

# Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Information Technology and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee held in Committee Room No. 2, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

## Present:

Cllr. Knowles (Chairman);

Cllrs. Bell (ex officio), Forest, Knowles, Ovenden (for the first item), Pickering.

## Also Present:

Director of Finance and Economy (for the first item), Head of HR and Customer Services, Customer Service and Digital Project Manager, IT Operations Manager, National Management Trainee, Governance & Data Protection Officer, Member Services Officer.

Visarc – for the first item.

Prior to the commencement of the Meeting the Chairman advised that there had been a change to the order of the items.

The Ex-Officio Member advised that he had attended the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board that morning and drew the Committee's attention to the emerging Big 8, which would include Broadband and Carbon Neutrality.

## 1 Notes from the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

- 1.1 The notes of the meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

## 2 Digital Partner Overview – Visarc

- 2.1 The Customer Service and Digital Project Manager introduced the item and advised that Visarc had been appointed as the Council's Digital Partner with a remit to review the structure and content of the Council's website.
- 2.2 The Visarc team introduced themselves and by way of a PowerPoint Presentation gave Members an overview of the company, its history and client base, the steps that they would undertake to assess the structure and content of the Council's website and highlighted some insights from the discovery stage of the process to date.
- 2.3 In response to questions from Members, the Visarc Team advised:

- Increasing the search-ability of the Council's website and particularly how it appears on Google searches would be part of the remit for Visarc. The design and structure required amending along with the search function on ashford.gov.uk.
- It would be possible to set expiry dates for pages, particularly for time-limited information. There would also be the ability to archive information.
- Heads of Service had been contacted to garner views on the level of information that was important to their services, there had been limited feedback to date. Follow up discussions were being scheduled for those that had responded to the initial survey.

2.4 The Customer Service and Digital Project Manager advised that user research had been undertaken earlier in the year, with engagement ongoing with Ashford Access surrounding accessibility of the website. The customer was fundamental in the process.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress to date be received and noted.**

### **3 Cyber Security**

- 3.1 The IT Operations Manager, using a PowerPoint Presentation, gave the Committee an overview of the cyber security landscape, including zero-day ransomware attacks at Local Authorities and the resulting issues from these, the security features the Council had in place to limit attacks with such software and awareness campaigns and tests that have been provided for both Officers and Councillors. A desktop exercise had also been carried out in conjunction with Zurich, which had gone to be replicated at other Local Authorities.
- 3.2 The Head of HR & Customer Services advised that there was an ongoing awareness campaign relating to Cyber Security and Management Team were increasingly aware of areas of potential vulnerability and the managing of those.
- 3.3 The IT Operations Manager drew attention to the new remote log in system used by staff, Duo, which used two-factor authentication. The rollout of this had been well received and was a significant improvement on the previous system. Additionally, GovRoam Phase 2 was being progressed, whereby when connecting to GovRoam at another Local Authority site the user would be automatically dropped onto their own Local Authority network.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress to date be received and noted.**

## 4 Digital Declaration

- 4.1 The National Management Trainee introduced the item. The Digital Declaration was aligned with the Digital Transformation Strategy adopted by Cabinet in November 2017, to better utilise the opportunities offered by technology and digital tools to promote more effective service delivery and cost saving for the council. He drew attention to the five principles that signatories were expected to commit to, which were detailed in full in the report. There was an expected commitment from both Service Managers and Councillors to be visible and accessible by tweeting, publishing blogs and to publish plans and lessons learnt.
- 4.2 The Committee welcomed the proposal and questioned how the progress on such a project would be measured. The Customer Service and Digital Project Manager advised that targets would be set and the data collected by the Customer Services Team would be assessed and utilised for this purpose.

### **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

### **Recommendation:**

**That the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee commends the Report to Cabinet and that the Council signs the Local Digital Declaration.**

## 5 Digital Action Plan

- 5.1 The Head of HR & Customer Services introduced the item and provided an update on the progress made since the publication of the original digital action plan. She was pleased to report that the websites accessibility score had increased from 60.3% to 95.4%, which demonstrated good progress and work in this area. The appointment of a Digital Officer to support the website in December 2018 had attributed to this. This role had been funded through a one-off allocation following the LGA Peer Review and this role and the support to the website would be reviewed in due course. She highlighted a potential risk arising due to a vacancy in the IT Service, this was being advertised and specialist recruitment agencies would be utilised should the usual methods not be forthcoming.
- 5.2 Further to the Committee's recommendation, a high profile launch of the 'Your Ashford' app had taken place in November 2018. There were currently 77 different services that could be accessed via the app and due to it being an in-house app with links to the Abavus platform Officers were able to troubleshoot and make amendments to the app following feedback. The IT Service had rolled out the single desk-top to support the roll-out of Skype for Business. The telephony aspect of Skype was being rolled out which would increase the ability for flexible working.

- 5.3 The Head of HR & Customer Services drew attention to the suggested focus for the IT & Digital Strategy 2020-2025, which included; the website, the replacement of the Planning and Building Control system, cloud migration, system rationalisation and broadband. Broadband was an enormous area and one that was linked to carbon neutrality and had been discussed at the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board earlier in the day.
- 5.4 The Chairman and Ex-Officio Member agreed that Broadband was a vital string in the Digital Strategy and would meet to discuss the thoughts of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board, the announcement from Boris Johnson that there would additional funding to support this and the progress being made by Kent County Council on the matter outside of this meeting.

**Resolved:**

**That**

- (i) **The suggested focus for the IT & Digital Strategy 2020-2025 be supported,**
- (ii) **The report be received and noted.**

## **6 Modern.Gov & Councillors IT Provision – Update**

- 6.1 The Chairman expressed his gratitude for what he viewed as a seamless transition and roll out of iPads and Modern.Gov post election, and therefore he wished to put on note his thanks for all of the hard work and dedication of the Member Services Team in making this happen.
- 6.2 The Member Services Officer advised that following the election, all Members had been issued with iPad devices and the printing of agendas, save for Planning Committee, had ceased. It was noted that this was a time of transition and a survey had been sent to all Members to gain a better understanding of any issues that had been a barrier to using the system. There had been limited response to the survey with only two of the fourteen responses being broadly negative. She advised that the Member Services Team were available to assist with any queries that Members had with either the iPad or Modern.Gov, and to that end dedicated drop-in sessions had been arranged over the coming months. These sessions would be supported by both the Member Services Team and IT, with an experienced Councillor attending each session to pass on tips and tricks they had learnt from using the system as part of the Early Adopters Programme.
- 6.3 In response to a question, the Member Services Officer advised that the 'Web Library' section of Modern.Gov would be utilised for training documents, policies and useful information. She endeavoured to contact Members to ascertain what other information they felt should be hosted in the Web Library.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress to date be received and noted.**

## **7 Report Tracker & Future Meetings**

- 7.1 The Report Tracker was noted and the date of the next meeting was amended to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019.

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