

Management Committee

5 June 2018

Dorset Councils Partnership Digital Strategy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder(s)/ Briefholder

Corporate Services - WDDC

Access & Customer Services - NDDC

Corporate Affairs & Continuous Improvement - WPBC

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

M Prosser, Chief Executive

Report Author:

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Purpose of Report

- 1 To present the Dorset Councils Partnership Digital Strategy and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) for adoption.

Recommendations

- 2 That the Digital Strategy and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment be adopted.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3 To agree a Digital Strategy which defines and communicates the current position and provides a direction of travel for the next 12 – 18 months, whilst the new unitary authority is being established.

Background and Reason Recommendation Needed

- 4 As part of the development of the strategy the Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the formation of a task and finish group. The digital strategy, supporting documents and notes of the task and finish group were discussed at Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1st May 2018. The committee supported the recommendation for the strategy to be taken forward to the three sovereign decision making committees.

- 4.1 In 2015 Dorset Councils Partnership committed to a transformation agenda, entitled Stronger Together Transformation Programme. This portfolio of work comprised of nine programmes of work:

- HR & OD

- Corporate Planning
- Democratic Leadership & Development
- Communications & Engagement
- Customer Access & Channel Shift
- Income Generation
- Service Transformation
- Smart Working
- Enabling Technology

4.1 The Stronger Together Transformation Programme has been kept under review to ensure it remains relevant to the challenges we are facing, making sure we are adapting to customer aspirations and reflecting on progress to date. One of the changes we have made is to amend the Customer Access & Channel Shift programme of work, to reflect the growing importance of digital transformation and re-focusing this as the Digital & Customer Access programme.

4.2 Throughout our work in delivering our transformation programme we have embedded digital. An example of this is in our Organisational Design Principles. These are set out below:

Organisational Design Principles	
Digital by Design	Automating as far as possible transactional service elements
Proactive Channel Shift	Meeting customer expectations by providing online services. Investing in technology and ensuring that staff and customers use the technology to the best effect
Customer Focused	Services will be redesigned with modern customer expectations at the heart of the process whilst ensuring provisions are in place for the most vulnerable groups
Empowering Staff & Communities	Creating opportunities for staff and communities to provide better outcomes
Maximise Income	All opportunities for generating higher levels of existing income or new revenue streams will be explored. Existing service provisions that are under consideration for reduction or stopping will be examined closely to ensure that it will not impact adversely on future income generating potential
Efficient Services	All processes and procedures will be critically reviewed to ensure that they are undertaken in the most cost effective way
Adaptable	Ensuring that sufficient resilience

	and agility is built into the service so that it can adapt to further change within local government and advances within the business sector
SMART Working	Maximise efficiencies through enabling and equipping staff to work in the most appropriate way to undertake their duties and meet customer expectations

Introduction

- 5 Digital technology is increasingly a large part of the Partnership's day to day operations and lives of our customers, residents and businesses, who are increasingly using digital channels to communicate with us.
- 5.1 The Partnership has been steadily digitising its services to meet customer expectations, deliver efficiencies and enable ease of access to services from anywhere. The Partnership has developed a Digital Strategy to help us:
- Meet customer expectations by providing more services online, in the same way that central government, and both the public and private sector are embracing
 - Develop digital services and gain insight from our data to help us to better manage resources and transform the way that we work
 - Open up a conversation about how we can embrace technology and use this to enhance innovation within both Dorset Councils Partnership and the unitary council.
- 5.2 This is the first Digital Strategy for the Partnership. This strategy consolidates the work the Partnership has done to date, celebrates our achievements, and brings forward a discreet and dedicated number of actions which ensures we continue on the right direction of travel into the the unitary council.
- 5.3 Through close Partnership working with colleagues across the other Dorset councils, we have been able to draft this strategy in harmony with work that is already underway across Dorset and join up approaches at an early stage to ensure that when the new council comes into operation it is not starting from scratch and that there is a compelling vision for its digital journey.

Progress to date in Digital

- 6 Over the time of the Stronger Together Transformation Programme, the Partnership has made the following progress in Digital:

- 70% of our workforce are in roles that need to use a device to do their job have been issued with mobile devices
- 96% of councillors are paperless. We also have a group of councillors who are 'digital mentors' to help support new ways of working
- Our customer services staff are now Digital Access Advisors
- Text Messaging is regularly being used as a communication channel
- We have an online portal for customers to submit Planning Applications
- Since 2012 the Housing Application process is completely online
- We are using software to manage our appointment booking process online, which helps us to gather data and manage resources appropriately
- Our Environmental Health and Housing teams use a cloud based business application, making it easier to record information whilst out in the field
- We are active partners of the Routes to Inclusion partnership, which undertakes initiatives to support digital inclusion
- We have joined and contribute to the international movement Digital Leaders
- A digital survey has been produced to help benchmark our progress against other organisations
- Networks are being built within the council and wider networks within Dorset to provide a joined up approach to digital transformation
- We have brought in nationally recognised organisations to help build digital skills, this includes Google and the Government Digital Service

Approach to developing the Digital Strategy

- 7 The Digital Strategy (Appendix A) development has taken a collaborative approach, examples of the engagement work that has taken place are:
- Regular meetings with portfolio and briefholders for IT, Customer Services and Equalities
 - In early 2018 the Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a task and finish group to review the Digital Strategy.
 - Engagement with members of the Councillor Digital Mentors group
 - Engagement with teams across the Partnership to capture progress to date and talk about our digital ambitions

- Regular updates to the Project Board consisting of Matt Prosser – Chief Executive, Jason Vaughan – Strategic Director and Penny Mell – Head of Business Improvement
- Consultation with access groups across the three sovereign authority areas
- Regular meetings and collaboration with colleagues from across the Dorset councils, in particular DCC, EDDC & Christchurch and PDC. The group have shared work and resources to provide a harmonised approach to digital initiatives.

The Digital Strategy

7 With the rapid evolvement of technology and approaches to how public services are provided, a Digital Strategy can become outdated relatively quickly. This strategy has been developed with a view of what can be delivered within the next 12 – 18 months, whilst Dorset Council is being established.

7.1 The Digital Strategy comprises of the following headings:

Delivering better services to our customers

This heading provides examples of some of the transformation work that has taken place to date.

Under this heading we believe the following actions can help us to deliver better services to our customers:

- Work with high transactional services to reach a target of an additional **20% of transactions** to be fully automated by 2019
- Support the launch of the new Dorsetforyou platform
- Undertake a digital survey for staff, senior managers and councillors
- Measure our current progress using a Digital Maturity Curve¹ and benchmark this progress against other public services in Dorset
- Identify ways to better understand our customers so that we can target services and communications appropriately

Digital skills and inclusion

This heading focuses on the important issue of digital inclusion. This strategy has helped us to understand the risks of digital exclusion in

¹ A Digital Maturity Curve is being developed in partnership with colleagues at Dorset County Council to help plot each organisations digital progress and provide strategic guidance on how to develop further.

greater detail and focus our efforts on actively supporting county-wide partnerships like Routes to Inclusion².

We believe the following actions can help us to reduce the risks of digital exclusion:

- Become an active partner of the Routes to Inclusion partnership, supporting the expansion of the Digital Champions network
- Work in partnership with Dorset County Council to help support our Universal Credit customers, through the Digital Champion network
- Work with Google Digital Garage to provide opportunities for local businesses and charities to develop digital skills
- Work with local businesses to share digital knowledge and best practice through established networks
- Continue to monitor our risks of digital exclusion and work with partners to reduce this
- Work in partnership with other local organisations to identify opportunities to develop digital skills within the area
- Hold events with employees and members to understand the risks of digital exclusion and how we can ensure we are making our online services accessible to all

Developing our people

Here we talk through the importance of developing our employees and councillors to ensure that they have digital skills and confidence necessary, to promote digital services within our communities.

We believe the following actions will help to support the growth of digital skills in our people:

- From November 2017, Digital has been incorporated into our recruitment processes. All person specifications, shortlisting criteria and interviews will now have a section dedicated to digital to ensure that we recruit according to our digital ambitions
- Working in partnership with Google, Government Digital Service and other local authorities, a series of learning opportunities are being developed and will be delivered, starting in 2018. These will complement the internal work that is being undertaken to invest in our learning and development offer as an organisation
- We will encourage our employees, elected members and volunteers to take an active role in supporting our residents to improve their digital skills

² Routes to Inclusion is a programme of work, governed by Dorset County Council, that focuses on initiatives to promote digital inclusion, examples of this is the Digital Champion Network.

and confidence be this through the work they undertake within their capacity as an employee, or by promoting volunteering opportunities as an organisation to help embed digital into the community

- Establish a digital mentor programme for employees to provide peer-to-peer support to develop digital skills
- Adopt the Government Digital Service principles corporately and provide training and support in understanding how we can use these principles to standardise our approach to delivering digital services

Digital engagement and democracy

This section celebrates the leadership our councillors are taking in the digital transformation of Dorset Councils Partnership. Engagement is also key to how we deliver services and interact with the communities that we serve.

We believe that we can embrace the opportunities to continue our digital approach to democracy by:

- Implementing a committee workflow system to improve the efficiency of the committee process across the Partnership
- Investigating the potential to live stream meetings to provide improved accessibility to the democratic process
- Embedding paperless meetings as an important means of communication within the Partnership and with the public, media, town and parish councils

Transforming our services together

This final section how important Digital is to the future of modern, efficient, service delivery. Understanding and making better use of data will help us to deliver services that are more intuitive and based upon customer feedback and expectations. The transformation of the Dorsetforyou website and adopting central government approved design principles will help us to provide a consistent approach to digital services.

To help us provide easy to use, consistent, online services, we believe we need to take the following actions:

- Rollout Office 365 and cloud computing to provide greater opportunities for collaboration both within the organisation and with partners
- Work with high transactional services to automate simple assessments and processes
- Investigate and promote the use of G-cloud within our procurement framework

- Establish a joined up approach to digital transformation through clear governance framework and a Digital Innovation Lab³
- Rollout of Digital Dashboards⁴ across the Partnership, to provide a clear transparent way to demonstrate our digital progress
- Review our corporate KPI's and identify opportunities to use this process to embed digital transformation as part of our service planning and performance measures

Summary

- 8 Dorset Councils Partnership has undergone a significant period of change and will continue to do so as it forms part of a new organisation, Dorset Council, in April 2019.
- 8.1 By continuing to commit to digital transformation, our Partnership will be able to positively and actively help shape how services are delivered in the future.

Implications

Financial

- 9 Some of the actions need no further investment to bring them to realisation. Projects which require additional investment will be considered on a case by case basis, including the potential use of the invest to save funding.

Equalities

- 10 An Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix C) has been undertaken in consultation with colleagues within Dorset Councils Partnership, other local authorities and access groups across our partnership area.

Appendices

- Appendix A Digital Strategy
 Appedix B Task and Finish Group Feedback
 Appendix C Extract from minutes of Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 May 2018
 Appendix D Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

³ An area (either virtual or physical) that can be used to help develop digital skills, prototype new processes and make use of advancing technology.

⁴ A virtual dashboard that demonstrates digital progress, this can be used to measure the success of projects and provide insight into how our services are being used.

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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