

Information Technology & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 11th August 2020.

Present:

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman for this Meeting)

Cllrs. Krause, Pickering.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bell, Forest.

IT Operations Manager.

Also Present:

Customer Service & Digital Project Manager, Senior Designer, Digital Content Officer, Governance & Data Protection Officer, Member Services Officer.

1 Election of Chairman

1.1 Resolved:

That Councillor Ovenden be elected as Chairman for this Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st November 2019

- 2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 1st November 2019 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

3 Digital Delivery Update

- 3.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager highlighted the progress to date on the Council's digital transformation project, with a review of said project having been undertaken recently by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Digital Transformation Task Group. In 2017, the three-year digital transformation strategy was adopted that targeted all the Council's services. The strategy was divided into four strands – the website, technology, staff culture and digital inclusion. Most of the actions within the Digital Strategy action plan had been implemented, however, there were several actions that were ongoing with a small number that were outstanding

which were reliant on other aspects of the project. These were summarised as; website analytics, collaboration tools, social media, public guest wi-fi, wi-fi hotspot database, funding for digital projects for the voluntary and community sector and digital member champions.

- 3.2 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager drew attention to each of the outstanding strands in turn and provided an update on these. At its July 2019 meeting, this Advisory Committee had provided feedback for the focus of a new IT & Digital Strategy for 2020-2025 which it had been intended to align with the new corporate plan. However, the development of the corporate plan had been paused due to the Coronavirus pandemic and other more specific priorities had been identified to support the Council's recovery plan in the shorter term. The recovery plan would focus on the economic and community recovery but also on how the Council must transform as an organisation. The website, replacement planning system and broadband were features of the recovery plan so would progress regardless of the pausing of the corporate plan.
- 3.3 Digital transformation would continue to play a key role in ensuring the Council delivered customer focussed and efficient services. Work had been undertaken with services to develop a corporate digital programme to ascertain key digital projects and those that were aligned to the corporate recovery and commercialisation plans were highlighted as follows; new planning system, revisit the garden waste system, lifeline procurement, ANPR, garage commercialisation, asset management, website, legal process review.
- 3.4 A Member raised the importance of broadband supply throughout the Borough and felt that this should be a priority. The Customer Service and Digital Manager advised that this was a key part of the recovery plan and was a priority.
- 3.5 The Advisory Committee wished for it to be put on record their gratitude to the IT Team for not only having had the foresight to provide all staff with laptops prior to the Coronavirus pandemic but also the move over to Outlook365 and Teams. The timing had been fortuitous and both staff and Members had embraced the move to remote and digital working which had held the Council in good stead.

Resolved:

That the Update be received and noted.

4 Website Update

- 4.1 The Senior Designer advised that the review of the website had taken place and the new website had been launched at the start of the month. She provided an overview of the changes to the website and showed the Advisory Committee how the functionality had been changed to ensure that the website was more user-friendly and user-centric. They had retained control over the

layout, and could therefore alter this accordingly. The demonstration showed the revised landing page, and several journeys through the website. There was a search bar at the top of the website, which could be seen on every page, along with an urgent message bar which could be updated at will.

- 4.2 The website had been designed with the user in mind and FAQs were no longer on a separate page, but rather imbedded on specific pages. There should be no more than three clicks to reach a page from landing on the website. The Customer Service & Digital Manager advised that the language on the website had changed to make it more understandable and away from 'council speak'. There were further areas to be developed, and these would be worked upon over the coming months.
- 4.3 A Member questioned whether some of the colouring could be changed on some of the links, to differentiate between drop down links and those which did not. The Senior Designer confirmed that she would investigate this and agreed that this differentiation would be beneficial.
- 4.4 The website would be ever evolving and flexible. Officers would be taking on feedback from users to build upon the progress made to date and welcomed any further feedback from Members.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

5 Modern.Gov Update

- 5.1 The Member Services Officer provided an update on the progress made to date with the full roll-out of the Modern.Gov project since the May 2019 election. Following the election, all 47 Councillors had been provided with an iPad device and given the opportunity to run through how the device and the Modern.Gov app worked. Additionally, two training sessions had been run by Modern.Gov, however attendance at these had been limited. Support to Councillors had been provided throughout the past year, be that via the telephone, email, one on one sessions or the increasingly popular Modern.Gov/IT Drop In Sessions. The move towards digital working had been an enormous change to how the Council operated and how Councillors were expected to engage with meetings and residents. For some this was the first time that they had had an electronic device and email account.
- 5.2 Improvements had been made to the Modern.Gov App during quarter two of 2019 which had resulted in one universal 'app' rather than one per operating system and provided for better functionality. Officers and Councillors had the same version of the app, which enabled greater support to all parties. The Member Services Team had been able to provide guidance on updates, or troubleshoot issues without having to differentiate between apps, which had saved time and was beneficial to all. All iPad devices had been installed with 'AirWatch' which enabled devices to be 'wiped' should they be lost or stolen,

additionally it also enabled updates or new applications to be added to devices remotely.

- 5.3 Significant savings in printing costs were highlighted to the Advisory Committee. It had not been possible to obtain figures for postal savings as these were not available, however it was safe to assume that these would also be significant.
- 5.4 The Council had been able to continue to hold Committee meetings during the Coronavirus pandemic due to the technology available to both Officers and Members. Meetings throughout the Council were hosted via Microsoft Teams, which had enabled public committee meetings to be viewed by the public and thus ensuring public engagement and participation was maintained. Microsoft Teams was supported on iPad devices, however Microsoft Teams Live Events were not currently. This had provided some initial problems however these had been resolved by the loan of laptops to those Councillors who did not have access to another device (aside from their Council provided iPad).
- 5.5 The Member Services Officer drew attention to a number of ongoing work streams that would be progressed over the coming months, as part of the continued improvement and roll-out of Modern.Gov to both Officers and Councillors. These improvements included workflow (a back office collaboration system for report writing and agenda circulation), online submission of gifts and hospitality, online submission of disclosable pecuniary interests for both Councillors and Parish Councillors and finally the submission of Councillors expenses. Each of these work streams were at differing points, with updates to be provided on the progress of these to this Advisory Committee over the coming year.
- 5.6 In response to comments from the Advisory Committee, the Member Services Officer advised that the Cabinet decision to not display Councillor attendance on the website had been noted and there was no intention to circumvent this decision. She noted that this could have fed into the expenses submission process, however this process was capable of proceeding in silo.
- 5.7 Looking forward to the Election in 2023, a review of the technology provided to Councillors would be undertaken to ascertain whether iPads remained the best device for supporting the Modern.Gov programme and whether in light of the pandemic and use of Microsoft Teams, advances had been made in respect of functionality and support for IOS devices for Microsoft Live Events (if this remained the Council's preferred provider for virtual meetings).
- 5.8 The Member Services Officer requested that should either Councillors or Officers have any issues with Modern.Gov to contact the Member Services Team to ensure that these could be resolved as soon as possible.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

6 Report Tracker & Future Meetings

- 6.1 The Member Services Officer provided a brief update on the cyber-security training that had been rolled out to both Officers and Councillors by the IT Team. She encouraged all to undertake the training as it would be beneficial.
- 6.2 The Advisory Committee wished to put it on record their gratitude to IT Officers for their work over the past year in ensuring that stress tests had been carried out on systems that had enabled a quick and efficient move to remote working during the ongoing pandemic.

Resolved:

That the Report Tracker & Future Meetings be received and noted.