback above has informed the key objectives and are included as examples of how these objectives will be met. Both priorities are included in the **reliable and secure solutions** objective.

For example, the action to ‘develop a framework to provide effective governance for all council used IT systems’ will ensure that council systems are governed effectively and that the data held in them is secure.

6 Feedback – survey (free text)

Respondents were asked to share free text comments about each of the three emerging themes. Responses were analysed and common themes were identified. This section of the report summarises these themes.

6.1 Easy to Access

6.1.1 Feedback – common themes

The highest volume of free text feedback related to two themes - an easy to understand website and alternative methods of contact for those who did not access digital services.

Examples of feedback are below:

“Clear and up to date website so most things can be dealt with as self-serve online.”

“Progressing digital access, but not at the expense of removing personal, telephone access.”

6.1.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

The action to easy to access objective includes the action to ‘engage with customers and the voluntary sector in the development of a new council website and our online services making sure that they are easy to access and use.’ This will contribute to a clear website that more customers can successfully use.

Section 3 of the draft strategy explains how customers who do not access services online are served by the council, for example by telephone or face to face appointments. This demonstrates the council’s commitment to provide accessible services that are delivered professionally and inclusively.

6.2 Digital by Default

6.2.1 Feedback – common themes

The highest volume of free text feedback related to two themes – a simplified website and the provision of a wider variety of services online.

Examples of feedback are below:

“More streamlined customer account, more services online, webchat

“Clearer signposting on the website”

6.2.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

These customer priorities will be realised by the implementation of a new council website that makes it easier for customers to find information, access services and complete transactions online. This action is key to the delivery of the **digital by default** objective included in the draft strategy.

6.3 Solutions that are reliable and secure

6.3.1 Feedback – common themes

The highest volume of free text feedback related to the need for a strong governance structure to be in place. Respondents felt it was important for the workforce to have knowledge of good governance and that it should be prioritised by the organisation.

Examples of feedback are below:

“Strong data governance, IT Security”

“Keep up to date with latest security systems and continue to educate officers who have access.”

6.3.2 Inclusion of Feedback in the Strategy

By publishing an information and data strategy and continuing to develop a framework to provide effective governance for all council used IT systems these customer priorities can be realised. This will ensure that **secure and reliable solutions** are delivered for both internal and external customers. The draft strategy includes a number of measures which will demonstrate the success of this activity.

7 Corporate Plan 2024-29 and feedback

The Customer and Digital Strategy will underpin the Corporate Plan 2024-29. Several of the actions and measures within the draft strategy have been informed by the feedback from the Corporate Plan consultation and subsequent development of the plan.

A key driver behind delivering the new customer and digital strategy in 2024 was to ensure that the feedback from extensive corporate plan engagement could be fully utilised to inform the strategy. Over 900 individuals and organisations were engaged as part of this process, including Norwich residents and tenants' groups, councillors and officers, voluntary sector and community organisations, and local businesses and business networks. The below paragraphs demonstrate the links between the emerging Corporate Plan and the strategy.

To achieve a **Fairer Norwich**, services and partnership networks need to be targeted to the areas where they are needed. The Customer and Digital Strategy will help to meet this goal by focussing on providing **digital services by default** and focussing limited budget and resources on complex cases and customers who need additional support.

The emerging Corporate Plan identifies that to achieve a **Climate Responsive Norwich**, the council's carbon footprint needs to be reduced across all services. The Customer and Digital Strategy will demonstrate how an increase in digital communications will contribute to reduced carbon emissions across the authority.

The Corporate Plan identifies that to achieve a **Future Proof Norwich**, the council must partner, enable and listen to public sector, voluntary and charitable organisations, and formal and informal community groups across Norwich. This is also key to becoming **An Open and Modern Council** which designs services around the needs of the communities we serve and involving these communities in the design process. The strategy consultation included a focussed workshop with voluntary and charitable sector organisations. The website redesign project will be informed by a customer engagement panel which will include representatives from those sectors and individuals identified by the corporate plan. Customers will also be asked to co-design new service standards for the council as part of the **easy to access** objective.

The emerging Corporate Plan identifies that in order to be **An Open and Modern Council**, service provision needs to be data-driven and evidence-based. This will be achieved by the provision of the following commitments which support the delivery of the strategy objective **secure and reliable solutions**:

- Improve the data quality of customer data, including contact details and the development of our master data management solution.
- Use data to proactively support customers and inform strategic planning.

8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and feedback

The Customer and Digital Strategy will form part of a suite of strategies which underpin the Corporate Plan. These strategies complement and inform one another.

Feedback received as part of the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy consultation has helped identify a number of groups in Norwich that may be disadvantaged because of inequality and lack of opportunity. They include those people connected to one or more of the characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010, these being disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. As well as a firm commitment to deliver its legal duty under the Act regarding these characteristics, the council's EDI strategy goes further to include refugees and migrants, those who have served or continue to serve in our Armed Forces, and those impacted by socio-economic and health inequalities resulting from deprivation as the groups it will prioritise within the Strategy's three core aims.

These groups are also adopted by the Customer and Digital Strategy within its easy to access objective – which seeks to 'provide accessible services that are on time, right first time and delivered professionally and inclusively.' Accessibility was highlighted a number of times in the EDI consultation feedback – this includes the importance of offering alternatives to digital services. Chapter 3 of the draft Customer and Digital Strategy

focuses on the council's support for customers who do not use digital services and how the organisation will continue to engage with these customers by providing an **easy to access** service.

Calls for clear and measurable goals and objectives within the council's strategies are also contained within the feedback cited above, with respondents stressing the importance of accountability and the monitoring and reporting of progress towards these goals. The Customer and Digital Strategy includes a number of clear, concise and measurable outcomes which will be supported by a detailed action plan that will assess achievements against those stated outcomes.

In addition, the EDI feedback highlighted collaboration, and the need for the council to work with partners when delivering its strategies. Consultation undertaken to inform the Customer and Digital Strategy included a focussed workshop with voluntary and charitable sector organisations. Similarly, the website redesign project within the Customer and Digital Strategy will be informed by a customer engagement panel which will include representatives from the priority groups identified within the EDI Strategy.



High level equality impact assessment for strategic programmes



Programme title	Customer and Digital Strategy 2024-2029	Programme start date	This strategy will be published following Cabinet Approval on 6 March 2024.
Team	Customers, IT and Digital	Directorate	Corporate and Commercial Services
Senior leadership team sponsor	Julia Medler	Role	Head of Customers, IT and Digital
Officer completing	Katherine McCurday	Role	Digital Business Manager

What are the main aims or purpose of the programme?

Norwich City Council's vision, as set out in the corporate plan 2024-29, is to become an open and modern council, which works in partnership and does the basics right. This strategy is key to how we will support that through the development of our customer and digital services.

Our customers are increasingly wanting to access our services digitally and we want to make these services easy to access for those who want to access digital services by default. We also need to ensure that our systems and digital solutions are reliable and secure to instil confidence in our customers who use them.

By making the majority of our services available digitally, the council can focus its resources on complex cases and on those customers who need them most.

We recognise that it is not one size fits all and that customers have varying needs, so we will continue to provide traditional contact options for those that struggle with accessing digital services.

This new strategy will build on the work delivered from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24 that focussed on developing modern, agile workforce tools and the building blocks for better data management.

The strategy has three key objectives which are to:

- Provide services which are **easy to access**.
- Develop our approach to best serve our customers expecting a **digital service by default**.
- Ensure IT and digital solutions are **reliable and secure**.

The delivery status, key objectives and subsequent themes will be supported by a detailed action plan that will measure and assess against the strategy and outcomes.

How does it fit with other services and policies, and how does it support our [corporate objectives](#)?

The Customer and Digital strategy is a whole organisational strategy. It will inform work undertaken across council service to deliver good customer service which is easily accessible, gets the basics right and deliver successful outcomes for all our customers.

This strategy underpins the Corporate Plan 2024-2029 will contribute towards the corporate goal of becoming an open and modern council, which works in partnership and does the basics right.

This strategy will contribute to the corporate goal of becoming a climate responsive Norwich.

The strategy's objectives link with other strategies including the EDI strategy and the data and information strategy.

What outcomes do we want to achieve, why and for who?

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- We will provide accessible services that are on time, right first time and delivered professionally and inclusively.
- We will develop and enhance our online services so that customers will choose to use them by default. Increasing digital services means that we are more cost-effective and enables us to focus our resources on those who need them most.
- We will improve the experience of our digital online services so that customers will use them by default and ensure they are accessible.
- We will develop modern, inclusive technology to provide our workforce with the skills and tools to empower them to work efficiently, collaboratively and creatively.

- We will provide safe and secure services that customers and the workforce can have confidence in using and which are supported by a strong governance framework.
- We will be informed by accurate and secure data.

We want to achieve these outcomes for all our customers. In the context of the strategy, customers are defined as anyone who lives, works or visits the city council area and our internal workforce and councillors.

We have consulted with our customers in the development of the strategy and customer priorities have informed the strategy. Consultation was carried out through meetings with key stakeholders, workshops with SLT, members and voluntary sector. A survey was also published for residents, businesses, voluntary sector, council workforce and councillors.

A report detailing the consultation responses and response demographic has been produced and presented to leader and portfolio.

The delivery status, key objectives and subsequent themes will be supported by a detailed action plan that will measure and assess against the strategy and outcomes.

This Equality Impact Assessment will be updated to reflect progress against these objectives once the action plan is published in July 2024.

Will anyone be disproportionately affected by the programme (customers, employees, those with protected characteristics or groups in the wider community)?

No one group will be disproportionately affected by the delivery of the strategy, including those with protected characteristics. Whilst a key objective of the strategy is to provide digital services by default, this is for those customers who wish to access services in this way.

The council will continue to provide traditional contact options for those who want and need to use these options, including a telephone service with an option to request a call back, a face-to-face appointment system or translation assistance. The council website has an accessibility function.

The strategy has been informed by input and feedback from customers and reflects their priorities. A workshop with voluntary organisations, representing those with protected characteristics was held as part of the consultation period and fed into the shape of

the strategy. The digital UX lead is setting up an engagement panel to ensure that these groups are represented in the delivery of the digital projects which underpin the strategy.

If yes, will these be adverse impacts (specify whether high, medium or low impacts)?

N/a – see above for details on how groups will not be adversely affected by the strategy.

If yes, can the impacts be

a) justified?

n/a

b) mitigated?

n/a

What is the reason for the proposal or change (financial, legal etc)? *The Equality Act requires us to make this clear.*

This customer and digital strategy 2024-29 will build on the work delivered from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy 2021-24. Prior to the previous strategy expiring, it was decided to create a new strategy which would be in line with the new corporate plan 2024-2029.

Officer completing EqIA	Katherine McCurday	Date	02.02.2024
SLT sponsor	Julia Medler	Date	05.02.2024
Equality lead (strategy team)	Joe Siggins	Date	02.02.2024