

**COUNCIL: 18 MARCH 2021**

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**FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM:**

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**Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office Inspection**

The Council was recently subject to a remote inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO), of which the outcome was very positive. The inspection found that the organisation is in a strong position with regard to the management of covert surveillance and resulted in a single recommendation being made by IPCO, which relates to some minor updates and amendments to recently revised policy documents.

The Director of Governance & Legal Services and Monitoring Officer is the Council's nominated Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and took the lead in the discussion with the Inspector. The information provided to the Inspector was found to demonstrate a level of compliance that will not, for the present, require a physical inspection to be undertaken. The Inspector also found *"the SRO and her team enthusiastic and knowledgeable regarding RIPA management, and very keen to demonstrate a high level of compliance, which is a credit to your organisation"*.

In response to the last such inspection in 2017, a comprehensive action plan was developed by the Council and its implementation was overseen by the SRO. Details of the subsequent measures introduced by the Council to address the previous recommendations were shared with the Inspector and demonstrated how seriously the Council takes its compliance responsibilities.

The letter sent to the Council detailing the outcome of the inspection confirmed that the Inspector *"was impressed by the content and clarity of the operational and policy guidance provided by Cardiff Council, and....would be happy to sign post other authorities to view your policies as an example to follow"*.

The Council is well placed regarding the handling of any product of surveillance and has in place the required safeguarding measures through the organisation's Data Retention policy. The Council has also maintained an up-to-date training and awareness regime across all the relevant departments and teams, including the Senior Management Team.

## **Census 2021**

The Into Work Advice Service has been successful in securing funding to provide digital support to people completing the 2021 Census.

The Advice Service's Digital Team will operate the local Census Support Centres for Cardiff. The team will support people who are digitally excluded and require extra assistance to complete the online survey. Support will also be available to those filling out paper versions (this is likely to be less than 10% of people).

The team is working hard to promote the support available. As well as including information on the Council's website and all social media platforms, marketing materials will also be made available in public spaces across Cardiff, including Hubs, community and day centres, and on bus stops.

Extra support will be provided to ensure that vulnerable groups are fully included in the Census; these include people presenting as homeless, with health conditions or disabilities that make it difficult for them to complete the form.

## **Digital Democracy Funding**

I am pleased to confirm that the Council has been awarded £39k in grant funding from Welsh Government's Digital Democracy Fund. This will be used by Democratic Services to upgrade equipment and purchase software licenses that will enable the Council to hold hybrid decision making meetings where members would be able to attend both remotely and in person.

## **Mobile App and Web**

Last month saw continued progress in the development of digital services for the citizens of Cardiff. The CardiffGov app was downloaded a further 1,514 times in February 2021, which followed a peak month in January 2021 of 2,324 downloads. The total number of downloads since launch has now reached 41,290 as the platform continues to grow its customer base. The current 2020/21 period is up 68% on our position by the end of 2019/20.

A new digital service to allow customers to report missed collections was introduced to the web on 22 February 2021 and is currently being tested for release on the mobile app at the start of April 2021.

Our data continues to show that where digital services exist our citizens are choosing them as their preferred option with on average between 65% to 75% usage compared to traditional channels.

The Council's website had 182,513 visitors in February 2021 viewing 668,729 pages of information. 65% of our visitors chose to do so using a mobile device. Over 6,000 online forms were submitted, which is a slight reduction on the figures for January 2021. The Council Tax content has also been re-prioritised based on customer behaviour during the pandemic, focusing more on helping people facing financial difficulty. Covid-19 related information was viewed 14,500 times.

## **Chatbot (BOBi)**

Since the chatbot was relaunched at the start of the pandemic, BOBi has had over 40,500 conversations with residents averaging 942 chats per week. 30% of these conversations are now taking place outside of normal office hours. BOBi is currently learning about our recycling centres and will soon be able to make bookings and help residents to amend or cancel existing bookings. The main topics for conversations in February 2021 were missed collections, other waste issues and council tax.

## **C2C – Connect to Cardiff**

In February 2021, Connect to Cardiff (C2C) received 33,422 calls and an additional 3,341 emails from residents. Interaction on social media continued to be popular with over 7,000 messages. February's figures also show an overall reduction in contacts compared to January 2021, which ensured that the service achieved an answer rate of 92%. C2C is currently supporting residents through the recent city-wide roll out of changes to waste collections, with additional staff in place whilst our customers get used to the new ways of working. C2C is also working closely with colleagues ahead of the forthcoming Senedd and Police & Crime Commissioner elections on 6 May 2021 and will be extending its opening hours on polling day from 7am to 10pm to offer as much assistance as possible to residents.

## **Bike Fund**

Following on from the success of the Bike Fund for Looked After Young People, the Into Work Advice Service has been successful in securing funding from the NHS to provide similar support for adults. The Bike Fund will be used to support people who are long-term unemployed where travel/transport is a barrier to them gaining employment. The project will also promote green, sustainable travel and advocate healthier behaviours.

**Councillor Chris Weaver**

**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

**11 March 2021**