BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2018

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To update the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made since the introduction of Phase 1 of the Digital Transformation Programme on 24th April 2018 plus the development of Phase 2.

2.   Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1   This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priority/priorities:

- Supporting a successful economy* – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.

- Helping people to be more self-reliant* – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.

- Smarter use of resources* – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

2   The Programme gives citizens a new digital channel of communication and self-service and enables back office functions to become more streamlined and efficient.

3.   Background

3.1   In September 2016, BCBC commenced a Digital Transformation (DT) Programme, with a digital provider Agilisys, to introduce a single digital platform (My Account) for customers to interact with us online for key services. As well as developing the new digital platform, in September 2017 we also commenced the development of a new, responsive website which allows citizens to seamlessly interact with the My Account functionality while browsing the various other services we offer.

3.2   The DT Programme has a Citizen-centric focus. We listened to the feedback from the 2015 Budget Consultation, that 87% of Bridgend citizens wanted more council services online. New, modern functionality also meets the demand of over 85% of Bridgend citizens who have access to internet and prefer the convenience of online transactions (ONS).   As part of the launch of the new digital platform, we embarked on a communications strategy to promote the availability of the new online digital channel, which sits alongside the current communication channels.

3.3 Phase 1 of the DT Programme ran to April 2018 where the key deliverables of council tax and housing benefits going on-line, as well as the implementation of the new, innovative website, were delivered successfully.

3.4 Phase 2 now focuses on a number of areas including school admissions and registrars being made available through My Account by the end of March 2019. The Corporate Plan stipulates that five services will be on-line by year-end and these will be council tax, housing benefits, school admissions, registrars and environmental reporting.

3.5 The departments that will be pivotal to delivery and adaptation of Phase 2 and the subsequent realisation of the benefits are:
   • Finance
   • Highways
   • Street Lighting
   • Other Cleaning
   • Customer Services
   • Registrars
   • ICT
   • Human Resources

3.6 With the Council facing continued austerity, staff and citizens must support the continuing strive to do better with less. Digitilisation will not only streamline services but also respond to the Public's expectation that Bridgend Council will become more accessible and easier to interact with.

3.7 To address the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) legislation that came into force on 25 May 2018, a review was carried out to ensure all privacy notices and agreements adhered to the new requirements across the new digital platform.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 Website & My Account

Content for phase two of the website has been identified based on the number of hits to the website and through liaison with service areas. Since the launch of phase one of the website, generating new content for phase two has been ongoing. Currently 38.11% of Phase 2 content has been written and is awaiting sign off by service area, 21.72% is in process of being reviewed and 40.17% is outstanding. We are aiming to complete Phase 2 content by June 2019.

Additionally we have been working towards achieving accessibility accreditation with the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC), which will be completed over the next couple of months. DAC accreditation will mean that the website is recognised as accessible for all users.

In July 2018 we launched the events portal of the system (Eventbrite) as part of the school's out summer programme. We will be using this to list events continuously throughout the year. As well as users being able to browse local events, we have also incorporated functionality to allow users to submit requests to us to add community events taking place within the county borough.

As part of the development of the new website, we incorporated an improved search engine (Funnelback) that enables users to get to the content they need quicker. Access and training to Funnelback software is currently being explored which will allow

us to have a better understanding of how users are engaging with and navigating the website that can help inform future developments.

Since My Account launched in April 2018, the key online activity is as follows:

- 7,544 My Account registrations **
- 5,350 council tax payments totalling £750,818.11
- 3,335 council tax registrations ***
- 1,654 council tax registrations subscribing to e-billing
- 305 new direct debits created
- 289 updated names on council tax accounts
- 170 housing benefit registrations
- 41 updating direct debit details
    ** based on population of 143,000, however My Account registrations is not limited to BCBC residents
    *** based on 64,187 council tax accounts and not potential liable parties

The digital transformation programme concentrates on building a new digital channel for citizens of Bridgend and prior to the launch in April 2018, training was provided to all front line staff in customer services and council tax to raise their awareness and to support citizens online. The success of the new digital channel relies on services adopting and promoting it to citizens.

4.2   Council Tax and Housing Benefits

Citizens can pay their council tax online via My Account and subscribe to e-Billing which in turn saves BCBC money on paper and postage. It promotes self-service and provides an end-to-end service that requires no manual intervention that will lead to a reduction in calls to customer services allowing our advisors to attend to priorities that are more urgent.

Since the launch of My Account in April 2018, of the 3,335 of citizens who have registered their council tax account, only 49.59% of them have subscribed to e-Billing so we are reviewing the communication plan to look at ways of promoting this further.

In Phase 2, we are progressing Single Person Discount and Vacant Property Discount functionality within the digital platform to also become an online, self-service function. We aim to go-live with these functionalities by December 2018.

We are currently working with our digital provider Agilisys to address the need to translate into Welsh the housing benefit "new claims" and "change in circumstances" online application solutions. The Welsh Language Commissioner is aware of the situation and has accepted an extension until March 2019 to complete this translation and we are on track with this.

We have also engaged with Northgate who supplies our council tax and housing benefit software to review the functionality within the system to explore opportunities of further streamline and automate current manual processes.

4.3   School's Admissions

There are currently five forms that parents manually fill in when applying for school places, namely: school transfer, full time nursery, part time nursery, junior class and secondary. We have also developed integration to the back office system to streamline the current application process.

In order to promote digital engagement via My Account and to make this process more convenient for parents, these forms have been developed as digital eForms.

The Secondary admissions for September 2019 will be the first round starting on 22nd October 2018 and these will be the first online forms we implement via My Account.

We will also be developing a new online form to be made available to parents who may wish to appeal the decision. This form will be available around the closure of the admissions round.

4.4   Registrars

Discussions have ensued with BCBC's Superintendent Registrar to ascertain how we can enhance registering births, deaths and marriages through a digital booking system.

The ambition is to provide an online booking system that allows citizens to make an appointment with the Register office. This will enable registrars to efficiently manage wedding dates, allows citizens to order birth, death and marriages certificates (via online e-forms), make an appointment online to arrange a marriage notice and to register births and deaths at Porthcawl and Pyle offices. This will not affect the current 'drop in' system that is in place in Bridgend and Maesteg.

We aim to go-live with registrar's online booking system by March 2019.

4.5   Pest Control

We currently offer very limited appointments for our pest control service to domestic properties; however, we are having discussions with our contractor, Mitie to explore opportunities of offering an improved online book system for citizens. This is in the discovery stage at the moment and will not affect any pest control services delivered by Shared Regulatory Services (SRS).

4.6   Love Clean Streets

Work is progressing to introduce an App called 'Bridgend Report It' which will allow citizens to report, through My Account, highways issues such as potholes, dog fouling and street lighting. The address/location of issue will be easily pin pointed on an interactive map and the citizen will have the ability to track their report from submission to resolution via My Account.

The digital service enables the business to revisit current practices and identify a more joined up 'right first time' approach to solving problems and delegating activities to front line staff. The new digital channel will ensure timely, transparent, efficient and trusted information exchange between the service and the citizen.

As part of this development, we are also reviewing the back office processes across the three service areas i.e. Highways, Other Cleaning and Street Lighting to ensure the same software and mobile working solution that is already in place in Highways is adopted across the other two service areas.

4.7   i-Trent People Manager (HR System)

Expanding the use of i-Trent is important for promoting a culture of self-service and digital delivery to staff.

An initial pilot and testing phase for the Performance Management module has been undertaken where Human Resources (HR) and ICT have improved the process and developed a functional system that can be introduced into the live environment.

Following decision with Corporate Management Board (CMB) to roll out of the appraisal cycle and to stagger appraisals to meet service requirements, HR are working with Business Managers to: identify the areas where the new system will apply; and to collate Directorate responses to the timing of appeals. It is anticipated that going forward this information will be referenced in Business Plans.

Self Service is now ready for roll out in Schools and initial meetings commenced in September 2018.

4.8 Engage

In October 2018, we are introducing "Engage" which is part of our digital platform to analyse online website activity. The Engage functionality will allow us to analyse what pages and services have been accessed to allow us to digitally signpost citizens to other pages of services we provide which further promotes self-service.

To enhance the current front line services, we will also explore opportunities to roll out a web chat function that will allow citizens a preferred method of engagement with customer advisors. An eDigital Customer Service Benchmark survey (2017) found that 79% of customers say they prefer live chat purely because of the immediacy it offers compared to other channels. Service efficiencies will also be realised as the advisors can communicate with multiple citizens at one time using this method.

We expect to go live with Engage in December 2018.

4.9 Digital Strategy

In 2017, the Welsh Government commissioned the Digital and ICT advisory services for the public sector (SocITM Advisory Ltd) to establish digital maturity of all local authorities. It identified while digital maturity was low, appetite to improve is high and a vital prerequisite to meet the Wales National Digital Agenda. Bridgend has now embarked on developing a Digital Strategy that will identify ways in which we can evolve to a 'digital first' approach in how we do business, develop our staff and the way the citizen engages with us.

Effective leadership is essential to promoting the required internal culture to change and embrace innovation. We will be guided by the Government's Digital Services principles to deliver digital services and platforms that meet the needs of citizens.

The Digital Strategy will be finalised by 31st December 2018.

To summarise, the functionality and go-live dates are provided below:

Functionality	Go-live Date
School Admissions	October 2018
Single Person and Vacant Property discount	December 2018
Engage	December 2018
Digital Strategy	December 2018
Registrars	March 2019

| Love Clean Streets | March 2019 |
| I-Trent | March 2019 |

4.10 Microsoft Navigator

We have recently completed a system review with Microsoft across various front line services including customer services, home-care and highways. This reinforced the need to explore automation software, mobile working and upgrading to Microsoft Office 365 to help move towards a more modern, streamlined way of working.

4.11 Further Developments

4.11.1 Citizen Digital Hub

Feasibility studies are currently underway to identify if further efficiencies can be achieved by introducing smart technology such as self-serve machines in the reception area of the Civic Offices. In order to capture citizens at their point of arrival, and to free up customer service advisors, we are exploring the possibility of introducing a 'citizen digital hub' that will allow citizens to:

➢ Have access to a payment kiosk that will allow bills to be paid with no need for manual intervention

➢ Access and utilise My Account if technology is unavailable to them which enhances digital inclusion

➢ Scan documents directly into our document management system such as passports, driver licences, and utility bills to support council tax and housing benefit claims

4.11.2 Council Tax telephone calls

We are currently establishing a single customer management function to become the first point of contact for all low complex council tax calls and to provide a consistent customer experience across the multiple access channels. This has also required us to upskill Advisors to deal with low complex calls to create capacity to enable council tax officers to deal with the more complex issues.

We have been piloting this over the past few months by transferring the calls into Customer Services incrementally. As of 3rd September 2018, customer services has become the first point of contact for all low complex council tax calls. Since transferring the calls, customer services received 1290 calls in the first 7 days and have successfully dealt with 761 (59%). We are constantly monitoring this with the service area to ensure calls are being dealt with effectively at the first point of contact and to identify any further training needs for the Customer Service Advisors.

4.11.3 'GOSS' online e-forms

The online Capita payment portal is being upgraded to version 10 which will allow us to integrate payments within our new online e-forms to enable customers to make an online payment at the point of application.

This workstream will commence in September 2018 and will incorporate services such as licensing and registrars.

4.11.4 <u>Cashless Schools</u>

Ongoing discussions are underway with several providers of Cashless Schools. The integration issue revolves around the current cashless school providers not being able to facilitate an interface into our digital platform, which would see the citizen transact outside of My Account. The issues lie with the provider's inability to connect with a digital platform.

This is currently work in progress and we are continuing to explore opportunities with suppliers.

4.11.5 <u>Centralising Energy Payments</u>

It has been recognised that by centralising energy payments, the process can be streamlined and better managed with potential savings. A kick-off meeting in October 2018 will seek to consolidate these payments and streamline current processes.

4.11.6 <u>Chatbots</u>

The age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is upon us and following an awareness session in mid-August, we are exploring opportunities to establish if areas of the organisation would benefit from using chatbots. A chatbot is a computer programme that provides automated responses to deal with frequently asked questions online. This will enable us to save time and efforts by automating customer support in areas of low complex tasks and simultaneously processing multiple requests from citizens.

Gartner, the leading research and advisory company, forecasts that by 2020, over 85% of customer interactions will be handled without a human, therefore, looking ahead we will establish if this function will benefit and future proof the organisation.

4.11.7 <u>Robotic Process Automation</u>

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is the use of software with artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning capabilities to process high volume, low complex tasks. Exploratory work is underway with a leading robotics company to establish areas of the organisation where tasks are routine and of high volume to determine if there is any benefit in undertaking a pilot exercise.

5. Effect upon policy framework & procedure rules

5.1   This report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1   An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening was carried out in June 2018 with no full EIA required.

7.   Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1   This programme contributes to the following Wellbeing Goals through the smarter use of resources and development of digital skills of both staff and citizens.

- A Prosperous Wales
- A Resilient Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities

8.   Financial Implications

8.1   The original Digital Transformation programme funding of £2.5million was split into £1million for capital expenditure and £1.5million revenue expenditure.

The current position is that as of the 1 April 2018, there is £520,000 of capital funding remaining and £1.115million of revenue funding.

9.   Recommendations

9.1   To note the contents of this report.

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6th September 2018

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Background documents:	Digital Transformation Project – Critical Path

		Jun-2018	Jul-2018	Aug-2018	Sep-2018	Oct-2018	Nov-2018	Dec-2018	Jan-2019	Feb-2019	Mar-2019	Apr-2019

CRITICAL PATH

Critical Path
- Phase 2 'kick off'
- Eventbrite live
- My Account v7 upgrade inc UAT 1 & 2
- My Account v7 live
- School Admissions
- Bridgend Report It App live
- SPD/VPD live
- Engage development
- Engage live
- NGate B&B
- NGate Annual Rollover test
- NGate Annual Rollover live
- NGate 6.17.2
- NGate 6.18
- Capita v10
- NGate 6.18.1
- NGate 6.19
- NGate B&B
- 5 on-line!

MY ACCOUNT

Comms & Marketing
- Communication Strategy

Payment Portal Upgrade
- Translated document to Capita
- Capita Build test
- Agilisys test env. connector
- UAT
- Capita v10 live

Love Clean Streets
- Cleaner St's interface May rise
- API x 2 categories May rise to LCS
- Link to LCS on My Account live
- Bridgend Report It App live

SPD_VPD
- Cleanse SPD data NGate & CT
- Test SPD during v7 testing
- Reverify VPD configuration
- SPD live
- VPD live

Pest Control/Registrars
- Configuration and testing of ssytem - Go Live: March 2019

Cashless Schools

School Admissions
- Develop 5 application forms
- Upload 5 application forms
- Back office app configured
- UAT
- Go live

ENGAGE

Webchat, roadblocks and signposting
- High level objectives agreed
- Confirm UI design
- Configurations
- Implement website-chat integration
- Webchat training
- Test UI
- Go Live