

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

17 NOVEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2020 - 2024

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to adopt and implement the Digital Strategy 2020-2024, which has taken into consideration public consultation responses.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-

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

Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient – taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enabling them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

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

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2017, the Welsh Government commissioned the Society of Information Technology Managers (SocITM) Advisory Ltd to establish the digital maturity of all local authorities. It identified that while digital maturity was low, appetite to improve was high and a vital prerequisite to meet the Wales National Digital Agenda.
- 3.2 The fast pace of change, through the availability of emerging technology, requires robust planning, understanding and leadership. Local Authorities have a duty to provide services in a way that is compatible with the changing demographics and increasing demands faced by its citizens.
- 3.3 The key aim for the Council is to modernise the services that it provides to its citizens. In September 2016 a Digital Transformation Programme of works commenced to primarily introduce a single 'digital platform' (My Account) and an accessible website.

The Strategy builds on these improvements by further developing how citizens, businesses and visitors engage and transact with the Council.

- 3.4 The Strategy supports the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This Act is about improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The five ways of working towards the sustainable development principles have been referenced throughout the Strategy reflecting the ambition to meet obligations to improve the long-term social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing both now and for future generations.
- 3.5 As part of the 2019 Budget Consultation, feedback showed that 87% of Bridgend citizens want more council services online using better and more modern online functionality to support channel shift as well as self-serve facilities. Also according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 85% of Bridgend citizens have access to the internet and prefer the convenience of online transactions.
- 3.6 As part of the Budget Consultation 2019 and in a separate Digital Survey undertaken between June and August 2019, the public were asked for feedback on current digital capabilities provided to them by the Council as well as suggestions to further enhance our services. The results have been incorporated into the assessment and delivery model. The results are attached as **Appendix A**.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 An ambitious four year Digital Strategy has been drafted which encapsulates Bridgend's well-being objectives, the national digital landscape and includes a matrix of measurements utilised by SocITM to assess Bridgend's digital maturity and growth. The Strategy has been divided into 3 key areas: Digital Citizen, Digital Council and Digital Place.
- 4.2 Each section has an allocated action plan, with dedicated owners to ensure the ambitions are achieved by 2024. The Strategy is underpinned by an intricate programme of works supporting each ambition.
- 4.3 Key officers across the organisation were involved in the development of the Digital Strategy. One of the aims within the Digital Strategy is to streamline routine and repetitive processes, delivering end-to-end connections to back office systems with the ambition of delivering efficiencies through digital automation. Robust business process reviews will be undertaken and solutions introduced to enhance service delivery.
- 4.4 The Council's Digital Principles have been developed to underpin the foundations of the Five Ways of Working within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, aligning a "Digital First" approach and encapsulating the good practice principles identified by SocITM.

Digital services will therefore:

- Be designed around the people who are going to use them, across the whole sphere of service delivery

- Be integrated where possible to deliver seamless connectivity and be simple and intuitive so that the user experience is positive, right first time and able to move easily between functions
- Be designed to safely and usefully share information, to better support the most vulnerable in communities, and to target the Council's limited resources more effectively based on demand
- Demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine channel shift
- Rise above traditional ways of working and challenge the status quo to ensure the Council is working smarter

5.0 Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 None.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) will be carried out when each digital workstream is initiated.

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

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Council should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

Involvement	Consultation results have underpinned the residents' need to provide more online services
Long Term	To provide an improved, consistent and sustainable customer experience
Prevention	Developing online solutions and encouraging and promoting self-service will prevent problems from occurring and build a sustainable service. Also by developing digital solutions with front line service needs, prevents future problems and utilises smarter resourcing
Integration	A single entry point into the Council with end-to-end integration to back office systems
Collaboration	Collaborating with Business Managers and key services to enrich the customers experience

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are established Earmarked Reserves to support both the revenue and capital aspects of Digital Transformation. The current budget available is £407,000 (revenue) and £520,000 (capital).

8.2 During the delivery of the digital programme, business cases will be developed to be approved by Corporate Management Board ahead of any future development works.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Digital Strategy 2020 – 2024 attached as **Appendix B**.

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November 2020

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Background documents: None