

COUNCIL MEETING - 20TH APRIL 2017

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 (3)

CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL STRATEGY 2017–2020

A report from the meeting of Cabinet held on the 4th April 2017.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Report follows consideration by the Cabinet of the final draft Customer and Digital Strategy 2017-2010 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The Cabinet approved the new Strategy and recommends it for adoption by the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The last decade has seen enormous developments in the range of technologies, digital tools and approaches available to both residents and organisations. For example, smart phones and tablet computers are now commonplace; use of social media is now mainstream, data and systems are increasingly stored in the 'cloud' and, according to Ofcom, approximately 80% of adults have internet access and can go online from any location. Collectively, these advances have enabled residents and businesses to change the ways in which they interact, gain access to information and services, and organise their daily lives and work.
- 2.2 At the same time, the change in digital technology and the uptake of technologies such as mobile devices, social media, high-speed broadband and open data present huge opportunities for the Council to target, improve and deliver better services through alternative service delivery models and to save money through associated efficiencies. To keep pace with advances in technology and meet the increasing expectation of our customers it is important that the Council has a clear, agile and progressive approach to the development of its digital agenda and associated resources.
- 2.3 This report introduces the Council's Customer & Digital Strategy (given at **appendix A**) and outlines the approach that the Council will take in the use and deployment of digital technologies to deliver services and outcomes that matter to its customers. Whilst providing for a general direction of travel, this has deliberately been formatted as an accessible and non-technical document.

2.4 Given the wider social and technological background shift outlined above, the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services and the digital strategy are seen as key enablers.

2.5 Central to the delivery of services that are fit for the future, it is widely recognised that the Council's digital strategy and approach will underpin and make significant contribution to all of the Council's four main priority work areas detailed in the Council Plan 2017-18 (shown opposite). As such, the development of the digital strategy sits on the Cabinet work plan and has formed one of the key work streams of the Council's transformation programme in its drive towards financial sustainability.



2.6 Collectively this forms the basis of our digital vision. This is one where 'Rushmoor' and its communities are empowered through the use of so-called 'smart city' technologies and infrastructure to support a strong economy and regeneration, social well-being and joined-up modern public services.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED STRATEGY

Guiding principles

3.1 To help realise this vision, the proposed strategy has, following consultation with Members and staff (see section 4 below), been structured around eight digital ambitions. Whilst high level and aspirational in nature these guiding principles have been established so as to allow for some flexibility, agility and a degree of responsiveness to what is a fast paced, ever changing and dynamic technological environment. Our digital ambitions include –

- a) Realising **the technology opportunity** – using modern technology to reduce costs and improve service quality for all.
- b) The Council **working differently and better** – using digital technology to make the Council more efficient and sustainable for the future.
- c) **Everyone included** – designing our services to be accessible to ensure no one is digitally excluded.
- d) **Working together and joined-up** – working with partners and other organisations to join-up services to make them easier to use.

- e) **Improve health, wellbeing and generate economic growth** – supporting opportunities to increase technology investment(s) to help create jobs and stimulate growth.
- f) **Engaging young people** – providing information and services electronically to ensure the Council remains relevant.
- g) **Better informed – Better Connected** – using modern technology to provide timely and accurate information to enable customers to make better choices.
- h) **Digital democracy** – to support democracy, community leadership and engagement through appropriate channels (including social media) and electronic voting.

3.2 Central to the digital strategy is a strong customer focus. This reflects the content and ethos of the Council Plan 2017-18, to **Listen, Learn, Deliver : Better**, and seeks to enable the delivery of the Council's work through the digital (re)design of services around the customer experience.

3.3 Whilst promoting self-service at times and in ways that our customers want to engage with our services, the strategy also seeks to facilitate a 'one Council' approach to service delivery. This will require the use of digital technologies to integrate front and back office systems, join up customer contact(s), analysis of customer data and interactions to gain insight and understanding of customer needs and, developing front office systems that can handle and process most of them (i.e. customer transactions) at the first point of contact.

Digital Themes & Action Plans

3.4 By way of translation of the Council's digital vision and ambitions, a set of digital themes and action plans have also been established to detail how the strategy will be delivered. These also reflect key areas of the Council's work programme, plans and priorities and are summarised below.

- a) **Connected Rushmoor** – making sure Rushmoor is connected by the fastest Broadband and wireless technologies and that our residents and businesses have support and access to the internet.
- b) **Digital by design** – putting digital technologies at the heart of services; (re)designing services as digital by default whilst mindful of those who may find using technology difficult.
- c) **Working smarter** – using technology to make the Council work better and smarter by, for example, remote and mobile working, enabling self-service and reducing running costs.
- d) **Digital skills** – provision of training, education and support to improve the digital skills of employees, those we work with and the community at large to use the new technologies.

- e) **Digital communities** – improving lives and driving economic growth by creating a ‘digital place’ and a dynamic, inclusive and efficient digital community able to do business electronically, from any location, at any time.

3.5 Whilst additional governance detail is given within the strategy, each theme essentially sets out the strategy objectives and how we will realise its ambitions. The individual steps or actions that will contribute to meeting each objective and the measures by which progress will be monitored are then set out in more detail in a series of high level action plans.

3.6 Implicit to the five themes and underpinning the overall strategy, is a sixth (unstated) element concerning the infrastructure necessary to deliver it. Whilst infrastructure is a critical enabling feature which pulls and holds the strategy together, the design, management, maintenance and necessary resources for this are governed through the Council’s ICT Strategy. Infrastructure is not therefore specifically detailed in the Customer & Digital Strategy.

4. CONSULTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The Customer and Digital Strategy has been developed by a work group established as part of the Council's transformation programme. This has looked extensively at what other local authorities and a range of major private sector partners are doing to identify both industry norms and where technology and technological developments are generally heading.

4.2 Furthermore, the strategy has been developed following consultation with the Cabinet, Corporate Services Panel and follows an all Member workshop on the subject in 2016. Council staff have also been engaged through a series of staff workshops, a digital learning network and briefings. The document and associated action plans have also been subject to external challenge by third party specialists.

4.3 Where approved, the strategy will subsequently be made available online, and be promoted and shared with key partners. Customer led input will also be captured through the planned residents survey 2017; also part of the Council Plan 2017-18.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

5.1 There are no immediate risks associated with the approval of the strategy itself as it has been intentionally developed to be flexible, agile and adaptive to changing technological and social circumstances. However, there may be some risk concerning IT security and cybercrime, digital inclusion and the skilled resources necessary to deliver it. These are outlined in more detail below.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 There are no immediate legal implications.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.3 There are no immediate financial implications associated with the strategy whereas the Council's Capital Programme for 2017/18 to 2019/20 provides for an ongoing rolling programme of £200,000 to support the ICT, Customer and Digital Work Programme. Moreover, for 2017/18, Cabinet has already approved an additional £85,000 for work related to the new environment customer hub/ portal. However, any new digital developments beyond those already programmed would need to be subject to usual business case and supplementary approvals.
- 5.4 With reference to other resources, it has long been recognised that the UK suffers from an IT skills shortage and has not produced enough skilled people to service the ICT sector. Supply and demand therefore results in high sector salary levels. Collectively, these factors mean that the Council operates in a highly competitive environment which, in turn, means that it may sometimes be a challenge to deliver some of its ambitions; particularly where skilled input is required.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 5.5 Whilst the strategy is designed to take account of the Governments digital inclusion framework to ensure that no one is digitally excluded, the Council recognises that not everyone in our communities will be able to access its services digitally. Therefore, whilst committing to making services digital by design and independently accessible by the majority, the digital strategy will include options for key services to be accessed in traditional ways by customers who may require our support. The Council will take a steer on these matters by the recently established Rushmoor & Hart Digital & Inclusion Task Force.

IT Security

- 5.6 Greater accessibility and increasing use and reliance on digital technology will inevitably expose both the Council and its customers to a risk of cybercrime. To combat this, the Council has and will, as part of its digital strategy, maintain a comprehensive programme of activities to reduce the risk of cybercrime based on the principles of the Government's National Cyber Security Strategy 2016-2021.
- 5.7 The Council has and is expected to maintain a high industry standard for its current IT security arrangements. As part of the Government's Public Service Network (PSN) the Council is required to maintain its code of connection whereby it is externally audited by the Cabinet Office and subject to an independent third party annual penetration test. However, it will need to continue working with specialist partners to protect and look after the Council's network and educate staff and Members on new and emerging threats and the actions they need to take to minimise them. As

5.8 part of its digital strategy, this information and support for staying safe will also need to be extended to local residents and businesses.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 By virtue of a non-technical and accessible document, the Customer & Digital Strategy builds upon existing investment by setting out the general ambitions, approach and direction the Council will take in the use and deployment of digital technologies. The Strategy is designed to be flexible and adaptive to reflect the ever-changing dynamic technology environment and seeks to bring a range of projects and initiatives together to enable the delivery of the Council Plan and deliver services and outcomes that matter to its customers.

6.2 Notably, the strategy is designed to empower 'Rushmoor' and its communities through the use of so-called 'smart city' technologies and infrastructure to support a strong economy and town centre regeneration, social well-being and joined-up modern public services.

6.3 The strategy has been developed following staff and Member consultation (c/o Corporate Services Panel) and seeks to align ICT and digital services with the broader aspirations of the Council. It seeks to ensure ICT and digital services become an enabler and platform for service transformation across the Council to do things better; ensuring that services are accessible, efficient and fit for the future in a safe and secure IT environment.

6.4 As part of the ongoing development and delivery of the action plans that support the strategy, arrangements are in place for the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services to be provided with regular progress updates. In addition, there will be opportunities for Members to contribute, participate, and work on a range of initiatives and to monitor progress.

6.5 Digital technology is transforming the world we live in and providing many opportunities to look at alternative ways of delivering and improving services and becoming more efficient. Whilst the Council has made good progress in utilising digital technology in some areas, the Council has set out its response and future approach to the use and development of digital technology in its Customer and Digital Strategy (**Appendix A**).

6.6 The Strategy pulls together the Council's digital ambitions and action plans, and sets out its general direction of travel in a non-technical and easy-to-understand document. The strategy aims to transform the Council into a more modern, efficient, joined-up and customer-focused organisation in response to changing customer demands, the Council Plan and a more challenging financial environment.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The Council is requested to approve and adopt the Customer and Digital Strategy 2017-2010.

P.G. TAYLOR
CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

APPENDICES:

- Appendix A – Rushmoor Borough Council, Customer and Digital Strategy 2017-2020 (20th April 2017).