

# **IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee**

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## **Present:**

Cllr. Ovenden (Chairman for this Meeting)

Cllr. Krause.

## **Apologies:**

Cllr. Forest.

## **Also Present:**

Head of HR & Customer Services, Customer Service & Digital Project Manager, IT Manager, Deputy Chief Executive, Senior Member Services Officer.

## **1 Election of Chairman**

### **Resolved:**

**Due to the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillor Ovenden was elected as Chairman for this Meeting.**

## **2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

2.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

## **3 IT, Digital and Customer Service Strategy**

3.1 The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager introduced this item and gave an overview of the IT, Digital and Customer Service Strategy. The first digital strategy had been adopted in 2017 and aimed to improve online services and make the way the Council worked more efficient. There had been many improvements since that adoption and this new Strategy would go further and underpin the core principles of the Council's Corporate Plan.

3.2 Since 2018 the website had seen an increase of users by 45% and a reduction in face to face transactions (visitors to the customer contact centre) by 81%, call volumes during this period had increased by 4.8%. Research had been undertaken looking at Central and Local Government strategies as well as a consultation looking at residents and local business needs.

Consultation with internal and external colleagues had also been undertaken. To achieve the outcomes within the strategy there were five strands of work;

- (i) customer first
- (ii) collaborate with partner groups to improve digital skills and inclusion
- (iii) make better use of data
- (iv) give staff the tools and skills needed to carry out their jobs safely, effectively and efficiently
- (v) create modern, secure and integrated solutions and infrastructure

3.3 The IT Manager highlighted work that had been undertaken to date in connection to strands (iv) and (v), including migration of systems to the cloud and assessing what systems were being used that could be used elsewhere. The move to the cloud had an added benefit of reducing the Council's carbon footprint and enabling a reduction in electricity usage. Funding had been received from the Department of Levelling Up to improve the Council's Cyber Security, which had seen immutable storage (a backup of systems not held on a server) purchased and was located at a data centre. A full laptop roll out had been completed on a three year lease, it was hoped that this would continue to ensure that the most up to date equipment was available to staff. The IT Manager drew attention to an area of concern, BT had announced that in 2025 they would stop using copper cabling and the connections that many relied on and would move towards fibre to premises. This would not only cause issues for residents but businesses and the Council alike. This had not been well communicated and it was important that the Council was aware that this would have an impact on services such as lifeline and the housing stock.

3.4 The item was then opened up to the Task Group and the following points/questions were raised:

- The increase in users on the website was welcomed. It was questioned whether the shift towards website usage been maintained. The Customer Service & Digital Project Manager advised that the figure for contact centre visits during 2018 had been around 20,000, during 2021 this had reduced to 3638, however the contact centre had not been open for the whole of 2021 due to various lockdowns. The level of visits to the website had been maintained with less visits to the contact centre, however telephone calls had remained at the same level. Webchat had also been introduced on a number of webpages and this would be rolled out further in due course.
- It was questioned how the move to Teams and Outlook 365 had been received by staff and whether all the functionality was being used. It was acknowledged that some areas were using Teams more than others, however a migration of data from Objective Connect to Teams was underway. There was no "big bang" of change but it was occurring. The IT Manager welcomed the need for an audit of how Teams was being used and how it could be used going forward.

- The definition of 'hybrid' was discussed. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that Management Team hadn't defined 'hybrid working' as it would be different for each Department and Team within the Council. The Senior Member Services Officer gave a brief update on the legal position with fully virtual meetings and the work being undertaken to progress hybrid meetings. There would be further work needed to support hybrid meetings and this would involve a working group to ensure that the best solution was found.
- A Member had read that BT were pausing the copper line removal. The IT Manager welcomed that news.

**Resolved:**

**That the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee recommends the adoption of the IT, Digital & Customer Service Strategy to Cabinet.**

## **4 Future Agenda Items and Report Tracker**

- 4.1 The Senior Member Services Officer would liaise with the Chairman regarding items to be added to the Tracker.