

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 15th February 2018
Report Subject	Digital Strategy – Digital Customer
Portfolio Holder	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Officer Community and Enterprise Chief Officer Governance Chief Officers Organisational Change
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has previously agreed a strategic approach to developing Customer Services and enhancing our use of Digital Technology. This report proposes an approach to deliver these strategies that focuses on enabling customers to contact us and use our services, where appropriate, through the use of digital technology.

To achieve this it requires:

- our contact with customers to be capable of being carried out digitally;
- our services for customers and information for the general public to be presented in a clear and accessible manner;
- the information we hold on customers across a range of services to be linked together so that both the customer and customer support staff can access this information.

Specific examples of how this would work are provided in this report including:

- a. a Customer Account and
- b. a Payment Portal, which will enable customers to buy a range of services from the Council on line and from one point of access; and
- c. configuring back office systems so that they interface directly with the Council's website.

The clear benefits of this approach are that those users who find it easier to access the Council digitally will be able to do so, and that those users who need telephone contact or face to face contact to resolve more complex enquiries, will have more support from customer service staff who might otherwise be handling queries that could be resolved through digital access.

Over time this approach will result in efficiencies that will support delivery of the Council's financial strategy. However the overall approach is about modernising and improving the Council's delivery of customer services by making the best and most appropriate use of digital technology.

An initial investment of £0.550m is proposed to support the improvement digital content and to ensure our back office IT systems can present information in the way this approach requires. This is on the basis that as a minimum this amount will be paid back through future efficiencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To comment to the Committee on the proposed approach of implementing both the Digital Strategy and Customer Strategy through a priority and focus on improving services for 'Digital Customers' as outlined in this report.
2	To comment to the Committee on the proposed launch of the Customer Account in March of this year enabling customers to use this service, and give initial feedback on the service so it can be developed over time.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND INFORMATION
1.01	The Council's digital and customer strategies are already closely aligned and can be brought closer together thereby improving services for customers who want to, and are capable of, accessing the Council through the use of digital technology. More detail about this approach is provided in the slides detailed at Appendix A and is termed for this report 'Digital Customer'.
1.02	<p>The Council has already made good progress in using information and digital technology to enable officers to deliver services. As shown diagrammatically in Appendix A to take forward Digital Customer the Council now needs to link those back office systems (e.g. revenues and benefits) with front office interactions i.e. the customer (e.g. contact centre, website).</p> <p>Practical examples of this approach are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the Streetscene system, Mayrise, will currently accept reports of broken streetlights directly from the website or Flintshire App. Those reports are automatically transmitted to work schedules on PDA's used employees. A similar arrangement could be put in place for pot holes or for reporting repairs in Housing a Customer Account (developed in house) to be launched in March 2018 will be the link between back and front office. Customers will be able to track all of their interactions with the Council as well as accessing key information such as councillor details or collections days. Officers will be able to access the account in order to answer queries etc. The range of services for which it is possible to make on line payments could be increased along with the "look and feel" of the payment portal The Council has multiple contact centres that lack resilience. By amalgamating these centres and skilling the employees to handle multiple disciplines their resilience and capacity will increase
1.03	A key to then encouraging customers to access information and services digitally will be improving the content and presentation of information on our website. By enhancing the information available and the ease of navigation, customers will be

	able to solve queries and carry out financial transactions to purchase services e.g. Council tax payment, Housing rents via self-service rather than needing to ring officers. This will increase access and convenience. During office hours the website will also be supported by online chat facilities so that anyone encountering problems can “speak” directly to someone in customer services.
1.04	<p>As part of Appendix A the tables on slides 13-17 and 19-21 (Annexe 1) provide an outline action plan for developing key parts of this approach including: Contact Centre; Flintshire Connects; Flintshire Website; Customer Portal; Flintshire App; the integration of back office IT systems to achieve this approach.</p> <p>Each of these actions are broken down into three stages of delivery:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Firstly in principle decisions that are covered in this report and enable delivery to start; ii. Secondly delivery of this model including key service improvements; iii. Finally the more complex and sensitive changes that are required in services such as social care and children’s services where due to the nature of the services the scope of what can be achieved needs more careful planning with an aim to implement this work from 2019 onwards. <p>If approved this action plan will be developed further over the next three months to be specific with in stage timings and who is leading each action.</p>
1.05	There are many benefits to this approach that including an improved customer experience, better and targeted service for vulnerable customers, reduced telephone and face to face contact where it is not needed, and the delivery of efficiencies through savings associated with Contact Centres, Connects and back office processing.
1.06	<p>The outline action plan will also need further development including further work to encompass the themes within the Digital Strategy that do not relate directly to Digital Customer such as Digital Business and Community. These themes detail the council’s aspirations on such issues as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the best possible digital infrastructure and services are made available to Flintshire’s businesses and communities; • Supporting business growth in Flintshire regardless of location; • Providing all schools with an effective digital infrastructure to support their delivery of core education services; • Providing a platform for the delivery of the Digital Competency Framework to ensure all learners develop the appropriate skills to engage in the digital world.
1.07	To enable delivery of this approach and completion of the action plan specific investment is needed. This is detailed in the Resourcing slide in Appendix A. It includes programme management, support to improve web content, and software licensing, and IT integration costs, over a three year period estimated at £0.550m.
1.08	From best practice elsewhere it is clear that successful delivery of this approach enables efficiencies to be delivered in customer service provision. The table in Appendix B identifies examples of best practice, which authorities have carried out this approach, and which best practice areas we are proposing to implement will potentially deliver efficiencies.

1.09	As with the procurement strategy, regular performance management and progress reports will be brought back to Cabinet, Scrutiny, and the Chief Officer Team.
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4.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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4.01	<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>A one off investment of £0.550m is proposed to deliver this approach funded from a review of reserves.</p> <p>An efficiency tracker will ensure that this level of investment is paid back through future savings.</p>
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4.02	<p>Human Resource Implications</p> <p>The appointment of a Programme Manager linked to implementation of Community Resilience work and a Digital Officer post to improve web content and business processing both on 3 year fixed term contracts. The costs associated with these posts are subject to final confirmation of job size and grading. At the end of these fixed term appointments there may be a small cost associated with redundancy.</p> <p>A review of the work of the customer service team to incorporate the development and delivery of web content and business processing.</p>
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5.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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5.01	Engagement with service managers and leads in these work areas.
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6.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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6.01	<p>Key Risks and Mitigation are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of resource to deliver this change – the investment resource will enable the time to be dedicated to this work that is required to make the changes outlined. 2. The Digital interfaces with the customer do not work for the customer – time will be provided to launching and testing the approaches so customers can feedback and the products can be further adapted and developed e.g. Customer Account / Portal. 3. Proposed Efficiencies are unable to be delivered – the examples of best practice provide assurance of the areas these will come from, an efficiency tracker will be developed and progress against this will be regularly reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny.
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7.00	APPENDICES
7.01	Appendix A – Digital Customer Presentation Slides Appendix B – Examples of Best Practice and Potential Areas of Efficiency

8.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
8.01	Digital Flintshire Customer Strategy Digital Strategy Action Tracker List of digital projects already delivered Contact Officers: Gareth Owens Telephone: 01352 702411 E-mail: gareth.owens@flintshire.gov.uk

9.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
9.01	Customer Portal / Account - Customer information that can be proved on line to the customer and customer services staff.
9.02	Business Processes – Changes to process that will ensure once a customer service request is received digitally this can be responded to quickly and simply with a digital response.