

## **MINUTE EXTRACT SCRUTINY PANEL 23 FEBRUARY 2016**

### **51. Digital Challenge**

Pam Donnelly, Executive Director, and Matt Sterling, Assistant Chief Executive, presented the Digital Challenge report. The report requests the Panel review and comment on the Digital Challenge business case, prior to the Cabinet meeting on 16 March 2016.

Pam Donnelly stated that the business case provides an exciting opportunity to implement many of the lessons learnt through service reviews, which gave the Council a greater understanding of the demands from customers.

The Digital Challenge represents the next significant leap for the Borough Council, and follows on from the approval of the ICT Strategy, which came to the Scrutiny Panel on 26 January 2016 and provides the investment in technology to enable the change. The Digital Challenge focuses on three audiences, members of staff, Councillors and customers. With regards to staff and Councillors, the aim is to ensure that the technology enables both groups to access information at any time and in any location, increasing the level of flexibility and reducing reliance on paper. With regards to customers, it's ensuring that the Council provides more online services that are demanded, but also identifying those who do not have internet access and providing better services for them. Pam Donnelly highlighted that the Digital Challenge will also provide an opportunity to generate income and possibly sell capacity to other organisations.

Matt Sterling provided an outline of the aims of the Digital Challenge including the ability for customers to access Colchester Borough Council services online 24 hours a day seven days a week. In addition the Council would also look to move its correspondence from post to e-mail as a default and aim for a paperless organisation. Matt Sterling also highlighted that the Digital Challenge would look to make the experience for customers who are supplying evidence to the Council easier and also implement electronic payment methods. In addition the aim is to increase the level of data available to members of the public, and for Councillors and staff to be able to work from any device in any location.

With regard to the finances included within the report, the majority of the investments will be made within the first two years, with increasing levels of savings realised over the four year programme. Matt Sterling also highlighted the current Digital Challenge examples with the recently approved Customer Enterprise Programme with Basildon District Council, on-going pilots with Office365 and the implementation of a new HR and Payroll system.

The following issues were raised by Councillors;

- Councillor Hogg – What steps are being taken to ensure members of staff and Councillors are equipped to keep up with the pace of change.
- Councillor Harrington – Asked for reassurance that Councillors would be able to retain a printed agenda.
- Councillor Hardy – Questioned where the £12m of savings came from and requested that human interaction with the Council is retained, also questioned what companies the Council would be working with in delivering the Digital Challenge.
- Councillor Young – Requested that reporting tools could be linked with Essex County Council's to help members of the public and Councillors.
- Councillor Pearson – Questioned how the assisted technology users are incorporated in to the Digital Challenge. Highlighted that the Town Hall meeting rooms do not include power points for charging mobile devices when in meetings or wired internet connections for when the Wi-Fi is not operating. In addition requested that skilled staff are used out in the community hub spokes to help provide assistance to members of the public.
- Councillor Cope – Queried whether there were members of staff who did not have access to e-mails. Also questioned use of the cloud and the ownership of file systems as well as information on developments in IT, particularly parking.
- Councillor Davies – Questioned whether the savings were realistic and achievable.

Pam Donnelly and Matt Sterling provided the following responses;

- In response to Councillor Hogg, training has been included within the Staff induction programme and training for councillors will also be provided.
- Matthew Sterling stated councillors would still be able to receive a printed agenda if requested. Receiving an electronic version would enable councillors to not only easily search through the agenda, but also annotate agendas for use at the meeting on a mobile device.
- The £12m total is compiled from the fundamental services reviews that have taken place across the organisation over the last few years. In addition the £12m includes the levels of additional income that is anticipated. In response to the query about ensuring the level of human contact being retained, Pam Donnelly stated that officers will always be available by telephone to support the work of Councillors; for members of the public the community hubs have recently been redesigned to improve the quality of the service. In addition, there will be spokes to the community hubs offering services by officers out in the Borough. With regard to the companies the Council is working with, the Council through the Digital Challenge will be looking to a range of companies who will provide tried and tested software rather than bespoke designs.
- Matt Sterling stated that Colchester Borough Council is a member of the Essex Online Partnership which is continually looking for ways to improve online integration.
- In response to Councillor Cope Pam Donnelly confirmed that there are members of staff who do not have access to e-mails, this includes refuse

collectors. Colchester Borough Council is looking into members of staff without access to e-mail accounts accessing the information on their own devices. Matt Sterling stated that file systems will be kept in the cloud with access available online from any location and password protected. This would then reduce Colchester Borough Council's reliance on physical servers and file duplication. With regard to IT developments in Parking, Pam Donnelly stated that further information could be provided after the meeting.

- Pam Donnelly confirmed that the savings are realistic and available as the savings targets come from each service area individually and then brought together. The savings and ideas identified will be monitored as part of the Medium Term Financial Forecast.

*RESOLVED* that the Scrutiny Panel reviewed and commented on the Digital Challenge.