

This Report will be made public on 4 September 2018

Report Number **C/18/26**

To: Cabinet
Date: 12 September 2018
Status: Non key
Director: Sarah Robson
Cabinet Member: Councillor Rory Love

SUBJECT: Digital Strategy 2018 - 2023

SUMMARY: The Digital Strategy summarises the direction the Council is taking with regard to offering a greater range of digital services for our residents and businesses and introducing new ways of working for staff

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to adopt the Digital Strategy 2018-2023 for the following reasons:

- Implementing the Digital Strategy will provide clear direction for service areas to work towards in the development of their service delivery models, guiding their choices about software and devices to help improve efficiency.
- Supports a consistent online experience for customers when transacting online with the Council.
- Provides staff with a clearer picture of how their working environment is going to evolve and change.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/18/26.
2. To adopt the Folkestone & Hythe District Council Digital Strategy 2018-23.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Digital Revolution powered by internet and mobile technology is changing the world we live and work in, and the pace of that change is ever increasing.
- 1.2 The Council must be prepared to meet these new challenges in the future. The expectation of customers is that they can be connected to who or what they want, wherever they want through easy to use technology. This will drive the way the council provides its services. Almost 95% of the UK population have access to the internet, and a generation of people have always had access to the internet at home or school. The Government's digital strategy predicts that within 20 years 90% of all jobs will require digital skills and we need to ensure that we support staff to cultivate an environment of digital self-confidence and capability.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This Digital Strategy recognises the importance of implementing a digital infrastructure and culture across the district and the Council – maximising the use of digital technology to drive better services and reduce costs – and helping to ensure that everyone who wants to, has the chance to benefit from these changes.
- 2.2 There are clear efficiencies to be gained from moving appropriate transactions to digital. National figures from the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) suggest that every face-to-face contact costs on average around £8.62 whereas each digital transaction costs a Council around 15p.
- 2.3 Changing our method of service delivery to predominantly digital is a significant challenge. For our staff, digital can be a difficult subject area to keep pace with – complex concepts, technical jargon and a bewildering array of software and devices to choose from makes it difficult for teams to develop an approach to service delivery that is sustainable and cost-effective, whilst maximising the use of digital technologies.
- 2.4 When faced with uncertainty, people have a tendency to stick with what they know best and this may mean continuing the use of paper based, administratively burdensome processes, in preference to the more risky toe in the waters of digital service delivery. Such an approach will not deliver the necessary step change in service delivery for the Council.
- 2.5 It is against this background that the Council requires a strategic direction that can be adopted by all involved in the delivery of our services. The adoption of a Digital Strategy is, therefore, about more than just the technology we use. It will enable the Council to radically rethink how we work with our staff, suppliers and partners to deliver efficient, cost effective and high quality services for customers, in line with their expectations.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 3.1 Implementing the digital strategy will provide clear direction for service areas to work towards in the development of their future service delivery models, guiding their choices about software and devices, whilst ensuring a consistent end-user experience when transacting with the Council.
- 3.2 Failing to provide a clear direction and strategy for the delivery of digital services risks teams duplicating spend on software, creating many different online services which are inconsistent to use for the customer, and failing to spot opportunities to join up services and improve efficiency.

4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

- 4.1 **Legal (DK)** – There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report. (In the long term CLT must take into account that the procurement of a new digital strategy will need to be done competitively and in accordance with the Council's contract standing orders and relevant legislation).
- 4.2 **Finance (CS)** – This document outlines a policy framework in respect of the authority's future approach to digital service provision and capability. It will have an impact on the future shape of customer delivery, transformation outcomes and the delivery of the ICT strategy. It does not however as a framework have any direct financial consequences. It is anticipated that the shift towards digitally enabled services along with the transformation programme will deliver efficiencies, but at this stage they cannot be defined. As specific ICT platforms to enable the digital services are proposed, separate business cases will need to be considered at that time.
- 4.3 **Human Resources (AS)** – The implementation of this strategy has the potential to make significant changes for staff. All changes will be made in line with existing HR policy and procedures, alongside the emerging People Strategy.
- 4.4 **Equalities (SR)** – The Council has a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. Further information is needed to establish whether those who do not use online services share a protected characteristic and whether there are people with protected characteristics who would like to access services online but are currently unable to. A proposed Digital Inclusion Plan will make sure that people who want to use our online services are able to, and that those who do not currently use them are not left behind, whilst still providing other ways to access services.
- 4.5 **Communications (MR)** – The digital strategy clearly sets out the aspirations for the Council with regard to technology over the coming years. It is a statement of intent and one which should be shared with staff at the earliest opportunity. The strategy will help staff imagine what the future of the organisation will be and help them understand the direction of the Transformation project.

- 4.6 Transformation (SR)** – The implementation of this strategy will need to align to the ICT Strategy implementation plan and has the potential to make significant changes to how staff work, which will need to be considered by HR.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

(Note: only documents that have not been published are to be listed here)

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Digital Strategy 2018-2023