
Meeting of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee – 23rd November 2022

Report of the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services

Digital and Technology Services Update

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee on ongoing and planned developments relating to Digital and Technology Services.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee note and comment on:-
 - The appropriateness and effectiveness of Digital and Technology governance.
 - Developments to protect the council from cyber-attacks
 - The outcome of the restructuring of the ICT team and plan to close the skills gap.
 - Key achievements in digital and technology.
 - The development, for Medium Term Financial Strategy approval, of important business cases: (1) Upgrade to enhanced Microsoft licences, (2) Storage increase, (3) migration to cloud services of 3 key applications.

Background

3. In May 2022 we completed the restructure of the ICT team creating a Digital team and a Technology team with 2 newly appointed heads of service. The restructure took place whilst we continued to run the operation, carrying out maintenance and renewals, delivering initiatives to enable the operation to run smoothly, and keeping us secure and compliant. Staff were fully engaged and supported the restructure advising

on the design, writing job descriptions and interviewing. Nonetheless it was an unsettling time for many, and we are pleased to have completed it with only one month delay in May.

4. The Government Cyber Security Breach Survey reports that 39% of UK businesses were victims of a cyber-attack. Of these, one in five experience a negative outcome, such as a loss of money or data. This suggests that 8% of businesses in the UK experience a negative outcome per year. Most reported outcomes include temporary loss of access to files or networks, disruption to websites, applications or online services and software or systems being corrupted or damaged. A permanent loss of data is much less common because 87% of businesses and 74% of charities back up their data. Breaches that do not have a budgetary impact, still have an impact: resources are diverted to investigate the breach and deploy new security measures. We continue to invest to protect the council from cyber-attacks.
5. The 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved spend in (1) a new digital platform to improve resident self-serve experience, (2) in additional web content staff to improve the information we provide our residents, (3) in equipment we provide our staff to enable them to achieve their objectives more easily, (4) upgrading to Microsoft E3 licences. We are making progress in these four areas.
6. Appropriateness and effectiveness of Digital and Technology governance model
 - In October 2021 we deployed a Digital and Technology governance model. The governance model includes a Councillor Digital Forum, a Digital and Technology Working Group and a Digital Board which reports into the Strategic Executive Board (SEB) and through SEB into Cabinet. Thus, the governance model draws input from Councillors, officers, and senior executives. It ensures directorates use common capabilities and resources effectively and that we synchronise and align our initiatives. It determines which initiatives we prioritise and fund, what resources we need to re-align, if the work programme is delivering the benefits and savings, the policies we need to ensure regulatory compliance, the rules we should we have to ensure a consistent customer experience, which partners we should collaborate with and if we are mitigating risk effectively.
 - The Councillor Forum, Board and Working Group have met as agreed and the agendas have led to important conversations and input. The agendas are set to ensure that the terms of reference for the boards are met and to ensure that the boards can be assured on the performance of digital and technology. At the end of each meeting, we ask the members if the meeting met their objectives and suggestions for improvement.

- At the most recent Digital Board we discussed and agreed on the benefit model Digital is deploying to ensure the teams understand and document the strategic, financial and customer experience outcomes of a digital transformation so that we can then assess if we are delivering against these outcomes. This is a cultural shift for the council and involves service areas as well as the digital team. We will be discussing this at the working group and sharing it with Councillor forum at the next meetings.

7. Protecting the council: Cyber security

- Smart working across various locations depending on the requirements of the job increases the cyber threat as it increases the potential attack surface. Since January 2022 we have introduced changes to better protect us in this new environment. The changes also improve staff experience. We deployed bitlocker encryption and Microsoft defender (Antivirus) to all laptops. We still need to improve hence the business cases proposed in MTFS (see paragraph below).
- Unfortunately, we have fallen behind third-party requirements in some areas. We do not currently have insurance coverage for cyber risks because we do not have advanced security deterrents like multi-factor authentication (MFA) and Conditional access (CA) implemented. Both MFA and CA have now become cyber-insurance requirements by most insurance agencies to qualify for coverage. We are working on this and expect to have coverage by 20th December 2022. 43% of UK businesses have an insurance policy that cover cyber risks. Only 6% of businesses have the Cyber Essential certification and 1% have Cyber Essentials plus, which is largely due to low awareness.
- We have already started the process of securing our PSN certification which will expire in June 2023. It takes up to 6 months to scope, scan, and mitigate any potential issues before sending the final submission to the Cabinet.

8. Outcome of restructure and staff skills

- The new structure introduced a Technology team to improve and oversee our IT infrastructure and a Digital team responsible for implementing digital initiatives that enable innovation and transformation.
- Creating a separate digital team which includes DC+ is enabling us to develop the digital capabilities we need and with greater accountability. The Council does not yet have digital mastery embedded in the organisation and the change is taking time. Integrating DC+ with Digital has been successful with good collaboration on web content and the new customer digital platform. DC+ staff have played a lead role in

defining the requirements for the new platform and are working very closely with technical colleagues drawing up customer forms for the migration. This collaborative working will ensure that traditional and digital customer engagement channels work together to create a seamless customer experience.

- On the technology side, the team are working on elements of a “cloud, unless” strategy, running the operation, and supporting staff and applications. Most of the work is still on running data centre and network infrastructure and maintaining applications rather than developing strategy and exploiting innovative technologies. This balance will shift as we move to cloud.
- The 2 teams work together. Formally they come together at the programme office level which holds our development roadmap and at Technical Design Authority. This is a process that requires all digital and technical projects to be approved to ensure that they comply with our system architecture, our cyber security requirements, do not duplicate existing functionality, and can be delivered technically.
- A common barrier to digital transformation is missing skills. In the last few months, we encouraged the teams to learn project management, process mapping, business engagement, and discovering benefit realisation on the job. From October we will start a formal skills assessment and we will develop a plan which includes a mixture of external and internal training. We have also started a programme to agree the behaviours we want to stop, start, and continue across the team.

9. Key achievements in digital and technology

- In digital we have implemented a very well attended digital platform steering group, with senior and operational representation from all areas of the council. This group are overseeing the procurement of a new digital platform, championing the development of a simple easy to use online service for residents. The suppliers bidding for the contract have proven experience in delivering to local government and are working through the tender process. The steering group also has a focus on digital inclusion. This includes ensuring the impact of designing digital services is understood and is appropriate, and other contact methods are provided for those who cannot use digital or may have complex needs.
- The digital team have supported commercial initiatives, including making improvements to DB Leisure website and the successful opening of Brookes Bistro, delivering an integrated table booking system to enable customers to book online and Bistro staff to maximise capacity.

- Following tender and cost benefit assessment, we awarded a contract to outsource the print, production and mailing of our letters for revenues and benefits, housing and elections. Outsourcing should deliver cost benefits, better quality and a platform to enable us to switch from letter to digital communication. This has become imperative following Royal Mail's 18% increase. We have stood up a cross council working group to deliver the switch and deliver the benefits.
- The team have delivered a complex Liquid Logic system upgrade of 4 databases, portals, and an early help module. It involved teams in Digital, Technology, Adult and Children Services. The team also successfully managed upgrades to key business systems for Education, Fleet Management and Green Care.
- We have implemented the strategy change agreed whereby the digital team is accountable for the website customer experience. We recruited people to deliver this and implemented new ways of working with the service areas. To date the team has overhauled the how to contact us, complaints, cost of living and trees pages. These have been simplified, made relevant, are easier to navigate and up to date.
- The technology team have enhanced systems, and services to improve staff working and the security of our devices, data, and infrastructure. An example of a change is the implementation of BitLocker encryption which has made it easier for staff to log in and has reduced the number of service desk contacts.
- Another example is the transition to exchange online. This enables enhancements to Microsoft teams, email, security, and self-support options.
- We are also working to implement a paid-for and more advanced single sign-on system called "AD Connect." It will help us deliver the cyber security deterrents like Multi Factor Authentication and Conditional Access and secure cyber insurance by Dec 2022.
- Following a successful proof of concept, we are rolling out MS Teams telephony and integrated into our existing telephony systems enabling calls to be made and received via a single MS Teams window. This new MS Teams feature will be rolled out to all staff subject to the MTFs bid being approved to procure enhanced Microsoft licenses.
- Technical Design Authority has been established, it meets every week and the TDA process has been published to put emphasis on governance, cyber security, and designing fit for future solutions.

10. Business cases

We are working on 5 digital and technology business cases for Cabinet approval:

- Upgrade to enhanced Microsoft licences (these are called E5 licenses) which provides: (1) Business Intelligence reporting through Power BI, (2) Use of Teams for internal calls, (3) Cyber security improvements to which will help us get Cyber Essentials / CE plus; (4) SharePoint Online which provides the foundations on which all other Microsoft services are built.
- Replacement of our core infrastructure to store council data centre. Suppliers will cease supporting our existing infrastructure in 2023.
- Migration to cloud of: (1) Northgate which supports revenue and benefits and housing solutions, (2) Liquid Logic which supports our children and adult social care solutions and (3) Umbraco which supports our web.

We will develop and incorporate the business cases within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as appropriate, for approval through Cabinet and Council.

Finance

11. The proposals outlined in this report will need to be considered in the ongoing development of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Law

12. The Council may appoint staff, as it considers necessary for the discharge of its functions upon such reasonable terms and conditions as it thinks fit, under Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972. The development of the proposals in this report will take account of all necessary legal obligations and any relevant requirements of the Council's Constitution.

Risk Management

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

Equality Impact

14. As part of the restructure an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken.

15. The work detailed in this report
- Has no effect of the decision on children and young people
 - No consultation with children and young people was required; and
 - There were no involvement of children and young people in developing the proposals.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

16. Colleagues within HR worked with us on the restructure. The MEARR Policy and other procedures that needed to be considered were adhered to.

Commercial/Procurement

17. Procurement legislation and compliance with Contract Standing Orders will be adhered to for the purchasing of goods associated detailed within this report.

Environment/Climate Change

18. No implications have been identified as part of this report.

Council Priorities and Projects

19. The Council's People strategy is in place to ensure we have the workforce capability and capacity needed both now and, in the future, to deliver modern effective public services. Workforce planning is critical to ensuring sustainability and directorate workforce plans will be key in determining how and where a mutual resignation scheme is to be targeted.



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