

**Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee -
6th September 2023**

Report of the Director of Digital, Customer & Commercial Services

MyDudley Digital Platform Update

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to the Corporate and Economic Select Committee on the MyDudley programme.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Committee note and comment on the contents of the report.

Background

3. The 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Strategy approved spend in a new digital platform to improve resident self-serve experience.
4. The digital platform is a tool that enables residents and councillors to request services from the council and ask questions. The platform allows two-way communication. Residents can self-serve by making a service request, and officers can respond through the platform. Any employee completing service requests for residents can view and respond to reports.
5. The Digital and Customer Services team procured the platform and awarded the contract to Granicus UK in April 2023 to deliver the platform which we branded MyDudley. The contract is worth £1.5m over 7 years (5+2).

6. The contract value includes set up costs and licence and support cost. We future proofed and agreed pricing for further functionality that we may want to procure later.

The platform functionality includes;

- Customer portal – used by residents
- Customer service hub – used by Dudley Council Plus
- Councillor portal – used by councillors
- Staff portal – used by officers

7. In March 2023, prior to contract signing, we organised a session for councillors to review the platform and gain assurance the preferred solution was the right solution to deliver online services for the residents.
8. Whilst online self-service will be the first choice for many of our residents, it is an enhancement to our offer and not a replacement way to contact the council. Over the 5 year contract, the number of online services available will increase, covering the majority of resident service requests received by the council. Residents will still be able to contact us by phone and visit us in-person. We will continue to ensure the needs of our residents are met.
9. The more we enable residents that can self-serve to self-serve, the more resources we have for those residents of different communities who cannot self-serve, or are vulnerable, or have complex needs. We will direct resources to support these residents via phone or face-to-face. This will improve our response rates and mean elderly, or vulnerable residents access the services they need more quickly.
10. Community Engagement

The introduction of this new technology and online services has the potential to bring about long-term improvements and efficiencies for the council. However, it can also be a further barrier for digitally excluded groups and communities to access services.
11. We are committed to understanding how different groups and communities use existing council services. The MyDudley implementation plan aligns to the feedback gained from community engagement and the future roll out of services will continue be informed by data and engagement.

12. The Digital and Customer Service team is carrying out engagement sessions and surveys to understand how residents use digital technology and what we need to do to make these technologies meet the needs of different communities. Involving users in the co-creation of the platform is a way of reducing exclusion due to digitalisation.
13. To bring independence, the team partnered with Healthwatch Dudley to facilitate our community engagement sessions (end of February/early March 2023). They were attended by residents and carers with wide ranging age, ability and accessibility needs. From having BSL interpreters, to working with residents to understand their needs, we will focus on accessibility at every step.
14. What we picked up from these initial consultation sessions was the need for easy, streamlined and joined up reporting, as well as the desire to retain help in-person or over the phone when needed. The groups also selected the new name for the platform, MyDudley. See **Appendix A** for the full data report that details the feedback from these initial consultations.
15. In July 2023 we launched the MyDudley Roadshow event. Residents were invited to complete a survey about how they and the council could work together to improve online access to council services.
16. The two-week roadshow consisted of sixteen events commencing 31st July 2023. Week one, the roadshow visited leisure centres, community centres and cultural centres. Week two, a promotional double decker bus visited different town centres with internal and external promotion in precincts, car parks and marketplaces.
17. The roadshow was supported by a marketing, communications, and engagement plan, including PR and a social media schedule. Communication activity ranged from targeted e-Bulletins to a digital advert for loop display on 42 doctor's surgery screens in the borough.
18. 3,073 residents completed surveys, 289% more than needed for the data to be valid. Sixty-two hard-copy surveys were completed. The roadshows were picked up by media outlets and received press coverage from Black Country Radio and the Express and Star. See **Appendix B** for further details of engagement statistics and results to date.
19. Early results from the survey highlight the opportunity to increase the number of residents who would use online services: 80% of residents who currently get in-touch in-person or called Dudley Council would possibly use online services in the future.

20. Implementing MyDudley

We are on track and on budget on our implementation timeline, see **Appendix C**. Our aim is to demonstrate “You said, we did” and directly trace aspects of the new platform back to what residents told us. Our high-level the timeline reflects the needs and preferences of residents. Our resident focussed implementation requires us to be flexible and take an iterative approach, being prepared to change our plans where resident feedback suggests a need. The initial launch focuses on delivering what residents told us they most access and what they most want to see on the platform. In autumn, go-live will deliver the first phase of the customer portal giving residents the ability to:

- Create a secure account and track their enquiries.
- Raise an enquiry about waste, bins and recycling
- Report anti-social behaviour
- Book tip appointments
- Report an issue in my neighbourhood

21. Councillor portal

Council officers respond to enquiries received by councillors and response times vary greatly between services. We will migrate councillor contact to the new platform. This presents an opportunity to improve this service.

22. A new councillor portal provides opportunity to:

- Track requests against the 10 day SLA target and escalate
- Provide councillors with a more consistent experience
- Enable communication between service areas and councillors
- Standardise practices that can be shared across service areas to support improved delivery
- Empower councillors to digitally self-serve and get served – to the betterment of the whole borough

Whilst a new platform provides additional functionality and transparency, it is acknowledged that service areas require people and resources to fulfil and action councillor contact. The new platform will provide directors with regular data and insight to allow services to target improvements.

23. Members of the cross-party Councillor Digital Forum attended a MyDudley briefing on 27th June. The objective was to ensure Members of the Councillor Digital forum agree the Phase 1 project milestones and benefits.

24. The Councillor Digital Forum briefing covered key functionality within the councillor portal, mock ups to illustrate the art of the possible and a discussion on future state, including reducing the cost of digital contact.
25. Councillors agreed a pilot approach to the councillor portal and agreed nominated Councillors to engage and co-design the build phase to shape process design and help flush out inefficiencies and pain points across resident & councillor platform.
26. On Monday 10th July, all Elected Members were invited to attend a showcase about the new MyDudley Councillor platform. Attending Members offered their views and contributed ideas and suggestions. Councillors engaged in conversations with officers about digital trends, challenges faced by residents, and opportunities for collaboration.
27. The following five key themes emerged and will be taken into consideration in the build of the new councillor portal:
 - Theme 1. Accessibility
 - Theme 2. Simplicity
 - Theme 3. Closure / Final Approval
 - Theme 4. Language
 - Theme 5. Visibility of Cases / Accountability

28. Governance & principles

Full programme governance is in place. The Councillor Digital Forum feeds into The Digital Board, which in turn reports into Cabinet via SEB. In addition, the project is reported directly to SEB via the Corporate PMO's Major Project Reporting.

29. The Digital Board also steers and receives input from the Digital Platform Steering group who are responsible for project budget, agreed savings, risk and benefits realisation.
30. The Digital Platform Steering Group are signed up to three key design principles. Ensuring these are adhered to will help us to enhance the customer experience, maximise the investment in the platform, maximise the efficiencies and realise the required savings. These are:
 - Principle 1. Single Front Door
We will ensure that access to council services is through the MyDudley platform wherever possible, exploiting integration and automation.
 - Principle 2. Consistent Customer Experience

We will direct energy towards the greatest impact for our people using data at the heart of decisions, co-designing and removing reliance on e-mail as a business tool.

- Principle 3. Data Driven

We will use data to identify trends to inform service design.

Finance

31.

The approved MTFS budget in place for the new digital platform, licenses and additional staffing is as follows;

- 22/23 £480K
- 23/24 £460K
- 24/25 £420K

The Granicus contracted prices over the term is within allocated budget.

- 22/23 Total spend £60,908
- 23/24 Spend to date £235,575

MTFS spend was approved on the basis the project would realise savings as customer contact reduces because more residents will self-serve. The Digital and Customer Service team will monitor the rate of resident self-service against the target reduction. The cabinet approved budget reduction is in Dudley Council Plus.

Digital, Commercial and Customer Services	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000
Digital Platform implementation & roll out savings.	-	120	470

Law

32 An external legal team were contracted to support the procurement of the new platform through a competitive dialogue process and to ensure the best terms and conditions were negotiated for the council.

33. We review feedback from consultation to ensure all development meets current legal and accessibility requirements.

Risk Management

34. Any risks will be mitigated using the Council's existing risk management framework.

Equality Impact

35. Being digitally literate opens-up opportunities for all age groups to enjoy the social, cultural, economic, and educational benefits being digitally active brings. Digital technology allows people who are housebound to interact with the outside world, overcoming loneliness and social exclusion. Advancements in technology enable visually impaired residents and hearing-impaired residents to use technology.
36. The work described in this report has no effect of the decision on children and young people. Being digitally literate opens-up opportunities for all age groups.

No consultation with children and young people has taken place; and we did not involve children and young people in developing the proposals. We may extend engagement activity to young people as we develop the platform.

37. As we develop and roll out our platform, we have planned in accessibility testing. We will invite residents who we have previously consulted with to test the platform against their needs. This will be an ongoing process throughout the development.
38. Since the council has now awarded the contract and has developed an understanding of the new platform and resident priorities, a further Equality Impact Assessment will be completed that aligns to the implementation. The project team will adopt the practice of repeating equality impact assessment throughout the various roll out phases.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

39. Colleagues within People and Inclusion are working with the Digital Platform project to develop employee engagement sessions and ensure alignment with the people programme.

Commercial/Procurement

40. Procurement legislation and compliance with Contract Standing Orders will be adhered to should the further purchasing of goods be required.

Environment/Climate Change

41. Being digitally literate enables a greater reach of climate change information and resources to residents, increasing accessibility to information such as becoming more energy efficiency, reducing pollution and waste management. Using digital services encourages less use of paper. Becoming paperless reduces chemical and physical waste and reduces carbon footprint.

Council Priorities and Projects

42. The contents of this report relate to the key Council priorities including the Borough Vision, Council Plan 2022-25.
Dudley The borough of Ambition and Enterprise
Digital opportunities are being exploited to modernise our working culture, customer experience and public services.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Consultation Data Report
Appendix B – Engagement Report
Appendix C – Implementation Timeline