

**Resources and Transformation Scrutiny Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

**Report of the Strategic Director Resources and Transformation**

**Service Transformation and the Digital Agenda**

**Purpose**

1. To provide members of the Committee with an update on proposals to transform the Council to meet budgetary requirements, with a particular focus upon the digital agenda and channel shift.
2. The report also provides members of the Committee with an opportunity to provide their views at this early stage in the transformation process.

**Background**

3. The items for detailed scrutiny by this Committee during the 2015/16 municipal year include 'How we provide improved and more cost effective customer access to Council services through the use of Channel Shift'.
4. Channel Shift typically refers to encouraging a council's citizens, businesses and visitors (i.e., its customers) to move from more traditional means of making contact, that can generally only be handled during normal office hours (i.e. face-to-face, telephone and email), to digitally-enabled contact methods, that typically have 24/7 availability, when they wish to obtain information or to transact.
5. The potential for automation created by digitally-enabled channels provides opportunities for cheaper and more effective service delivery and so releases valuable resources to allow additional assistance to be provided to those in our communities that need it. Channel Shift also encompasses how councils consult with and listen to their various communities, through online questionnaires, social media, etc.
6. The potential savings from Channel Shift are highly desirable in times of austerity. Successfully delivering these savings depends upon many things; from how we support and enable our customers to 'shift', how we ensure that the channels customers have access to and use are the right ones for their needs, how we ensure that our information and services are consistent and simple to access across all applicable channels, to how we enable each and every customer contact to result in the outcome that is needed, at the lowest possible cost to the Council and the customer.
7. Savings will be found by reducing the cost of how the Council does its business across all departments. This will include maximising the benefits of digital technology by increasing customer and staff self-service by investing in a new

digital platform and improved website, as well as implementing smarter working practices to remove unnecessary administrative overheads and maximising paperless working.

8. This represents a fundamental change in how the Council interacts with its customers. Through the procurement and implementation of fit for purpose technology, simplified and automated processes, both staff and customers will be able to do more for themselves. Reporting matters online will be the norm rather than through face-to-face or telephone contact. The Council does, however, recognise that some customers will need support in using the technology and direct contact with staff will be necessary in some instances.
9. While younger generations now generally expect to be able to conduct their business (be that with Amazon or Dudley Council) over the internet via their smartphones and tablets, some of our customers are less able or willing to do this. Successful Channel Shift must recognise and accommodate this range of needs and abilities, with services targeted to appropriate channels (be they online self-service, or traditional face-to-face that is also digitally-enabled behind the scenes), with support in place for those who need it.
10. Hence successful Channel Shift is about people, and is enabled by digital technology that is fit for purpose – it's about having digitally-enabled self-service channels that are so good people choose to use them, while still supporting those who either choose not to or simply cannot use them.
11. To continue the progress made through channel shift we now need to look at a digital solution for our customers. By understanding how customers interact with the various parts of the Council (either by searching for information, transacting or contacting) you can start building an understanding of how to create effective, digitally enabled access channels that customers choose to use.
12. Further information is included in the appendix to this report.

## **Finance**

13. Work to identify savings for 2016/17 has made it evident that existing approaches to the identification of savings are not going to achieve the level of reductions required. A more radical approach to transformation is necessary and there is a need for a complete redesign of the Council within the available budget.
14. Transformation will require some invest to save resources to bring in some expertise to build the skills and capacity of the corporate transformation team, to work with a strategic partner to do the radical redesign work that the transformation envisages and to provide investment in a new digital platform. It has been agreed to set aside £2m for an invest to save scheme.

## **Law**

15. The Council may do anything which is incidental to conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972.

16. In addition, pursuant to section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has the general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

### **Equality Impact**

17. In accordance with the Council's equality policies, where transformation proposals are likely to have a significant equality impact, they will undergo an equality impact assessment informed by consultation with the protected groups who may be adversely affected.

### **Recommendation**

18. It is recommended that Scrutiny Committee notes and comment upon the contents of this report.



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### **List of Background Papers:**

Report to Scrutiny Committee 18/06/15 – Annual Scrutiny Programme  
Report to Cabinet 31/12/15 – Transforming for the Future