

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Customer and Digital (Introduced by the Executive Member for Customer, Advice and Streetscene Services)	Executive Cabinet	3 August 2017

DIGITAL INCLUSION – ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report provides an overview of the work carried to address digital exclusion since May 2016, as well as what work is planned for the year ahead.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. To note the report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. A digital access and inclusion project was established as part of the council's budget in 2015, together with a £50,000 budget.
4. In 2016 a part time digital inclusion officer post was established and the attached annual report provides a summary of the achievements made since May 2016.
5. The report provides details about digital training delivery, digital access points, digital support provision, a new project regarding digital hubs and also a summary of the digital inclusion projects which were approved by Executive Cabinet in June 2017, as part of the approval of the Council's digital strategy (2017-2020).

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Key Decision? Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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Reason 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. To raise awareness of the Council's ongoing work to address digital exclusion in the borough.

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. A digital access and inclusion project was established as part of the council's budget in 2015.

10. It was driven by changes to the welfare reform agenda in particular Universal Credit. These changes were and continue to be a major cultural change in the way people receive and access support and on-line services is at the heart of the reforms. There was a clear need to invest in digital inclusion within Chorley to ensure individuals were not excluded from receiving the help and support they needed.

11. The original project objectives were to:

- a. Raise awareness of online access and technology;
- b. Examine options to deliver technology to hard to reach groups;
- c. Examine options to provide low cost equipment to non-profit groups.
- d. To work with other organisations to provide public access to technology in high need locations.
- e. Develop a directory of free public access points across the borough;
- f. Deliver the Council's digital strategy – improving the Council's online services;
- g. To work in partnership with other agencies to develop the skills of welfare benefits claimants to enable them to claim online.
- h. To work with other organisations develop options for providing training in the use of computers to events for the public

12. A budget of £50,000 was allocated over two years to fund equipment, marketing and promotional materials and to commission training.

13. A part time digital inclusion officer post was created in April 2016, and in May 2016 following the senior management restructure the post was transferred from the Housing team to the Customer Transformation service.

14. This report provides an update of the work carried out by the part time digital inclusion officer since May 2016 to date.

ANNUAL REPORT

15. The annual update report is attached as appendix A. It provides an overall summary of some of the key achievements and also provides information about:

- a. The success of digital training delivery;
- b. The increase in free digital access points;
- c. The additional digital support which is available across the borough;

- d. A new project to create four new digital hubs; and
- e. future projects which have been agreed as part of the council's digital strategy.

16. Some of the key achievements include:

- a. All council managed community centres now have WiFi.
- b. 15 Training laptops and 8 android tablets have been purchased using the digital inclusion budget for use in community training.
- c. The digital inclusion officer travels to community venues across the borough to deliver free beginners training regularly and, where free provision is available, training is now delivered in conjunction with tutors from Lancashire Adult Learning or Preston's College. 233 learners have attended our digital inclusion training sessions as part of the project so far.
- d. Upgraded digital access terminals are in place at our offices at Union Street and weekly drop in sessions are offered to help more people to complete online tasks.
- e. The new customer and digital strategy extends the work further to incorporate projects such as setting up digital hubs in 4 of our community centres; establishing free town centre WiFi and creating a digital champions (public, private and VCF sector) partnership to work in a more coordinated way to improve digital access across the borough.
- f. A "digital access" page has been established on the council's website which is updated regularly with details of access points, training sessions and useful links to other providers <http://chorley.gov.uk/Pages/AtoZ/Digital-Access.aspx>

17. The digital inclusion work does link with wider work to increase the take up of online services and over the same period as this report there has been an increase in the number of people registered for My Account of 80%. Additionally, the percentage of service requests online is also at 32.74% at the end of quarter one against a target of 20%. A significant proportion of this will be due to the changes to the waste collection services and the promotion of the facility to register and pay for these services online at any time.

18. Over the next years this work will be developed further, and will be key to the successful delivery of the council's digital strategy. One example of the planned digital inclusion projects include establishing a laptop/tablet loan scheme for people who don't have access to a device at home and are unable to visit one of the boroughs free access points.

19. To support this work, and the wider work which will be involved in delivery the Council's digital strategy the digital inclusion officer post has been revised to incorporate additional responsibilities and will also be offered as a full time post. The additional costs for this can be met within existing budgets.

20. From the original £50,000 budget, £15,000 remains and is provisionally allocated to funding the set up costs of the digital hubs. Once this money is spent there is no ongoing revenue funding, beyond the digital inclusion staffing costs to support this work. Therefore if additional budget is required to progress the digital inclusion projects which are set out in the digital strategy, a case for the funding will be presented either as a separate report or within the council's regular revenue budget monitoring reports to Executive Cabinet.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

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

Finance		Customer Services	
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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

22. The cost of increasing the hours for the Digital Inclusion Officer will be met from the requests for permanent reductions in hours elsewhere in Customer Services. As stated in the report further funding will be identified to deliver additional digital inclusion projects as part of the approved digital strategy.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

23. None.

ASIM KHAN
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Joanne Farmer / Rebecca Huddleston	5779	13/07/2017	Annual report covering report