1.   **Summary**

1.1   Renfrewshire Council is delivering a digital participation programme of activities for Council tenants. This seeks to promote accessibility to technology and the internet in line with the Council's Digital Strategy and Tackling Poverty Strategy.

1.2   This report summarises the progress that has been made through this initiative.

2.   **Recommendations**

2.1   It is recommended that the Board:

   (i)   note the commitment to promoting accessibility to technology for Council tenants in line with the Council's Digital Strategy and Tackling Poverty Strategy and the range of measures being put in place to support Council tenants, and prospective tenants, to become digitally included.

3.   **Background**

3.1   A Digital Participation Officer post, funded via the Housing Revenue Account, was created in 2017. The key aims were to design and deliver a digital participation programme of activities for Council tenants, and promote accessibility to technology and the internet.

3.2   Early successes have included skills training being provided at all 12 Renfrewshire Council sheltered and amenity housing complexes, which reached out to 400 tenants to train with tablets, laptops and computers. This training included using a digital device, getting online, browsing the internet, using 'apps' and staying safe online.

3.3   More recent training has involved voice control with Google Home and Alexa, and the use of other new technologies such as virtual reality to further explore tenant's interests in home automation, as they are proving valuable aids in addressing loneliness and improving social interaction.

3.4   For mainstream tenants, 'Essential Digital Skills' classes are now available at our George Street Service office. A particular focus with these sessions is the provision of digital skills for tenants who need to be online to apply for Universal Credit.

3.5   Classes at the Disability Resource Centre and Paisley YMCA for older adults in 'Being Smart with your Phone' smartphone classes were delivered in March / April 2018 in response to requests for making more use of smartphones beyond simple texting and calling.

3.6   Maintenance and promotion of Renfrewshire's new sheltered housing and Housing Support Service Facebook pages has helped to share news about digital projects and activities within Renfrewshire, and the digital support available to service users.

3.7   A 'Celebrating Digital in Renfrewshire & Browsing into the Future' event was hosted by the Digital Participation Officer in Johnstone Town Hall in September.

       It was attended by those working in the digital sector, school children from East Fulton in Linwood and Johnstone High School, older adults from across Renfrewshire including Renfrewshire Council's 'Golden Surfers' project, and organisations with digital services and interests such as ROAR, Paisley YMCA, Renfrewshire Libraries Digiteers project, the University of the West of Scotland, Engage Renfrewshire and so on.

3.8   There has been filming and photography recording at various health and wellbeing events which are organised for our tenants, with videos being created to allow tenants to enjoy the event again, as well as being used to signpost tenants towards the health and wellbeing and digital support that is now available.

3.9   The work to date has resulted in the support to tenants in our sheltered complexes to become 'Golden Surfers' being shortlisted for a national I.T. Award for the help being provided to tackle the digital divide, as well as contributing to another short-listing for the national Excellence Awards from the Chartered Institute of Housing for the broader health and wellbeing service we provide to our sheltered housing tenants. The winners will be announced in November.

3.10 Future priorities for the next 12 months will include working closely with Homeless Services to provide digital learning classes for homeless applicants, deploying volunteers to help with continued digital sessions at sheltered complexes, increase home automation understanding for older tenants and those with mobility issues, and provide digital training sessions at other locations for mainstream Council tenants as more become subject to Universal Credit.

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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – none

2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none.

3. **Community/Council Planning –**

    - Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all – older tenants, homeless applicants and those who are digitally excluded are being provided with support to gain access to online services and new technology

    - Working together to improve outcomes – The Council's Digital Strategy helps to ensure a range of partners work together to improve outcomes

4. **Legal** – none

5. **Property/Assets** – none

6. **Information Technology** – none

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

    (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – none

9. **Procurement** – none

10. **Risk** – none

11. **Privacy Impact** – none

12. **Cosla Policy Position** – not applicable.

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List of Background Papers

(a)   None

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FC/TI/AF
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