CYNGOR CAERDYDD

CARDIFF COUNCIL

POLICY REVIEW & PERFORMANCE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE   **11 March 2020**

Digital Strategy - progress report

Reason for the Report

1. To provide the Committee with a progress update on the Council's Digital
   Strategy.

Background

2. The Committee's Terms of Reference confer responsibility for scrutiny of the
   overall operation of the Council's programme for improvement, including
   Organisational Development and Information and Communication Technology.

3. In July 2018 Cabinet approved a new Digital Strategy to deliver the Capital
   Ambition commitment to adopt a 'Digital First' approach, making the best use of
   new technologies to run the Council's services, particularly its transactional
   services, as efficiently and effectively as possible.

4. The Digital Strategy supports Capital Ambition and the 'Modernising and
   Integrating our Public Services' well-being objective of the Corporate Plan. The
   Corporate Plan agreed at Council in February 2020 states that '*Delivering
   improvement while reducing resources has relied on a bold and ambitious
   approach to leading change. We will continue to introduce new technologies to
   support the residents of Cardiff in their personal lives, as well as the
   Council's workforce in their professional lives. We now need to push harder at
   applying digital thinking …to reconfigure and automate countless processes and*

services, delivering savings and improving the services for citizens in the process.'

5. To achieve the digital ambition the Corporate Plan sets out steps to

   - Launch a new bilingual 'chat bot' by September 2020;
   - Produce an agile working strategy for the Council by December 2020.
   - Establish Cardiff as a Smart City, where digital technologies and data are seamlessly used to enhance the lives of people, by adopting the new Smart City roadmap by September 2021.

Issues

6. The Digital Strategy, attached at **Appendix 1,** recognises that customers require effective automated services as a first contact point and that the Council needs to do more. The approach will use digital technology to enable working more efficiently, reassign resources to more critical services, manage the rising cost and demand pressures that the Council faces, whilst becoming a more agile and flexible organisation and thereby increasing productivity.

7. The Strategy sets out an approach to transforming the Council based on a set of five principles
   a. The customer experience comes first;
   b. Digital interactions will become the first choice for our customers;
   c. Modern, fit-for-purpose technology will be used to ensure efficiency;
   d. Technology solutions will be re-used, purchased and developed responsibly;
   e. Digital services will support collaborative working to improve outcomes for our customers; and
   f. Digital services will be continually monitored, assessed and improved.

8. Examples of services currently offered digitally are street lighting, parking permits, payment transactions, Council Tax payment, recycling and waste caddy requests and school place applications.

9. The Strategy has a clear vision, defined via 9 areas of connectivity:

- Connected Citizens
- Connected Management
- Connected Workforce
- Connected Partners
- Connected Business
- Connected Education
- Connected Visitors
- Connected Services
- Connected Elected Members

10. Behind each of the above sits an Action Plan in the form of a diagrammatic explanation of activity. These are attached at **Appendix 2.** In April 2020 the service will deliver an annual report addressing progress on each of these connected area action plans.

Previous Scrutiny

11. The Committee last scrutinised the Digital Strategy in July 2018, following which it made observations and received responses as follows:

12. **Resourcing & Savings** - the Committee was keen to establish the implications for resources, and the savings that might unfold from greater digitalisation of Council services, noting that the aim was to reduce the volume of low value queries handled by C2C staff. Members highlighted the significant potential for the strategy to impact on staff.

    The Cabinet Member responded he would be happy to bring information on the impact on staff of digitalisation back to the committee as cases developed.

13. **Cardiff App** - The Committee felt the functions available from the App were limited at the time, urged that there should be an increase in the services available online and requested more information on future proposed transactions.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that significant work was underway to identify suitable services and that the App roadmap for future services would be based on Service demand, user feedback and Service Area readiness, together with an offer to return to committee with an update.

14. **Councillor support –** The Committee stressed the importance of the App supporting councillors to represent citizens, and was able to advise them that an issue they have reported is progressing. A Member of the Committee volunteered for the 'smart councillor' test group.

    The Cabinet Member agreed that councillors understanding of how the App works was important and reassured that all technical glitches raised by members would be looked into.

15. **Serving All Citizens -** The Committee was particularly keen that the Council did not confuse the elderly with artificial intelligence, and retained appropriate mechanisms to assist them manually, echoing a note of caution that the Council must be able to deal with the demand that ease of access to Council services creates.

    The Cabinet response reassured that all other access channels would remain open so that people can access services in a way that is most convenient for them, and offered to return to committee to present the service map.

Scope of the Scrutiny

16. Members may wish to assess progress against the actions listed for each 'connected' group in **Appendix 2**, and follow up on the committee's previous observations as listed. The Committee has a governance oversight role in monitoring how effectively the Digital Strategy will support the aims of the Corporate Plan 2020-23.

Way Forward

17.	To support this scrutiny, in attendance will be Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer, and Phil Bear, ICT Service Manager.

18.	At the meeting, Members will receive a presentation by the Chief Digital Officer, covering the progress to date and ongoing ambitions for introducing a digital culture across the Council, following which they will be invited to ask questions.

Legal Implications

19.	The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

20.	The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However,

financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendations

21. The Committee is recommended to:
    i.   Note the progress on the Council's Digital Strategy;
    ii. Consider whether it wishes to offer comments, observations, or recommendations for Cabinet consideration.

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Director of Governance and Legal Services
5 March 2020