
Meeting of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee – 8th September, 2021

Report of the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services

Digital and Information Technology Services Update

Purpose

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

Recommendations

2. That the Scrutiny Committee note and comment on:-
 - The development of a 3-year digital and technology roadmap for agreement by the Strategic Executive Board in October 2021.
 - The establishment of a Digital and Technology governance model to be agreed effective from October 2021.
 - The restructuring of the ICT team by March 2022, subject to the outcome of the recruitment of the Heads of Service.
 - The development, for Cabinet approval, of 3 significant business cases: (1) digital platform (October 2021), Future Workplace (September 2021) and Migration to 365 (2022).
 - The deployment of a development plan to close the skills gap in digital and technology.

Background

3. 2021 – 2023 is a difficult period for IT. It needs to transform whilst running the operation, carrying out maintenance and renewals, delivering initiatives to enable the operation to run smoothly, and keeping us secure and compliant.

4. The transformation process will be significant as we embed digital in our day to day activity and we shift to a “cloud, unless” strategy. Everything will change:
 - Resource allocation (less people working in the data centre, more resources on supplier management and requirements capture)
 - Budget (more opex - less capex)
 - Ways of working (greater focus on requirements capture, architecture design and organisation-level integration - less focus on developing “products”)
 - Skills we draw on (data integration, engagement, process mapping and agile delivery rather than coding) and
 - Governance model (at executive level in addition to project level).
5. There are various ongoing issues associated with the restructure. There is an understanding of the need for change. A transparent approach is being taken to involve the team in the design of the new structure, however, there is inevitably some uncertainty during this period.

Digital Roadmap

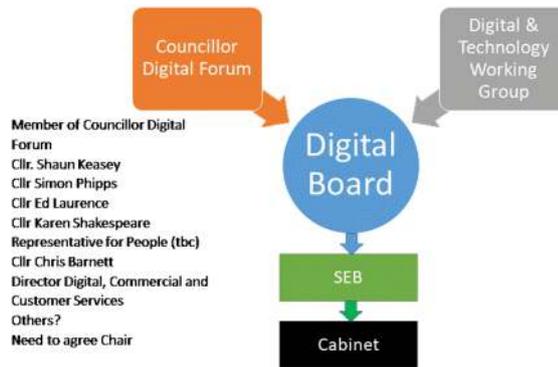
6. The 3-year roadmap outlines the **goals** we want to achieve with the new technology, the **initiatives** we need to undertake to achieve the objectives, and the **order of priority** we will deliver the initiatives in given financial and resource constraints.
7. We have identified c.150 initiatives to prioritise and 115 “must do” initiatives. We do not prioritise the latter but include them in the roadmap as they require resources. We exclude from the roadmap initiatives requiring less than 1-months work. On 1st September a representative group across the Council will prioritise the initiatives using an agreed scoring system. We will have to make difficult decisions and manage progress against the roadmap tightly to achieve our ambitions.
8. The ambitions articulated in the Borough Vision and the Future Council Programme determine the initiatives included in the roadmap and underpin the roadmap.
9. The IT community is divided on whether organisations should have a digital strategy. It is proposed that we do not have a digital strategy because digital is an enabler of the organisation’s strategy. A successful IT team understands the strategic objectives of an organisation and delivers a roadmap that achieves the ambition of the organisation. IT will develop targeted strategies i.e. cloud strategy and cyber security strategy.

Digital and Technology governance model

10. Governance is a key determinant of success in digital transformation as cycles become faster, risks increase, and we need more organisation-level integration. Our Governance Model needs to ensure directorates use common capabilities and resources effectively and that we synchronise and align our initiatives. It needs to answer key questions: which initiatives do we prioritise and fund, what resources do we need to re-align, is the work programme delivering the benefits and savings, what

policies do we need to ensure regulatory compliance, what rules should we have to ensure a consistent customer experience, which partners should we collaborate with.

11. To achieve this we propose the following Governance Model



12. SEB will sign off the terms of reference for the Digital Board and the Digital Board will sign off the terms of reference for the Councillor Digital Forum and the Digital and Technology Working Group. We will deploy the Governance Model in October 2021.

ICT team restructure

13. Decision Sheet (Reference DCCS/03/2021) created 2 x new Heads of Service – the Head of Digital and Data Integration and the Head of Technology, Delivery and Services. This decision was effective from 3rd August, 2021. Job Evaluation has graded the posts as Grade 16 and we have advertised the Head of Technology role.
14. Creating a separate Head of Digital role enables us to develop the digital capabilities we need more quickly and with greater accountability. The Council does not yet have digital mastery embedded in the organisation and a dedicated role is key to deliver the digital transformation. On the technology side, the new Head of Technology will need to deliver a “cloud, unless” strategy and this requires different experience and skills. The role of Head of Technology is to improve and oversee our IT infrastructure whilst the Head of Digital is responsible for implementing digital initiatives that enable innovation and transformation.
15. The current Head of Customer Services is leaving the Council and it is proposed to include the customer service functions within the proposed new Head of Digital role. Customer services are transforming. Customers increasingly interact with us using self-serve forms, app, web sites, and social platforms. As we improve our digital channels and include new capabilities (e.g. chat bots and video communication) customers will increasingly choose these communication channels. We will continue to offer customers traditional channels as we need to cater for all needs. The Head of Digital is best placed to ensure these channels work together to create a seamless customer experience.

Business cases

16. We are working on 4 digital business cases for Cabinet approval: Digital Platform, Future Workplace, Web Content, Chatbots. We will start work on the migration to 365 case in January 2022.
17. We have developed some components of digital platform. We have approx. 200 forms that customers and customer service advisors use to action customer requests, a customer portal, and a councillor request form. We have not delivered: a customer service contact database (customer service advisors replicate requests in the legacy system); a complete customer portal experience; a complete set of fit for purpose forms. To complicate matters, Microsoft will no longer support the on-premise version of Microsoft Dynamics we use and switching to cloud will require resources and will cost more.
18. Given this environment, we are exploring and costing solutions to deliver the experience customers expect and achieve the efficiency benefits. We are working with Microsoft and Hitachi (cost funded by Microsoft) to establish the cost of switching to cloud and are having discussion with Granicus, GOSS and IEG4 (alternative providers). We will use the information to prepare a business case. Should this be agreed, we will go through a formal procurement process to select the platform.
19. We are also working on the Future Workplace business case. This covers the IT equipment staff need to work well in a hybrid environment and smart room equipment. We divided staff into 11 personas, and through focus groups and interviews, established what equipment they need. We also established the requirements for the smart rooms and have agreed with vendors to trial equipment.
20. We will develop and incorporate the business cases within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as appropriate, for approval through Cabinet and Council.

Digital and Technology skills

21. A common barrier to digital transformation is missing skills. The team has been developing in areas such as cyber security and management skills. We need to develop a plan to upskill in: process design, agile, requirements capture, architecture design, robotics, data models, documentation, etc. We will develop a plan which includes a mixture of external and internal training. We have already created the opportunity for 5 people to learn how to gather requirements through on the job learning which is proving successful. The development of these skills will enable us to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation and reduce workload by working more effectively.

Finance

22. The proposals outlined in this report will need to be taken into account in the ongoing development of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.



Law

23. 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

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

Equality Impact

25. Communication and consultation on the restructure is taking place with managers, staff and trade unions to comply with Council policies, procedures, and knowledge of protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

26. Council policies will be complied with for the whole process of the restructure. Human Resources/Organisational Development have been part of the proposals for the restructure and we have a Business Partner supporting the process. Where any staff may be at risk of redundancy, this will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Managing Employees at Risk of Redundancy Policy.

Commercial/Procurement

27. There are no commercial or procurement implications relating to the restructure. The development of the proposals in this report will ensure compliance with Contract Standing Orders and procurement legislation and will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's established policies and procedures.

Council Priorities

28. The proposals have been designed to support the Future Council Programme. The new structure will strive to improve the way that we deliver our services to meet the needs of the Council and to ensure that we can measure and demonstrate our achievements. We are committed to managing our performance in line with the challenges outlined in the Council plan and supporting plans and initiatives.

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List of Background Documents

Decision Sheet (Reference DCCS/03/2021)

