



DIGITALISATION STRATEGY 2022-2027

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INTRODUCTION

The Digital world has been rapidly evolving over the years, at a faster pace now more than ever with our reliance and consumption of digital means becoming innate to who we are. There was a time when our digital understanding was minimal and would evoke connotations of technological equipment however we are now more aware that digitalisation is a way of life and is critical to our education, economy, health and social wellbeing.

Digitalisation has become central to how we connect with our family, friends, wider communities, and the world. Smart devices such as phones and tablets are commonplace in daily use by people of all ages, providing us with instant access to our work, social networks, news, games, statistics, and information, providing a source of instantaneous knowledge. The consumption possibilities are endless as are access to services with now almost any service available on an 'app', from school learning, shopping, gaming, ordering food, paying bills, and even checking our health.

The smart device has given us the 'world at our fingertips' and with it has allowed us to become more connected than ever from any place in the world and enables businesses and entrepreneurs to harness these opportunities by becoming one of the readily available services to access, in our hand. The marketing opportunities for business via digitalisation are vast with the ability to provide an instant service with bespoke information, resulting in time, resource and cost efficiencies.

The recent pandemic highlighted and heightened our reliance on digitalisation as it provided us a vital connection to the 'outside' world to keep us up to date on current affairs, but more importantly at that time, in touch with friends and family, ensuring older family and community members were reached out to via video-calling, and enabled our young people to continue with their education, providing even the youngest school children with an introduction to the digital world and its capabilities.

Our Health and Social Care services were extremely stretched during the pandemic, with those tasked with providing those services, rightly and literally deemed as the saviours of the pandemic. However, it also shone a light on this service and highlighted not only how undervalued and uninvested the sector is, but also the opportunities for streamlining provision and services in a varied way through digitalisation.

With the digital revolution now upon us, we must strive to ensure that we utilise all opportunities available to us to deliver a collaborative, efficient service that is customer-focused and accessible whilst also tackling the distinct challenges this new era brings with it by addressing inequality, exclusion, security, and capacity issues, ensuring our workforce and communities are suitably knowledgeable and skilled to thrive in this digital age.

AMBITION

Vision

To transform our culture, and the way we work and live through digital thinking; operating technology in a secure, efficient and user centred way that is inclusive and supports wellbeing and enables economically thriving and sustainable communities.

Priorities

The Digitalisation Strategy priorities are in alignment with local and national ethos and outcomes developed support the aims of the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy and Outer Hebrides Local Outcome Improvement Plan and are underpinned by Audit Scotland's recommended key principles.

➤ **People & Place**

- Improved Digital capacity in our communities
- Increased access to digital infrastructure, including vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged people
- Improved service delivery and accessibility in partnership with other sectors and organisations
- Council services and data are accessible through digital options
- Improved Community engagement and customer relations
- Our Young people are digitally skilled with access to technology and services
- Digitalisation options for Health & Social Care Services available

➤ **A Strong Digital Economy**

- Our workforce is digitally enabled and confident in utilising digital tools
- Improved Service Delivery through Digitalisation
- Organisational Digital Governance is instilled
- Our Businesses have increased digital awareness, skills, and resilience
- Our Islands are promoted as scenic, wellbeing economies, attracting relocation opportunities for remote working
- Improved access to 4G services and superfast Broadband is available throughout the Islands

➤ **Technology and Services**

- We provide place-based and Smart working environments for all, that promote equality
- We have a Strong and Resilient Digital Council
- We are able to analyse and utilise our data to add value to our Services, in a safe and secure manner

Key Principles

<i>Digital Leadership</i>	Demonstrating a digital cultural through Members, governance, community engagement and investment in people, skills, and technology.
<i>User Focused</i>	Engages staff and communities in service redesigns, determining needs with a digital first approach and is outcome focused.
<i>Digital Workforce</i>	Understands skills and culture required for a digital council and provides upskilling and retraining prospects for improving capacity and creates learning opportunities with others
<i>Collaborative</i>	Co-ordination of internal and external services and cross-sectoral partnerships, including identification of common opportunities to add value.
<i>Technology and data enabled</i>	ICT considerations in relation to equipment, storage, joined working and data recording and usage,
<i>Secure by Design</i>	Recognises that there are many threats to the privacy, integrity and availability of digital products and services and builds security into digital services by design, ensuring adherence to all appropriate legislative requirements
<i>Innovative</i>	Creating a culture of exploring new opportunities and service delivery that enables collaborative and streamlined working provisions

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Corporate Strategy

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's corporate strategy outlines the vision for a socially and economically thriving community, sustaining our quality of life through the key priorities of strengthening the local economy; supporting children, family, and young people; resilient communities; and by being a sustainable and inclusive council. Digitalisation underpins all these objectives and plays a pivotal role in their achievement.

The aims of this Digitalisation strategy will assist in achieving the Comhairle's commitment to developing a local approach to digitalisation, that supports infrastructure, customer engagement and business development. The digital revolution will aim to support our children and young people enhance their learning experiences and accessibility to a variety of higher and further education opportunities and will support our businesses to thrive in our local, national, and international economies. Our communities will be empowered to harness and promote their full potential, retaining and attracting young and working demographics.

Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP)

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership highlights a commitment to delivering 100% connectivity to every resident in the Outer Hebrides by 2028 through close Scottish Government working. The Comhairle's Digitalisation Strategy will assist in reinforcing that aim, amplifying the importance of this sector to our Island life and the wellbeing, academic and economic profits that can be gained from it.

Economic Recovery Strategy

Digital recovery is key theme of the Comhairle's post COVID Economic Recovery Strategy and aims to ensure high speed digital infrastructure is available to all and to aid business stimulation. The opportunity for our rural Islands to become more attractive places to work and live are also highlighted and dovetail with this Strategy's priority of creating a strong digital economy that enables and attracts businesses in our Islands to thrive.

Community Wealth Building in the Outer Hebrides

Community Wealth building (CWB) represents developing a wellbeing economy through a progressive approach to economic development that is modelled on delivering wide-spread benefits. Repopulation of the Islands is crucial to achieving CWB and central to this will be repopulating not just the islands in general but through distribution of all communities within the Islands. A Pilot initiative involving a digital hub is being trialled in locally owned assets to allow people to live, work and socialise within their locale and stimulate an area in need of regeneration. Digitalisation aims to assist in unlocking CWB potential within our Island communities, and we will endeavour to support those aspirations.

National Islands Plan

The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 sets out the purpose of the National Islands Plan (NIP), which includes the main objectives of improving outcomes for Islands communities, highlighting interventions which are critical to Island lives with Digital Connectivity identified as an instrumental economic growth and wellbeing enabler, especially in the most remote and rural areas of our Islands. Key objectives of the NIP involve prioritising early digital investment in Scotland's Islands and delivering a change in the quality of connectivity across the Islands.

Those priorities of the NIP will be supported through baseline evidence and direct engagement with the Scottish Governments Digital implementation team, striving for not just a change in connectivity but delivery of a 'like-for-like' service in the Islands as to those in urban, mainland areas, supporting the 'Island-proofing' ethos of the Act.

Scottish Government, A Changing Nation: How Scotland will thrive in a Digital World

People and Place, A Strong Digital Economy and Digital Government and Service are main priorities highlighted by the Scottish Government in delivering their updated Digital Strategy. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will echo these priorities and ensure they are achieved in our local Island landscape with strong advocacy for areas where it cannot be supported in full, being undertaken.

The Changing Nation strategy notes that to become a truly digital nation, the nature of government, at national and local levels will be required to ensure responsive and tailored services to the needs of the people in our communities. This is at the forefront of the Comhairle's Digitalisation Strategy, ensuring that we re-think how we design and deliver services.

Climate Change Plan Update

To promote the priorities of reducing car usage in kilometres by 20% by 2030 the Scottish Government is committed to delivering 100% broadband to allow people to use alternative methods to reduce their need to travel and to live well locally. We will strive to ensure that we can contribute to supporting this by stimulating our digital engagement with our communities and ensuring they have access to all services online and deliver more localised place-based solutions, reducing the need to travel long distances and support carbon reduction aims.

Scottish Government Economic Transformation Strategy

The Scottish Government have identified five key transformational programmes of action that are aimed at improving our Economy which includes stimulating entrepreneurship; opening new markets and increasing productivity; developing future skills and ensuring fairer and more equal economic opportunities. We will support these actions, ensuring we equip our future generations with necessary skills required for our evolving digital and green centred jobs, and ensuring our current workforce are digitally literate and that there is connectivity parity to allow our businesses to harness these opportunities.

Digital Health and Care Strategy

Scottish Government's updated Digital Health and Care Strategy (DHCS) highlights that digital technology is an essential component of health and care services in a modern and dynamic Scotland, noting digital technology as being critical to supporting the NHS and how we embed and sustain health and social care integration and recognises the issues with digital exclusion and how that needs to be tackled. Options for a 'digital choice' will also be available enabling citizens access to not only services, but to their health and care data as well.

Health and care support not only takes place in formal settings, but increasingly also in the community - in people's homes and community centres and supporting the shift in balance of care into community settings by delivering more care at home through the adoption of digital practices is a central component of the DHCS.

Providing a place-based digitalised service within our communities with users at the heart of service design will be supported through this Strategy in collaboration with various sectors and organisations combating digital exclusion, supporting accessibility, and revitalising our local communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

People & Place

Providing a User-focused and Collaborative Service, that is transformative and inclusive.

Digital Exclusion

People and Place are a key focus of the Comhairle's Digitalisation Strategy and for our users and community members to be able to access services and information quickly and easily and in a way that is expected in the post COVID World. Whilst the pandemic brought on an unprecedented and imminent need for digitalisation and allowed us to work in various formats and locations in a way that was more accustomed to our lifestyles and wellbeing, it also highlighted significant disparities in geography, poverty, skills, and equality.

Digital exclusion has therefore grown from not just 'users' and 'non-users' but to the level of digital skills and knowledge possessed by our communities and how this determines the role digitalisation plays in their lives. More time should be spent on those with interdependent needs, as it is often those who require access to multiple services with the greatest levels of exclusion.

The Comhairle aims to simultaneously develop their digital service whilst also ensuring digital exclusion is tackled effectively through a range of customer-focused and collaborative opportunities including promotion and supported working of digitalisation and its various methods with those harder to reach groups, with place-based approaches aligning to wider community hub proposals and multi-service autonomy.

The exploration of Community Hubs throughout the Islands, providing access to a range of multi-sectoral services including supported learning and digital infrastructure will be undertaken, assisting users in accessing a collection of services in a remote location, including available support to access digital services, and encompassing flexible working arrangements.

The Comhairle will also continue to work with other Services, sharing challenges and ideas to co-develop and co-produce innovative solutions on a range of other digitalisation issues, such as housing and broadband access, ensuring connectivity is treated in parallel to water, waste and electricity services. Further options in relation to cost poverty will also be actively explored, researching partnership working and pilot initiatives undertaken throughout other regions.

Communication

The way in which we engage with our Community is paramount, and the Comhairle has long strived to promote a positive relationship and ensure as much information as possible is accessible online. The Comhairle's website design has been heralded as one of the best in Scotland by public sector reviewers, however there are some anomalies with regards to ease of access and legibility of some of the regularly visited areas within the site. The website will be reviewed and further enhanced in those areas, streamlining information and services ensuring more intuitive usage and logical organisation of data that is readily accessible, especially for the everyday user, including timetables, paying services, and booking capabilities.

A review and update of the Customer Services Strategy will be undertaken to align with the Comhairle's Digitalisation Strategy and further explore and consider the accessibility of services, ensuring a digital offer is available, where appropriate, and in a more user-friendly and simplified model. Established relationships with organisations such as NHS, resulting from the pandemic, should be continuing to be built upon, further exploring the sharing of data and accessibility to services, with the potential for customer logins being investigated, simplifying the process for our users, whilst also conforming to security and data requirements.

Throughout the pandemic, the Comhairle successfully communicated important information and messages with the wider public through social media outlets, through the form of Press Releases and Question and Answer sessions with relevant Comhairle employees and through their online Ceilidhs, all of which proved to be hugely successful. Following on from this, the Comhairle will review and update their Communications Strategy, building on these successes and the digital opportunities available, whilst also addressing the gaps identified during this time, providing an effective communication engagement model between the Comhairle and our Communities.

An increased Comhairle profile and its services, accessibility and everyday working should be portrayed to the wider community regularly. Email and social media are useful tools for organisations to engage with their users and audiences, however with so much information available it can be easy for messages and promotions to become diluted amongst all other digital data. The Comhairle will further explore the opportunities that arise from digitalisation and learn more effectively the methods that can be undertaken to capitalise on promotions and press releases, with the learning shared amongst the wider organisation through the Communications and Training sections.

The development of a Comhairle services 'app' should be explored, to include a range of daily used online services and searches and allow for community engagement opportunities and alert systems to increase instant access to users. Options for this will be identified and carefully considered by the Comhairle in relation to its potential effectiveness.

Education

Whilst the educational sector is not new to digitalisation, it has been one of the most transformative services since the pandemic; requiring to provide academic needs to millions of people throughout COVID online whilst still ensuring adequate pupil-teacher support and researching, reviewing, and accessing an infinite amount of online educational support material.

Whilst the Comhairle has long been trailblazing online learning through E-Sgoil, the advantages of this are now being considered on a more prominent basis, nationally. The emergence of online learning resources has created new opportunities to add value to existing methods and offer a more diverse range of content and experience to our learners.

Demand and availability of additional online resources and partnership working will be explored to be utilised in the local learning environment to help deliver equity where required, in line with the Curriculum and with regards to further education and Foundation and Modern Apprenticeship opportunities.

To further support our young people, we will continue to review and develop the tools and skills provided by our schools and address inequalities in accessibility to ensure all our young people are able to thrive in the emerging progressive digital learning environment.

Home and Social Care Services

Throughout the pandemic, our Health Care system also become reliant on digital options through online screenings, with patients accessing services remotely via video conferencing, something which is set to continue in the future with the policy of a ‘digital choice’ now being an option for GP and health care services.

Health and Social Care are vital services to our Island Communities and one that was significantly affected by the pandemic. Digitalisation has the ability to transform the home care service, providing efficient and time-saving processes and increasing accountability and recording and sharing of data.

Local Social Care provision will aim to review digitalisation options within their services and identify areas for improvement and opportunity. However, it is acknowledged that a significant amount of investment would be required to implement this; continued liaising and working with other sectors and Government will be ongoing as transformation is likely to be nationalised. Digital Health and Care Scotland are currently working with a broad range of stakeholders to improve the care and wellbeing of people in Scotland, with part of this work to ensure the best use of digital technologies in the design and delivery of services.

Outcomes:

Improved Digital capacity in our communities	Improved Service delivery and accessibility in partnership with other sectors and organisations
Increased access to digital infrastructure, including vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged people	Comhairle services and data are accessible through digital options
Our Young People are digitally skilled with access to technology and services	Improved Community engagement and Customer Relations
Digitalisation options for Health and Social Care Services are available	

Developing a Digital Economy

Creating a skilled and digitally enabled workforce and supporting strong digital businesses

Workforce

Working in this ever-changing digital landscape, it is not necessarily just those on the periphery where digital gaps are apparent; basic digital skills are needed for almost every job, including the primary sectors underpinning our cultural economy, with their own increasing reliance on technology to capture, record and forecast data.

To achieve our aim of becoming a digital first Comhairle, where appropriate, we must also ensure that we have a digitally skilled workforce. Where new software and technology are being introduced, we will ensure that our staff are fully trained and confident in their operation, including the once 'basic' office packages and their increasing abilities. Staff will become knowledgeable on everyday software applications and their capabilities and will be able to identify improved service delivery options as result of their usage and create opportunities for exploitation. Staff digital skills will be aligned with the Competency Framework, currently in development by Society of Personnel and Development Scotland, the Scottish Digital Academy and the Digital Office.

To ensure this, increased level of digital training will be made available on an initial 'catch-up' basis and Digital Champions will be appointed within in each Section, responsible for working closely with ICT and Training sections and having an awareness of and skilled in the usage of the various software packages within the Comhairle and facilitating utilisation of their full potential, such as Microsoft Office 365. Digital Champions will permit and govern departmental access for each section to be responsible for updating their own webpage content on the corporate site, ensuring that the mandatory corporate presentation formatting is adhered to safeguard professionalism and consistency and providing increased access to information and services online. This will be undertaken in accordance with the appropriate and necessary security measures.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is a subscribed member of the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, and the role of Digital Champion will also be responsible for liaising and utilising resources in Digital Office to identify a shared approach to developing and delivering common systems and platforms that improve Digital working within the Comhairle and increase capacity among staff growing the ability to capitalise on opportunities for providing a transformative service.

Training with local councillors to establish a digital way of thinking about how they engage with their communities and making services and data more accessible will provide governance to our digital approach. Digital champions within each department will drive forward utilisation of resources, improved capacity, shared ways of working, and opportunities for upskilling.

Economy

Digital skills are being delivered in education and workplace settings ensuring the fluency of our up-and-coming workforce, enabling them with the skills to harness opportunities in high earning technological sectors that will support the growth of the local economy and increase sustainability by attracting and retaining entrepreneurial talent in line with Scottish Government's Economic Transformation Strategy.

Supporting our businesses to be digitally revolutionised will assist in unlocking our economy, opening the gateway to engaging with not just local and national partners but internationally as well, allowing networking, collaboration, and trading opportunities. We will aim to promote and increase the uptake of digital business services such as the Digital Boost scheme and undertake a survey to identify baseline usage and knowledge gaps to provide a targeted approach at supporting our local businesses to digitally transform.

The Comhairle will work with local businesses to highlight the opportunities of digital transformation to enable adoption of innovative operating models that boost productivity and collaboration as a result of various software packages, social media, cloud storage and the intelligent use of data.

The scenic landscapes and outdoor activities of the Outer Hebrides attract thousands of tourists each year, which has led to our economy becoming increasingly reliant on the sector. However, the pandemic has highlighted the focus of a wellbeing economy, which includes an improved work-life balance. With flexible and remote working now 'the norm' there are opportunities to retain and attract more people to the islands including 'digital nomads' who can work anywhere and can have high earning stimuli for their local economies. Increased connectivity is vital to this and the Comhairle will continue to pursue the requirements to ensure that the Outer Hebrides can fully participate in the new digital world.

Whilst basic digital skills are now as key as reading and writing, there is also an increasing reliability on any sector to have good digital skills and those sectors which are integral to digitalisation, such as computing, coding, graphic design etc. are all high earning jobs, which can be undertaken remotely and within the Outer Hebrides. Increased focus on delivering good jobs in the Islands is a priority and ensuring our work force are equipped to undertake these opportunities are key and require continued and enhanced working with education partners and wider business sectors to deliver upskilling.

Our key sectors, Tourism and Creative Industries, are also heavily reliant upon digital technologies and connectivity which can be utilised to deliver innovative, interactive experiences with users. During the pandemic a co-operative online project between Orkney, Outer Hebrides and Shetland, provided 'visitors' the opportunity to view local culture exhibitions online and learn about our heritage whilst in the comfort of their own home, whilst still creating the appetite to come and view the Islands for themselves.

Vital to delivering this will be the availability and improvement of connectivity infrastructure in broadband and mobile networks.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

Connectivity and infrastructure are integral to delivering digital transformation. Due to its rural landscape, low population, and remote locations the Outer Hebrides has long been behind on its accessibility to these services.

Scottish Government are working to improve and extend Scotland's Broadband connectivity across the Country, with their 'Reaching 100% Broadband Programme' (R100). The R100 commits to

delivering superfast broadband, defined as access to speeds of at least 30 Megabits per second (Mbps), to every home and business in Scotland, with the potential for some to be able to access up to 1 gigabit (1,000 Mbps) through the UK Government ‘Project Gigabit’ scheme. Scheduling for R100 in the Outer Hebrides is not due for delivery until 2025/2026, and it is anticipated that it will not support every house and business in the remotest parts of our Islands.

In parallel, a subsidies scheme, the Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme, is also available to assist customers in domestic and non-domestic settings to access a range of technologies and suppliers to achieve a superfast broadband connection, for amounts up to £5,000, in the interim, or for those who are not on the ‘route map’ to receive the R100 rollout. However, to date there has been no uptake of this in the Outer Hebrides with cost and access to contractors a contributing factor.

Mobile coverage and access to 4G services is improving with further investment in this underway through the Scottish Government 4G infill Programme, which will provide another broadband alternative. However, ‘not spots’ will still be evident throughout some more remote communities and issues also arising from delays resolving outages with no back-up options available in some communities, further contribute to the connectivity disparity faced in the Outer Hebrides.

An initial Islands Community Impact Assessment (ICIA) undertaken by Scottish Government illustrated the main blockers to digital access as being high cost and slow internet, with the Western Isles, Shetland, Orkney and Highlands included in the worst 6 UK local authority areas for broadband speeds.

The Comhairle will continue to pursue high level engagement with Scottish Government for improved delivery of R100 and for gigabyte fibre infrastructure where possible, to ensure that all inhabitants of the Islands receive an equitable service and cost, in parity to the remainder of mainland Scotland. In the interim, alternative innovative options will continue to be explored and delivered to those with impaired access, including the consideration of strategic local partnership interventions.

Outcomes

Our workforce is digitally enabled and confident in utilising digital tools	Our Businesses have increased digital awareness, skills, and resilience
Improved Service Delivery through Digitalisation	Our Islands are promoted as scenic, wellbeing economies, attracting relocation opportunities for remote working
Organisational Digital Governance instilled	Access to 4G services and superfast Broadband is available throughout the Islands

Technology and Services

Transformation through Data, Technology and Cyber Resilience

Technology

To become a digital council involves moving away from technology led strategies and become more outward looking, focusing on how digital technology can deliver better outcomes for citizens, communities, and staff. It involves understanding the needs of service users and staff, involving them in the process and creating a culture that embraces change and collaboration.

Being a digital council requires investment in Information and Communication (ICT) infrastructure (hardware, software and cloud services), council staff and digital leadership. However, at a time when government and local authority resources are significantly stretched and diminishing, an innovative and collaborative approach to this should be undertaken to achieve added value in a cost-effective manner.

When considering local investment and transformational services, understanding should be given to economies of scale, in terms of implementation and necessity. However, cohesive working with other agencies, and local authorities with shared commonalities, might offer opportunities for co-operation in terms of shared platforms and procurement.

The modern world of digitisation provides us with fluid, streamlined, imminent information and allows ease and comfort. However, while it provides the operator with a more user-friendly efficient service, it can indeed relate to increased complexities and resources from ICT services, and these need to be fully considered and addressed to allow the Comhairle to progress with its digitalisation aims.

Through the updated Communications Strategy, the Comhairle will continue to investigate and research the best methods for communications within the organisations, including its devices, connectivity resources, online services, and telephony system, improving organisational coherence and engagement. Where connection issues are compromised, alternatives should be provided to communities and increased profile at Scottish Government level should be undertaken to highlight the issues with R100 Programme in the Outer Hebrides and ensure Island-proofing of an alternative long-term solution is identified to meet the connectivity requirements of the communities, economy, and people of the Outer Hebrides.

The Comhairle will be committing to the provision of purchasing predominately mobile computing equipment in the future to ensure maximum versatility using and operating equipment in relation to smarter working and home learning for schools.

Old or surplus IT equipment, where possible, should be refurbished and made available to those who do not have access to equipment with the same initiative promoted widely to communities to donate and recycle unused old IT equipment, also reducing the electrical waste (e-waste), said to be the planet's fastest growing waste stream.

Digital Telephony Services

In 2017, British Telecom announced that existing analogue telephone network will be switched off and everyone will receive a digital internal protocol (IP) voice service enabled by 2025, paving the way

for all other telecommunications providers to follow suit. The Comhairle will work with the Scottish Government prior to this transition to ensure a seamless process and avoid geographic exclusion and ensuring the service is deliverable in every home and business throughout the Outer Hebrides.

With increased members of the workforce now undertaking hybrid working, a digital telephony service will also be explored within the organisation, streamlining accessibility and removing the requirements of 'idle' phones based at desks. A full review of the equipment implications of this will also be undertaken.

Data

This small word connotes an almost infinite amount of information in various formats relating to multiple sectors. Data and how we record it, use it, publish it, and learn from it has become a significant gateway to enabling us to better understand our environments, what issues there are, where there are gaps and analysis to improve our delivery and outcomes.

The Comhairle is committed to enabling safe, accessible data, efficient recording and usage of data and promotes collaboration of all sectors to ensure that it is provided to our work force and communities. As we know, data is power, and efficient usage of this will allow for a more effective service. Partnership working with other Councils and Scottish Government should be undertaken to identify and develop a data governance framework that tackles data standards, ethics and security.

We will endeavour to explore more ways in how we effectively record, review, and learn from our data, recognising that to ensure maximum impact could require additional capacity, financial options for which should be investigated, with the cross organisational and wider community benefits of this asset highlighted. As a registered data controller with the Information Commissioner's Office, data protection requirements and their adherence will be incorporated into all processes.

Cyber Resilience

While digitalisation has transformed our living and working lives, and has enabled personal, academic and professional growth, it also creates the potential for criminal activity, with cyber-attacks, stolen identities and lost data on the rise.

During the pandemic, the integrity of many organisations' data potentially became significantly comprised due to the instantaneous scale and availability demanded from their services to remote home workers, making their organisation and employee data vulnerable.

The Comhairle has ensured to strengthen the security around their services, including accessing systems, such as work emails, involving the usage of multiple authentication methods, a commonly used framework and cyber deterrent in significant global companies, including the banking sector.

The Comhairle are committed to ensuring that data is used as securely as possible and will also commit to delivering a Recovery Plan to increase cyber resilience should there be any breaches, thus ensuring the integrity of the organisation's data.

Outcomes

We provide place-based and Smart working environments for all, that promote equality	We are able to analyse and utilise our data to add value to our Services, in a safe and secure manner
We have a Strong and Resilient Digital Council	