

**Report of**                      **Executive Director**

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**Title**                              **Digital Challenge**

**Wards affected**              All

**This report concerns the Digital Challenge business case and its proposals.**

**1.      Decision Required**

1.1      To approve the Digital Challenge business case, attached at Appendix 1.

**2.      Reasons for Decision**

2.1      To enable the implementation of the Digital Challenge proposals, which will:

- Improve customer service
- Improve effectiveness
- Increase productivity
- Improve efficiency
- Deliver significant savings.

**3.      Alternative Options**

3.1      The alternative option would be not to approve the Digital Challenge business case, but that would fail to capitalise on the investment included in the ICT Strategy to achieve the benefits and savings in this business case.

**4.      Supporting Information**

4.1      This Business Case builds on the investment and changes that resulted from the Fundamental Service Review of Customer Contact, approved by Cabinet in 2012.

4.2      The Council has made great strides over recent years by enabling flexible working, improving its processes and transparency, making our services more accessible, and offering our customers more choice.

4.3      The next steps will involve embracing truly paperless working, extended self-serve and more efficient sharing of information across staff, councillors, customers and partners.

4.4      This business case has been developed with the involvement of:

- Officers from across the organisation
- Senior Management Team
- Essex Online Partnership and other local authorities
- The Portfolio Holder for Resources.

## 5. Outcomes

- 5.1 The outcomes that will be delivered by the Digital Challenge are described in Section 5 (on page 12) of the business case. They include:
- Our customer processes, billing and payments, and our outbound contact are digital by default (with face-to-face or telephone back-up to ensure accessibility)
  - Easier access for councillors and staff to all files and documents by default
  - All non-sensitive data to be searchable by the public, which will make data more accessible and enable self-serve
  - Fully electronic working is adopted by councillors and staff
  - Paper in the back office is removed
  - ICT systems that free councillors and staff from the confines of having to work in a specific location are introduced
  - Duplication in processing and storage is removed
  - The number of ICT applications we use is reduced.

## 6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The proposals contribute to the vision and broad aims set out in the Strategic Plan of a vibrant, thriving, prosperous and welcoming place. Technology acts as an enabler for the delivery of the Council's Strategic Plan over the next three years.

## 7. Consultation and publicity considerations

- 7.1 Our ICT needs to meet our customers' expectation of how services are delivered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Times are changing fast, and many of our customers are very familiar with digital technology and expect instant or 24/7 access to services. They also expect this to be accessible from any device, at a time and place that suits them, and tailored to their needs and situation.
- 7.2 Councillors have highlighted their requirement for smarter, simpler access to the information they need to support their communities.
- 7.3 The 2015 staff survey highlighted that there was room for improvement with the equipment/software available to staff, access to information and knowledge, and ease of communication between teams. This business case addresses these needs by modernising our infrastructure, and improving the ability to share information.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The full financial implications of the Digital Challenge are described in Section 8 (on page 19) of the business case. The table below summarises the time-limited investment required and the savings that will be delivered.

	<b>Year 1 2016/17 *</b> £'000	<b>Year 2 2017/18</b> £'000	<b>Year 3 2018/19</b> £'000	<b>Year 4 2019/20</b> £'000
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(740)</b>	<b>(1,065)</b>	<b>(1,120)</b>
<b>Revenue Costs</b>				
Implementation capacity	150	150	80	50
<b>Net savings</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>(590)</b>	<b>(985)</b>	<b>(1,070)</b>

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 The screening stage for an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out, and is available by [clicking this link](#), or following this pathway from the homepage of [www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk): Council and Democracy>Policies, Strategies and Performance>Equality and Diversity>Equality Impact Assessments>Corporate and Financial Management>Managing Customer Experience. We are using this EQIA as the Digital Challenge is an enabler for the achievement of these aims and outcomes, and will be supplemented by additional screening if needed during implementation.
- 9.2 By providing a flexible choice of ways to engage with the Council, we are improving the accessibility of our services for customers, and how we respond to their individual circumstances and choices. One of our key aims is to ensure that our services and resources are focused on dealing with the greatest needs of our customers. People will be supported in the accessing of the services they require.
- 9.3 The Council has a proactive approach to improving access to digital and online services. The Council's website includes free, instant online translation tools to help people who do not have English as their first language to access our services and in the completion of forms. Many people with disabilities have found IT systems to be very helpful, as specialist software enables the user to customise their online experience to their individual needs, for example font size, colour, or a physical adaptation. Much of this software is now available for free, following customer demand and significant improvements in IT.
- 9.4 A summary of resources is shown on <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/go-online>. This include local support, tips, one to one support, online drop-in sessions at venues across the borough, digital skills for life course, community champions, go online advisors, online accounts. These help to minimise or remove any negative impacts, and help to support all customers to embrace digital options and to access 21st century technological advances.
- 9.5 We are also looking to improve the opportunities for working with diverse external partner organisations to promote self-service in a range of community outlets across the borough, which should bring different customer groups together and provide an environment that enables them to support and learn from one another.

## **10. Other Standard References**

- 10.1 There are no specific Human Rights, Community Safety or Health and Safety implications at this point. As with Equality and Diversity above, the implications for these areas will be considered at the implementation stage.

## **11. Risk Management Implications**

- 11.1 Key ICT risks are already included in the Corporate Risk Register. A detailed risk assessment and register will be finalised, in line with the timescales around approval of this business case and development of the implementation plan.

## **Background Papers**

None.