
OSMC Task Group Report: ICT / Digitisation

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	06 October 2020
Lead Member:	Councillor Tom Marino (Task Group Chairman)
Report Author:	Report prepared on behalf of the Task Group
Forward Plan Ref:	n/a

1 Purpose of the Report

To outline to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) the work undertaken by the task group created to review the Council's Digital Strategy and the Corporate Digitisation Programme.

2 Recommendations

2.1 OSMC is recommended to:

- note the changes made to the Digital Strategy in response to comments made by the Task Group prior to the Strategy being approved;
- approve the proposal for the Task Group to continue to meet on an on-going basis to monitor delivery of the Digital Strategy.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	None
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	None
Risk Management:	It is considered that the adoption of the recommendations of this report will reduce the risk that ICT / Digital projects fail.

Property:	None			
Policy:	Adoption of the recommendations of this report will improve the Council's Digital Strategy.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:		X		
ICT Impact:	X			Adoption of the recommendations of this report will improve ICT / Digital services.
Digital Services Impact:	X			
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Digital Strategy supports the priorities set out in the Council Strategy.
Core Business:	X			Delivery of the Digital Strategy will improve business as usual services.

Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	See full details in the report.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 At its meeting on 29 October 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) agreed to review the draft ICT / Digital Strategy and Corporate Digitisation Programme.
- 4.2 The aims of the review were:
- to ensure the draft Digital Strategy was fit for purpose;
 - to identify any barriers to implementation of the strategy; and
 - to ensure that implementation of the Corporate Digitisation Programme is delivering the required change, with appropriate resourcing, prioritisation, and project management.

Methodology

- 4.3 The review was conducted by a cross-party Task Group consisting of Councillors Jeff Brooks, Gareth Hurley, Tom Marino and Steve Masters, with Councillor Tom Marino elected as Chairman.
- 4.4 The Task Group met four times between June and August 2020 to review the draft Digital Strategy and Digitisation Programme, and to ask questions of Council officers. There was active participation by members and the group benefited from the experience and insight those involved.
- 4.5 The Task Group proposed a number of minor changes, which were incorporated into the Strategy prior to being approved by Councillor Jo Stewart by Individual Executive Member Decision on 20 August.

Summary of Findings

- 4.6 Changes incorporated into the approved Strategy in response to the Task Group's recommendations, include:
- References to procuring commercial off-the-shelf software as a key principle;
 - Highlighting the need for sufficient funding and resources to be made available in order to deliver the projects identified in the Programme;
 - Additional detail on performance indicators, baselines and targets to be used to measure delivery of the strategy and achievement of desired outcomes;

- Minor amendments made to the formatting and wording of the Strategy.

Recommendations

4.7 Following discussions with the Chairman of OSMC, the Task Group has indicated that they would like continue to meet in order to review the delivery of the Strategy and to track its delivery and performance.

Acknowledgements and thanks

4.8 The Chairman and Members of the Task Group would like to thank Kevin Griffin (Head of Customer Services and ICT), Phil Rumens (Digital Services Manager) and Evangeline Haggerty (Energy and Programme Delivery Project Officer) for their participation in the Task Group, for answering all of the questions and for amending the Strategy to take account of the Task Group's comments. Thanks also to Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer) and James Townsend (Policy Officer (Executive Support)) for supporting the Task Group.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Digital Strategy sets out how the Council will embrace digital techniques to change how the Council works and to improve its communications and service delivery.
- 5.2 The Council's vision for digital transformation is to apply the most recent, and future practices, processes and technologies to respond to customers' raised expectations of service delivery.
- 5.3 The Strategy articulates how the Council will redesign its processes and make best use of data in order to optimise the route from customers' needs or requests to service fulfilment, thereby reducing the amount of resources consumed by each process.
- 5.4 This optimised service delivery will employ a range of access channels and in many cases will be available outside of the normal operating hours of the Council.
- 5.5 The Strategy includes a high-level delivery plan, which identifies the current Programme of planned activities to achieve the strategy's aims and objectives. A separate delivery plan with greater details of each of the programme elements will be produced to control and monitor progress.
- 5.6 It also includes measurable success criteria for each initiative, with baselines, targets and dates for completion.

Background

5.7 The Task Group held four meetings outlined in the table below:

Meeting date	Focus of meeting
09 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election of the Chairman• Agreement of the Terms of Reference and Methodology

Meeting date	Focus of meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Digital Strategy • Overview of ICT / Digital Transformation Programme • Overview of New Ways of Working (NWoW) Programme
23 June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election of Vice Chairman • Discussion of Digital Strategy
6 July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Responses to Written Questions • Agreement of Information Required for Review of ICT / Digital Transformation Programme
19 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Updated Digital Strategy • Review of Success Measures • Review of Electric Vehicle Charge Point Information • Discussion of NWoW Reviews • Discussion on Systems Thinking in ICT / Digital • Discussion on Council Telephone Systems • Discussion on Benchmarking • Discussion on Task Group Outputs

5.8 Kevin Griffin (Head of Customer Services and ICT) and Phil Rumens (Digital Services Manager) attended all of the above meetings to answer questions relating to the Council's Digital Strategy and the associated ICT / Digital Transformation Programme, while Evangeline Haggerty provided written responses to questions relating to the provision and use of electric vehicle charge points.

Methodology

5.9 As can be seen from the table above, the Task Group met on four occasions over the summer. The Task Group interviewed officers who had been involved with the process.

Findings

5.10 The findings of the Task Group are summarised with reference to the questions in the Terms of Reference:

5.11 **Question 1 – Is the Council's Digital Strategy fit for purpose and how do we keep it up to date?**

- 1a) The Strategy was generally considered to be a sound, well-structured and well-written document and was considered to be largely fit for purpose.
- 1b) The Council has an incredibly complex and diverse range of ICT systems and processes, which reflect the broad range of services it delivers to customers – this is well captured in the Strategy.
- 1c) The intention is for the document to be regularly reviewed throughout its lifetime to ensure it remains up to date.

5.12 Question 2 – How does the strategy address issues around digital inclusion?

2a) Issues of digital inclusion have been effectively addressed.

- The Council follows national guidance around easy-to-read content.
- In 2019 the Shaw Trust was commissioned to review the Council's website and other online platforms for accessibility against the WCAG2.1 AA standard. Changes were made in response to the review and Shaw Trust will be asked to repeat the assessment.
- The proposed move towards a multi-channel offer will offer greater choice to customers with non-digital options retained, ensuring that citizens are not excluded due to a lack of access to digital channels or relevant skills.

5.13 Question 3 – How will the strategy improve customer experience and how will this be measured?

3a) The Strategy will improve the customer experience by:

- enabling them to engage via the communications channel of their choice;
- streamlining processes, and
- making better use of data, with improved integration across Council services.

3b) Customer research and engagement is the first of five principles that guide the Strategy and officers are committed to listening to customers to better understand their needs and to act on consultation feedback design processes that better meet their needs.

5.14 Question 4 – What does implementation progress look like and is it driving the required change?

4a) The ICT and Digital Teams have moved at pace to respond to the COVID pandemic and there is an expectation that this pace will be retained.

4b) The high-level delivery plan indicates a good level of ambition.

4c) The programme is front-loaded with space for additional projects to be added later in the plan period.

4d) ICT projects are being fed through from the New Ways of Working reviews.

5.15 Question 5 – Are there any barriers beyond time and staffing?

5a) The Strategy articulates a number of different ways to ensure projects are adequately resourced by people with the requisite skills, which could be altered to suit the needs of individual projects.

- 5b) The Task Group recognised that delivery of the ambitious programme could only be achieved if sufficient funding and resources were made available and that this should be acknowledged.
- 5c) No other potential barriers were identified.

5.16 Question 6 – How does prioritisation work and is the process driven by business cases?

- 6a) Governance processes are mature and fit-for-purpose, with all projects requiring a clear business case in order to progress.
- 6b) Projects are appropriately prioritised according to a clear set of criteria articulated in the strategy.

5.17 Question 7 - Is the project management effective?

- 7a) The majority of recent projects appear to have been delivered to time and budget, particularly where the scope has been well-defined and is appropriately understood from the outset.

5.18 Question 8 - Is there evidence that the outcomes are being delivered?

- 8a) The Strategy has only just been approved, so it is too early to tell for many areas of the Strategy.
- 8b) Good progress has been made in a very short space of time in response to the Covid pandemic, including:
 - Staff supported to work from home in large numbers;
 - Effective use of Zoom, supporting home working and remote public meetings;
 - Deployment of Granicus to improve communications with residents and businesses during the Covid pandemic.
- 8c) The monitoring framework being used to track delivery of the Strategy had a number of missing / incomplete elements.

5.19 Question 9 – Should the Council commission a Digitisation Healthcheck??

- 9(a) The Task Group considered that the Strategy articulated a clear approach to improving ICT / Digital Services and had a good idea of baseline conditions, so a Healthcheck was not considered necessary.

Proposals

5.20 The investigation highlighted a number of minor areas where the Strategy could be improved:

- References to procuring commercial off-the-shelf software rather than bespoke solutions as a key principle;

- Highlighting the need for sufficient funding and resources to be made available in order to deliver the projects identified in the Programme;
- Additional detail on performance indicators, baselines and targets to be used to measure delivery of the strategy and achievement of desired outcomes;
- Minor amendments made to the formatting and wording of the Strategy.

5.21 These amendments were incorporated into the Strategy prior to being approved by Councillor Jo Stewart by Individual Executive Member Decision on 20 August.

5.22 In addition, members of the Task Group have indicated that they wish to continue to meet on an on-going basis to monitor delivery of the Digital Strategy. Digital Transformation is considered to be of paramount importance to the Council improving its services. The Task and Finish Group would offer an agile and useful addition to existing project management processes, ensuring continuity of involvement throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Not to make changes to the Strategy. This would have resulted in weaknesses in the document not being addressed.
- 6.2 For the Task Group to be disbanded and for OSMC to retain oversight of the Strategy. However, OSMC only meets four times a year and could not be as responsive to emerging issues.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Although most of the modifications proposed were relatively minor, the Strategy has demonstrably benefited from the review by the Task Group. There would be further benefits from continued oversight of delivery of the Strategy by the Task Group. It is considered that a Task Group would be better placed to do this than OSMC, since it can be more flexible and can be convened at short notice to respond to emerging issues.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Terms of Reference

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: All wards.

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