Date: 19 May 2023

Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member. Finance, Modernisation & Performance
Cardiff Council,
County Hall,
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Chris,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 16 May 2023

Members of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee have asked me to pass on their thanks for attending Committee to update us on the Customer and Digital Strategies. Members were pleased to welcome Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer and Head of Customer Services, Rachel Bishop. Please also pass on our appreciation to the Corporate Director Resources, Chris Lee. We offer the following comments, observations and requests, as discussed at the Way Forward.

Request for training

The Committee was particularly impressed with the Council's approach to Customer and Digital services, its aspiration for excellence, and also to help other local authorities on their digital journeys. We requested that you attend committee to familiarise ourselves with the service, but also to consider future possibilities for our work programme. Members have expressed an interest in an awareness raising visit to the frontline of customer services, C2C, incorporating a fuller understanding of how the Council might use AI. We *request* training and we would like our visit to cover:

- Digital awareness of what the Council offers.
- An understanding of Bobi the Council's chatbot.
- A better understanding of AI ChatGPT.
- How AI might *assist* the Council in responding to complaints.

Accessibility

Members were particularly keen to ensure that as the Council progresses the digital availability of services, it preserves accessibility for all. We pointed to examples of those who speak minority languages and those with sight loss. We note you work

within an established framework of ensuring inclusivity for all, and *request* that you share the accessibility report for the digital strategy, as offered at the meeting.

Sharing expertise

The Committee has heard that services, such as Commissioning & Procurement, have arrangements with other local authorities to support them by sharing their expertise. We are keen to encourage this sharing of knowledge for Digital Services. We note that considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that Bobi, the Council's chatbot, is capable of effective delivery in the Welsh language, and that you have consequently secured shared intellectual property rights for this development. We applaud the initiative and urge the taking of commercial opportunities in sharing our expertise. We note that these are early days, and that recruitment and retention of software developers has become an issue. We *request* that you share the outcome of the WLGA/Wales Audit Office survey of digital services across all 22 Welsh local authorities.

Social media

Members would like assurance that the personal data of Council customers who over share on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, is not stored. We recognise the value of Members having access to social media to gauge public feeling, particularly where they are sitting on committees such as the Planning Committee. However, we consider it important that someone has oversight of social media activity and monitors the appropriateness of media channels used to the request for service. For example, comments on planning matters should be directed to the Planning Portal.

Cyber security

The Committee sought assurance that the Council has appropriate cover should it suffer a leak, given it is dealing with sensitive data. We were pleased to hear that there are robust processes in place for detecting cyber threats, and that there has recently been an external audit of our cyber security arrangements. We note that two weak links were identified, the risk of not retaining cyber security staff in the current employment market, and the risk of staff opening phishing links. We also note the Council performs its own phishing tests to evaluate this risk and there are 3 online cyber security training modules available.

Requests following this scrutiny:

- A committee visit to C2C with digital awareness training;

- Please share the accessibility report for the digital strategy;

- Please share the outcome of the WLGA/Wales Audit Office survey of digital services across all 22 Welsh local authorities.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, thank you once again for this update. With your support, I look forward to continuing the valuable exchange between this Committee and the Cabinet. There are a number of requests following the scrutiny, and therefore I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

COUNCILLOR JOEL WILLIAMS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc   Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Leaders of Opposition Parties – Adrian Robson, Rodney Berman & Andrea Gibson
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources
Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer
Rachel Bishop, Head of Customer Service
Mr Gavin McArthur, Chair, Governance & Audit Committee
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations
Jeremy Rhys, Assistant Head of Communications and External Affairs
Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer
Claire Deguara, Cabinet Business Manager
Andrea Redmond, Committees Support Officer.