

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 1 MARCH 2022
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF RESOURCES

THINK DIGITAL (DIGITAL STRATEGY) – PROGRESS UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In November 2019, Cabinet approved the Council's Digital Strategy which runs for 3 years until November 2022.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on progress against the strategy, outlines key activities for 2022 along with setting out the approach for the review of the strategy in 2022.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet note progress against the Digital Strategy.
- 2.2 That Cabinet note and agree the direction of travel for the review of the Strategy during 2022.

3 Background

- 3.1 In November 2019, Cabinet approved the Council's Digital Strategy which runs for 3 years until November 2022.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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
- 3.4 Following approval of the strategy, the officer group met to create an action plan around the key commitments in the strategy. These actions were grouped into four key headings:
 - Structure and Governance
 - ICT & Infrastructure
 - Culture
 - Service Redesign
- 3.5 The action plan, and updates against this plan, are included in Appendix A, and an update on each of these four key strands is outlined in the following sections.

Structure and Governance

- 3.6 This strand considered the base requirements to ensure that the right groups were formed, that quick decisions could be made, and that reserves were set up for digital projects.
- 3.7 The strategy was approved shortly before the wider Modernisation Programme was announced, and actions and groups were adapted to reflect their role in and links to the wider modernisation, and the Modernisation Earmarked Reserve was established.
- 3.8 No actions are outstanding or ongoing from this strand.

ICT & Infrastructure

- 3.9 This strand considered the ICT service, infrastructure, applications and core digital tools.
- 3.10 A core strand of this work was enabling staff to work in an agile and hybrid way. This piece of work proved extremely timely, with technology such as Microsoft Teams being in test in January 2020, which enabled the council to roll out to the wider organisation quickly when the pandemic hit. This put us in a much stronger position than many councils, and also highlights the importance of keeping up to date with changes in technology.
- 3.11 The action plan includes a summary of projects and new technology implementations that have been completed, and some which are underway. A review of Telephony has been completed and the council is currently changing its telephony, both to meet the need to change to SIP lines in advance of the national deadline, but also to integrate with Microsoft Team and improve telephony for customers to access services.
- 3.12 The options appraisal has been completed for the ICT future delivery model, which has been overseen by a procurement board. A direction of travel has been agreed (change to in house team and multi-sourcing providers rather than a single provider), and the council is currently sourcing a partner to help us design the service, procure contracts and transition.
- 3.13 Other than the telephony project, which is due to complete in early 2022, the main activity which is continuing in this strand of work, is the design and implementation and transition to a new ICT service model, which will be completed for the end of the contract in December 2022.

Culture

- 3.14 This strand focusses on engaging with staff and changing the way we think about digital.
- 3.15 The new intranet was procured and implemented, providing a much-improved platform for information sharing throughout the council.
- 3.16 A large part of this strand directly links into the last strand of service redesign. Whilst some work has started on this, the programme will significantly ramp up early in 2022, and is detailed more in the following section.
- 3.17 Communications with staff around digital projects were wrapped up into wider modernisation updates.

Service Redesign

- 3.18 This strand is focussed on ensuring we had the right tools in place for resident contact, and customer management. Once sourced and implemented, the next steps of this strand are to start to engage with services on redesign to really embed a digital culture into services, improve customer access to services, and streamline processes.
- 3.19 The digital platform was sourced, which will also replace the council's CRM system. The first case type that went live in this system was complaints, followed by applying for a garage, terminating a garage tenancy and reporting a noise nuisance.
- 3.20 A project has commenced to review, design and replace existing contact forms on the website, to migrate away from the council's CRM system. Some forms are planned to go live in early 2022 as part of this project.
- 3.21 The service redesign principles were agreed by the Modernisation Board in 2021 and are shown in appendix B, along with agreement on the resources we will use to manage the programme.
- 3.22 The Service redesign process will start to ramp up significantly in 2022, with forms being delivered at pace. Alongside this, there will be a review of business processes and web content to drive customers to the right forms and improve service efficiency.
- 3.23 The strategy has delivered the base tools and principles needed to move onto this core phase, which alongside the new ICT model, will be the key deliverables for 2022.

Strategy Renewal

- 3.24 As the council moves into the final phase of the action plan and last year of the strategy, it is the right time to consider the direction for the renewal of the strategy.
- 3.25 There are a number of other key factors which drive the need for a review of the strategy, including:
- The council's Customer Services Strategy, which covered three years, ends in the first half of 2022
 - The council will be designing and implementing a new ICT delivery model during the year in readiness for the end of the contract in December 2022.
 - Subject to approval at this meeting, the council's Customer Contact Centre will be insourced for the end of the contract in December 2022.
 - The review of the council's corporate priorities in 2021 brought together customer service, efficiency and effectiveness in the target of being "A well run Council which puts the customer first".
- 3.26 As the council continues on its modernisation journey, the links between customer and digital, data and technology grow stronger, with digital being a key factor in how we deliver good customer service and respond to service requests as efficiently as possible.
- 3.27 Based on these factors, it is recommended that the council move away from having completely separate digital and customer strategies, and move towards a co-ordinated strategy approach, which will be developed during 2022.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising directly from this report.

5 Financial Implication(s)

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Any financial implications arising from actions within the action plan and service redesign will be considered separately as part of those individual projects.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 The key risks related to this proposal are:

6.2 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 skills can be shared/enhanced, and activities co-ordinated. Any shortfall in resource of skills identified, will be met through consultancy support, such as with the outsourcing of the options appraisal that was undertaken for ICT. 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

6.3 That the cultural change required to deliver change is not delivered:

The Modernisation Board continues to oversee all working groups delivering the modernisation programme. This strategic group sets direction and communication. Briefings have been held with staff throughout and strong communication and engagement will continue through the life of the programme. The engagement with services and use of services leads will help embed the 'Think Digital' message and drive the organisation forward.

Inherent risk: Likelihood High / Impact Medium

Managed risk: Likelihood Low / Impact Medium

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising directly from this report.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising directly from this report.

8.2 All procurement for activities undertaken have been undertaken in line with councils Contract Procedure Rules.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

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

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

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

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

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

12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

- 12.1 There are no direct communication and engagement implications arising from this report.
- 12.2 Communication and engagement will be considered as part of specific action plan items or projects arising from the delivery of the strategy.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The subject of this report is linked to being a well run council which puts the customer first.

14 Equality and Diversity

- 14.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed at the development of the strategy 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.
- 14.2 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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Appendices

Annex A – Action Plan and Updates

Annex B – Service Redesign Principles