

Report of	Meeting	Date
Chief Executive (Introduced by the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance)	Executive Cabinet	16 January 2014

## DIGITAL STRATEGY 2014 - 2017

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To present the Digital Strategy 2014 - 2017 to Executive Cabinet for consideration and agreement.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

- The Digital Strategy 2014 - 2017 is approved.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- The strategy sets out the aims and objectives for the Council in adopting a 'digital first' approach. It includes a number of key actions to be delivered on a service by service basis over the next three years. During the next financial year these key actions will be delivered in respect of the consolidation of services already delivered from Customer and Transactional Services and the Revenues and Benefits service.
- Outlined are the changes that are required to ensure that customers are able to access services and information online whilst still supporting and making provision for those who cannot do so.
- Improvements in how the Council stores, processes and accesses information are required in order to realise the business benefits of these changes. Information will be stored in digital format so that it is easily accessible, more readily shared, managed more effectively and provides better business intelligence.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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<b>Key Decision?</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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<b>Reason</b> Please bold as appropriate	1, a change in service provision that impacts upon the service revenue budget by £100,000 or more	2, a contract worth £100,000 or more
	3, a new or unprogrammed capital scheme of £100,000 or more	4, Significant impact in environmental, social or physical terms in two or more wards

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

### (If the recommendations are accepted)

6. The Digital Strategy 2014 - 2017 sets out the principles and outcomes for the digital delivery of services and information provision over the coming three years. These principles and outcomes will ensure services are provided in a way that will meet customer expectations and allow the efficient delivery of those services.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

7. None.

## CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	√	A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	√

## BACKGROUND

9. There have been a number of changes over recent years which have created a need for the formalisation of the Council's intention with regard to delivering services and adopting more efficient working practices. The Government's Digital Strategy endorses a 'digital by default' approach and is clear that redesigning services so that customers prefer to access them online is a priority.
10. Reductions in local government financing mean that services need to be delivered in a more efficient way and working practices need to be streamlined in order to reduce costs.
11. Much investment has been made in technology and the Council needs to make the most effective use of the digital opportunities available.

## ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR

12. Many services have already been successfully migrated to digital access channels and lessons have been learned as a result.
13. Applications for residents parking permits have been an online process for the last three years. Over 80% of resident permit applications are processed this way.
14. Housing benefit and council tax support applications are now made almost exclusively using an online claim form rather than a paper form. Support completing this form is still available face to face in Customer Services and through home visit support where required. This was a notably smooth transition suggesting that where customers need to access a specific service they will readily accept an alternative channel.
15. Railcard applications have also made the transition from paper forms to digital channels. Railcards are available to customers over 60, the age at which the propensity to use digital channels begins to fall. However, less than 12% of railcards have been applied for by other means in the last 12 months.

16. The majority of local land charge searches are also made online. Over 55% of searches are carried out via the Council website even though there is a small charge for this.
17. The transition in these examples, from paper-based applications involving staff-time collating information, processing applications, distributing permits and information, to streamlined digital processes has already allowed savings to be made.
18. From the progress achieved so far it is clear that customers are willing to adopt self-serve and digital access. There is a risk that customer expectations will outstrip the pace of change of development if significant progress on delivery of this strategy is not made.

## **DIGITAL STRATEGY 2014 - 2017**

19. The Digital Strategy is included as Appendix A to this report.
20. The overall aim of the strategy is two-fold:
  - to ensure that customers are able to, and prefer to, **access services easily online** whilst also maintaining traditional channels and support for customers unable to benefit from self-service;
  - also to **ensure that changes continue to be made in the way the Council manages information** and conducts its business in order to deliver efficiencies.
21. There are a number of guiding principles which underline the implementation of the digital strategy which are as follows:
  1. The default approach will be on providing digital access to services and information
  2. There will be an emphasis on customer channel migration towards online channels
  3. The emphasis will be on achieving end to end digital completion of transactional processes
  4. Services will be designed to work seamlessly through the digital and non-digital stages of a process
  5. Processing and sharing information will make maximum use of technology available
  6. The need for non-digital storage of information will be removed
  7. Information will be up-to-date with service areas having clear responsibility for this
  8. New staff job descriptions will actively promote the use of digital systems in all aspects of work
22. The delivery of the strategy involves a focus on four key areas:
  - 1. Information:**

More accessible and well-managed information will be the base for improved delivery of services and better working practices.
  - 2. Redesign of service delivery:**

Access to services will shift to e-channels with speed and convenience being key.
  - 3. Cultural change:**

Raising awareness and promoting the benefits of a digital first approach to members, staff and customers.
  - 4. Ability and Capability:**

Consideration will be given both to customers' ability and propensity to use digital channels and the technical capability that is available to them.

23. The delivery of the strategy will be managed through the project management methodology and the organisational plan and will be reported on a regular basis to Members through overview and scrutiny and to Strategy Group and the Executive Member.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

24. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	√
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	√
Legal		Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

#### COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

25. There are no additional costs that will impact on the budget. Productivity and efficiency gains that can be realised from the strategy will be assessed as part of the implementation and project methodology.

#### COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

26. None.

#### COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

27. As integrated impact assessment will be undertaken on the strategy to assess its implications, particularly for different equality strands. The strategy's aim to make online the preferred channel for customers is not at odds with the council's Equality Scheme. The strategy will not preclude customers from using other channels to access services and, as outlined in the report, alternative approaches such as face to face support can be made available for customers.

Gary Hall  
Chief Executive

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Helen Sutton/Asim Khan	5449	12 December 2013	***