

Part I

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All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
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REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND  
CULTURAL SERVICES)

**Part I**

**DIGITAL STRATEGY AND REVENUES AND BENEFITS TRANSFORMATION  
PROGRAMME**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides the background and recommendations for the adoption and delivery of a digital strategy.
- 1.2 Following the very positive Local Government Association Peer Challenge report and recommendations, the Chief Executive set out a vision to all employees of #OurFuture.
- 1.3 This highlighted an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive modernisation programme, a cornerstone of which will be how we respond to ever-changing demands on our services and the new ways that people want to access them.
- 1.4 This report and proposed strategy sets out how we will support #OurFuture by using modern and innovative digital methods to support service delivery, drive change and efficiency, and put customers at the heart everything we do.
- 1.5 The report also sets out the broad approach for delivery of the strategy, and provides an update to Cabinet on a Transformation Programme for Revenues and Benefits, being delivered by the Councils service provider. This programme aligns well with the council's own direction and the recommendations set out in this report.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 To review and approve the Digital Strategy (Annex A)
- 2.2 To note that soft market testing will be undertaken on a single digital platform, alongside an exercise to review the capabilities of the existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. (Section 4).
- 2.3 To note the progress of the Revenues and Benefits Transformation Programme, and its direct links with the draft Digital Strategy. (section 10)
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- 2.5 That Cabinet note the commitment in the strategy, and approve that the Council sign up to the Local Government Digital Service Standards.

- 2.6 To agree that the recommendations relating to the financing of the strategy delivery (see financial implications), be incorporated into the budget setting process.

### **3 Background**

- 3.1 As set out in the executive summary, the key drivers for the strategy are to modernise the council, using modern and innovative digital methods to support service delivery, drive change and efficiency, and put customers at the heart everything we do.
- 3.2 The council's current approach to software purchases and development does not put the customer at the heart of services. Instead, the current approach puts service's own requirements at the heart of service design.
- 3.3 The current approach also means that the council is not obtaining economies of scale with all of its software purchases (for example the council has a number of document management systems).
- 3.4 A strong example of services being designed in a silo approach, is how customers access our services when user accounts are required. Following the update to the councils website, a number of login links which had previously been accessed via service specific pages, were brought together on a central "login" page. The following link to this login page, demonstrates very simply the difficulties customers may face when trying to access services, with a number of separate logins required:
- <https://www.welhat.gov.uk/login>
- 3.5 Another simple example of the silo approach, is that some services are set up for paperless and online Direct Debit facilities, whilst others are not and so rely on paper forms and manual keying of information.
- 3.6 There are a set of nationally agreed Local Government Service Design Principles, which the Council should adopt if it wishes to design services which put the customer at the heart of what we do. These principles are set out in Appendix A of the strategy (Annex A).
- 3.7 The strategy sets out a number of high level commitments ("aims") and actions ("what we will do"), which will drive the direction and digital modernisation. A more detailed delivery plan for each of the actions will be developed by the corporate working group and will be used for internal purposes, with regular updates going to the Modernisation Board, and formal annual updates going to Members/published online.
- 3.8 The high level commitments in the strategy are as follows:
- To provide customers with modern, efficient and accessible services
  - To make digital services available to all
  - Drive modernisation and efficiencies through digital innovation and feedback

- Have a digitally empowered workforce

3.9 One of the actions set out in the strategy, which will provide the key tool for digitalisation of services, is the purchase and development of a single digital platform. Information on this is set out in section 4.

#### **4 Single Platform and CRM**

4.1 A single digital platform, is software which effectively sits between customers and services. This is demonstrated visually, in Appendix B of the draft strategy (Annex A).

4.2 It provides a platform through which customers (and staff) can access and update data and request services. It delivers a consistent look and feel, and significantly enhances the customer experience through the availability of a single sign on process, ease of use, providing a feedback cycle and regular update notifications.

4.3 The feedback cycle and account management, provides a strong tool for gathering customer insight, which along with the enhanced management information that will be available through a single digital platform, can be used to further develop and enhance services quickly and efficiently.

4.4 It provides a key tool which enables the fundamental review of service design, putting the customer experience first, whilst still enabling efficiencies to be driven out of processes through automation and direct integration with back office systems.

4.5 Staff can also use the system in the same way as customers, simplifying training requirements and set up. For example, if a customer phones to report a missed bin, the customer services team would use the same screens that the customer would use on the website, to gather and record the required information. This negates the need to train on separate back office systems, or to raise separate internal requests. The customer can also be offered the same feedback cycle and update notifications as part of the call, which would help promote the digital service and assist to nudge people to use the digital platform.

4.6 The strategy commits to market testing, purchasing and developing a single digital platform. There are clearly strong links between a single platform and a CRM system, given that one of the key aims of both systems is to provide a single source of data ('view') on the customer.

4.7 A high level review of the existing CRM (Verint/Lagan) has already started, following the transfer of the management of customer services and CRM to the Environment Team. In the early stages of this review, it has been identified that there has not been a consistent approach to the level of use of the CRM, and also that the system has been set up differently for different services. An example of this is complaints, whereby not all services use the system to record complaints, and those that do record it in different ways in the system. This makes reporting on data extremely difficult.

4.8 In addition, although the system has been maintained, the Council is not using the newest version of the CRM and there hasn't been a full review of the system

to ensure that it is fit for purpose. As part of the Waste Contract Mobilisation, a review is underway of the scripts, and the way in which data is recorded. This will provide a consistent basis which can be rolled out to other services. Whether the Council continues with its existing CRM provider, or sources a new one, this work will be invaluable in shaping the requirements and set up of a CRM moving forward.

4.9 Due to the direct and clear links with a CRM, the soft market testing will include consideration of three key options:

- Obtaining a single digital platform to work alongside the councils existing CRM
- Obtaining a single digital platform which will also replace the councils existing CRM
- Exploring the single digital platform offered by the councils existing CRM provider

## **5 Options for delivery**

5.1 There are a number of options for the delivery of the strategy. Discussions have been held with other councils delivering digital strategies, and with the councils ICT provider to understand the different approaches being adopted elsewhere.

5.2 The council already has a number of staff which support/lead on service reviews, digital change, performance management and gathering customer insight. It therefore has a pool of skills and resources within the organisation, which will support the delivery of the strategy.

5.3 Another consideration is performance management, which provides key insight into services and is a fundamental tool for monitoring the impact of digitalising services. Performance data will be a key aspect of measuring the impact on resource requirements for a service, and it could benefit the organisation to include performance management in any decisions on the preferred delivery method.

5.4 Pending any strategic review of resources as part of the peer review action plan, the Council will deliver change through a matrix style 'Digital Delivery Project Group', made up of officers from throughout the Council. There will be key officers identified by the Digital Strategy Corporate Working Group as leads on the following areas:

- Customer Insight
- Digital Development (front end integrations and service redesign)
- Business Analysis (process mapping and service need)
- ICT (infrastructure and technical integration)
- Performance management

5.5 This approach will deliver a consistent/streamlined approach to delivering change.

- 5.6 An alternative would be to externalise the delivery of the strategy. This approach would be very costly, and based on the conversations with other councils, it has only been used where councils did not have an existing resource base with the appropriate skillsets. The pace at which it would be delivered using this method would be dependent on the annual cost the council would commit to. It would also mean reviewing the requirement for the existing roles within the council already undertaking some of these functions.
- 5.7 It is anticipated that for the first 12-18 months while the team is embedded and change is driven forward, external support will be required to assist in developing the processes and approach to change/service design.
- 5.8 All of the single digital platform provider's that officers have spoken to have demonstrated strong experience in service redesign and of driving digital change. In addition, for councils which have delivered change in house, many have sought consultancy days from their single platform providers to assist in driving change for the first 12-24 months, also ensuring that the skills and technical knowledge of existing resources are enhanced to continue to deliver change in the future.
- 5.9 On this basis, the external consultancy support required to drive change and help assist in setting the project approach, will be sourced through the selected single digital platform provider. This will therefore form part of the soft market testing, tender specification and the review of the councils existing CRM provider.

## **6 Content and Accessibility**

- 6.1 In 2018, the Government introduced new accessibility regulations (The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018). These regulations mean that the council has a legal requirement to ensure its website and public facing applications meet international accessibility standards by September 2020. In order to demonstrate it will meet this target, it must have plans in place by September 2019.
- 6.2 The new website was developed to meet the required standards, but the content and customer facing applications do not. As part of the proposed strategy a commitment is given to ensure these standards are met.
- 6.3 The team have already commissioned an external review/audit of key content and applications in order to identify the detailed actions required, and put a plan in place to update content and work with application providers as required.
- 6.4 The team are also leading on the development of a new intranet, and will need to undertake a fundamental review of the content as part of this project. This area will form part of the more detailed action plan.

## **7 Project Delivery Approach**

- 7.1 As previously outlined, a detailed project/action plan will be drawn up through a corporate working group. Another peer review working group is currently considering the councils approach to project management, and the techniques agreed by this group will be adopted into the delivery of the digital strategy.

- 7.2 The Digital Delivery project group will have the core skills for undertaking business analysis and service design. It is anticipated that they would also have the capacity to support with any required data gathering and research, as this forms part of existing roles.
- 7.3 This project group would work with service representatives in the review and fundamental redesign of services. These service representatives would be nominated Digital Champions, details of which are set out in section 8.
- 7.4 The group will also work with system owners/developers, particularly in relation to functionality, automation and integrations of back office systems. This may also require support from system providers, particularly at workshop stage / initial scoping of work.
- 7.5 The team have started to gather some information on key customer contact/requests/processes (including why customers are contacting us, how many contact us for the same thing, how much of a process is automated, which systems are involved).
- 7.6 Once completed for all services, the project group will use this information to undertake an initial programme of works, prioritising any quick wins which (such as processes for which we have a high number of contacts for processes which could be automated), which will be reviewed and approved by the corporate working group.
- 7.7 Each area of redesign will vary in complexity (technical integrations, complexity of web forms etc), will have different requirements (such as the need to login to an account or not), and will have different levels of automation.
- 7.8 It is anticipated that works will be scoped by the project group, who will facilitate workshops to understand customer need, the existing customer experience, the current processes, service requirements, and system capabilities.
- 7.9 From this, the next stages would be to develop prototypes for agreement with service leads, before developing test environments. From here, an iterative design and test/review process would be taken until sign off was agreed to go live.
- 7.10 The approach to service design will need to be agile, and this has been a clear message from other councils and external providers. It must be accepted that as a project on service design progresses, the design and aims may change, as more information and customer insight becomes available.
- 7.11 Another consistent area of advice received is that access is required to a Senior Officer to make quick decisions, rather than the traditional project approach of seeking decisions from a project board. This is very much in line with the Local Government Service by Design Principles.
- 7.12 During the programme, services may identify new or additional demands, which were not originally in the planned programme of works. Such works could be the writing of a new interface, or the purchase of an additional system model to enable automation. These would be raised through the project group for consideration and incorporation into the programme.

- 7.13 The adoption of a project group to co-ordinate and lead on service redesign, will ensure consistency and that a corporate approach is taken. A visual summary of the proposed approach and flow chart are included in Appendix E of the draft strategy (Annex A).

## **8 Digital Champions**

- 8.1 It is set out in the strategy that we will use digital champions within services to coordinate digital improvement activities, undertake testing, and to encourage their colleagues to think about the delivery of their services in new ways.
- 8.2 These representatives will champion and support the delivery of digital change at service level, providing support to analyse existing processes and user needs, and highlighting development opportunities.
- 8.3 The Champions will be nominated through Heads of Service, will not have to be experts on ICT, but will have a strong ability to influence, to champion staff to 'think digital', and to have a passion for change and improving the customer experience.
- 8.4 They will attend service redesign meetings and constructively challenge the teams they are representing to think differently about how a service is designed and delivered.

## **9 Corporate Working Groups**

- 9.1 The introduction of the digital strategy provides a good opportunity to review the governance of technological and digital transformation, and proposals to set up a Digital Strategy Corporate Working Group are set out in the strategy.
- 9.2 This group would be made up of a much smaller group of senior officers, and lead officers from the project group. Its focus would be on driving forward digital change, provide a key link to the council's Modernisation Board. It would also enable a corporate approach to be taken to the purchase and enhancement of software, rather than the more historic silo approach.
- 9.3 A representative of the Communications Team will be working closely with the project group. They will also attend the Digital Strategy Corporate Working Group, and the Modernisation Board. This will ensure key messages are delivered in a structured and timely way, and are lined up with other messages from the wider modernisation programme.

## **10 Revenues and Benefits Transformation Programme**

- 10.1 The councils partner for the delivery of the Revenues and Benefits (Sopra Steria) have agreed to undertake a transformation exercise on these services. They are undertaking this project for each of the council's in the contract, Welwyn Hatfield and Broxbourne.
- 10.2 The aims of the transformation are primarily to;
- Significantly improve customer experience, leveraging digital services and automation

- Create the tools and processes to deal with future workload increases and complexities with minimal staffing impacts
  - Transform at pace to create early benefits realisation
- 10.3 In the early inception stages, it was identified that Broxbourne had recently purchased a single digital platform, and that the project would be approached differently for the two authorities because of this.
- 10.4 A meeting was held to explain the council's direction, draft strategy and that the direction for the Council would likely be the purchase of a single digital platform. On this basis, the project concept was amended, and is being undertaken on the basis that both will likely have single digital platforms.
- 10.5 The approach being taken to the project is very similar to the approach being set out in the council own strategy, with four key leads focussing on customer experience, service design, technology and policies/procedures. These leads will be supported by the service representatives.
- 10.6 The core delivery team are working on a detailed transformation plan between September and December 2019.
- 10.7 These involve holding workshops with the service representatives, council officers, and software providers. The workshops are reviewing existing processes, understanding the customer journey, outlining redesign principles, designing prototypes new processes, and understanding system capability (interfaces and automation).
- 10.8 As part of this, the team are keen to work with, and invite to workshops members of our project group. This will offer the project group an early opportunity to enhance their skills, in advance of implementing the digital platform.
- 10.9 The timing of this transformation adds weight to the need to purchase a single digital platform, and provides an excellent opportunity to have one of the key council services on the platform during an early period of the strategy.
- 10.10 As council Tax can be used as a key tool to verify a customer, once a customer has been through an agreed registration process, it will be easy for them to access other key accounts, once other services have been moved to the platform (eg garden waste, housing, service charges, ground rents, planning) as they should not need re-verification.

## **11 Next Steps**

- 11.1 The next steps following approval of the recommendations in this report are as follows:
- Soft Market Testing will be undertaken on a single digital platform
  - Internal groups and representatives will be set up and identified (such as digital champions).
  - A more detailed action plan will be created.

- Council officers will work closely with Sopra Steria on the Revenues & Benefits Transformation
- The budget forthcoming proposals (including earmarked reserves) will be amended to include the delivery of the strategy.

### **Implications**

#### **12 Legal Implication(s)**

- 12.1 This report references the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 which places a statutory duty on public bodies to make their websites and mobile applications more accessible.
- 12.2 It also contains a further obligation for a public sector body to publish an accessibility statement on compliance with the accessibility requirement, and keep that statement under regular review.

#### **13 Financial Implication(s)**

- 13.1 Although the adoption of the strategy does not directly have any financial implications, the commitments contained within the strategy do require significant investment to ensure delivery.
- 13.2 In relation to the single digital platform, the soft market testing will help to estimate costs. Initial discussions with other councils have suggested that costs could be in the region of £500k including consultancy days.
- 13.3 In comparison, we are aware of another council who is progressing a digital programme at pace. This is being delivered purely through outsourcing the work, and that council has committed over £2m in the first year on consultancy alone (excluding cost of systems).
- 13.4 Through the programme of digitalisation, it is expected that additional requirements will be identified which require further investment. An early example of this that has been highlighted in the project concept for the revenues and benefits transformation, is that there may be a need to upgrade/replace the document management system being used as it may not be fit for purpose in its current form.
- 13.5 This highlights the need for an agile project management and decision making process, as if through the process it transpires this is the case, the project risks significant delay if the upgrade/purchase of software were to go through the normal decision making process.
- 13.6 In order to facilitate quick and agile decisions, it will be recommended through the budget setting process that an earmarked reserve be set up for use towards digital development projects, including the digital platform. Delegated authority would be recommended for the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services), in consultation with the Executive Member (Resources), to draw down from this reserve for the set purpose of delivering the strategy.
- 13.7 There will inevitably significant changes to the way in which services are requested and delivered through the successful delivery of the strategy. This will

free up resource, which is expected to generate significant financial efficiencies, but also focus staff time on value add activities, providing the customer support to those that most need it. The financial benefits are difficult to quantify at this early stage, but some data is included in the strategy to demonstrate the significant differences in cost of a basic DVLA process.

- 13.8 As each service redesign is scoped and other digital projects progress, an analysis will be undertaken to identify the efficiencies that could be achieved through digitalisation and automation, at different levels of take up. This can then be monitored against and reported through the Digital Strategy Corporate Working Group, through financial monitoring reports, and efficiencies built into the base budget during the relevant budget cycles.

## **14 Risk Management Implications**

- 14.1 The key risks related to this proposal are:

- 14.2 That the council does not have the resources or skill sets to deliver the strategy:

The council does have strong pockets of the resources and skills required for this project. Through bringing these skills together in a clearly defined project group, a more streamlined approach can be taken, and skills can be shared/enhanced. Any shortfall in resource of skills identified, will be met through consultancy support. This will be written into the specification as part of the purchase of a single platform.

Inherent risk: Likelihood Medium / Impact Medium

Managed risk: Likelihood Low / Impact Medium

- 14.3 That the cultural change required to deliver change is not delivered:

The Modernisation Board will oversee all working groups delivering the modernisation programme. This strategic group will set direction and communication. A number of briefings have been held with staff to set the initial direction, and strong communication and engagement will continue through the life of the programme. The use of enthusiastic and passionate Digital Champions within services will help embed the 'Think Digital' message and drive the organisation forward.

Inherent risk: Likelihood High / Impact Medium

Managed risk: Likelihood Low / Impact Medium

- 14.4 That the council does not have the financial resources to deliver the strategy:

The council has reserves of over £1.3m set aside for the delivery of budget priorities and transformation. It is likely that, due to the wide remit of this strategy, and the large number of unknowns, that there will be unforeseen costs through the programme, and it will be recommended that there is a reserve specific to the delivery of the strategy in order to meet these unforeseen costs. The councils Section 151 provides an annual review and statement on the adequacy of council reserves. Through this investment, significant ongoing efficiencies will be found.

Inherent risk: Likelihood Medium / Impact High

Managed risk: Likelihood Low / Impact Low

## **15 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

13.1 The security of data, and systems, will need to be considered as part of the purchase and development of the single platform.

## **16 Procurement Implication(s)**

16.1 There are likely to be procurement implications as the projects and delivery of the strategy progress. Standard procurement processes with procurements over £100k going through procurement board.

16.2 The Councils Procurement Manager will be advising on and supporting the soft market testing exercise.

## **17 Climate Change Implication(s)**

17.1 There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

## **18 Human Resources Implication(s)**

18.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

## **19 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

19.1 There are no direct Health and Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

## **20 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

20.1 A detailed communication and engagement plan will be created through the Digital Strategy Corporate Working Group. This will include both the strategic messages required on 'think digital', and the communication plans for specific sub projects led by the project group.

## **21 Link to Corporate Priorities**

21.1 The subject of this report is linked to the efficient and customer focussed delivery of all of the council's Corporate Priorities.

## **22 Equality and Diversity**

22.1 The EqIA was completed on 9 August 2019 and no negative impacts were identified on any of the protected groups under Equalities Legislation. This is specifically due to the fact that existing contact methods will continue to be in place, and the strategy aims to enhance its digital offering.

22.2 The EQIA identified that there is the potential for positive impacts on some of the protected groups as the strategy will look to improve digital inclusion. This will be done through making sure its website and digital methods meet the accessibility standards, and through promoting digital inclusion (eg. training, working with

volunteer/charity groups).

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Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Annex A – Digital Strategy and Associated Appendices