

To: City Executive Board
Date: 17 November 2016
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Digital Strategy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek approval for a Digital Strategy and its implementation.
Key decision:	Yes
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	An efficient and effective council
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendations:	That the City Executive Board resolves to:
1.	Approve the Digital Strategy and associated action plan as set out at Appendices 1 and 2
2.	Delegate authority to the Head of Business Improvement in consultation with the Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services the annual review of the action plan

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Digital Strategy
Appendix 2	Draft Action Plan
Appendix 3	Local Government Digital Service Standard
Appendix 4	Risk Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Today 86% of adults in the UK are online (93% in Oxfordshire). More people are going online for shopping, banking, information and entertainment because online services tend to be quicker, more convenient and cheaper to use. Public expectations for better online public services are growing.
2. The Government has had a digital strategy since November 2012 which has guided the transformation of its services to being 'digital by default'; ensuring that access

to information is better, that services provided are convenient to customers and more efficient and cost effective to run.

3. The Council's ICT Strategy 2015-18 referenced the need for a more detailed digital strategy to inform and support its ambitions in this area. The ICT strategy itself focuses on infrastructure and process to deliver online services, the proposed digital strategy focuses more on culture and new ways of working to ensure customers remain at the heart of service delivery.

Our progress to date

4. In 2016 the Council achieved full corporate accreditation in Customer Service Excellence, with all services being able to demonstrate how they listen and respond to our customers' needs. Our satisfaction levels with telephone and face-to-face are very high (at 99.2% and 90% respectively for September 2016)
5. We have also made great strides in recent years in improving online services for our customers;
 - We developed a mobile app in March 2015 providing automatic bin collection day reminders, 20 'report it' forms, councillor details, news and access to local planning applications. Over 3,100 reminders are delivered each month.
 - We launched a new website for the Council in January 2016, completely re-writing all its content, improving search results for customers and applying a new design to encourage mobile device use. This receives over 120,000 visits per month.
 - At the same time we launched an improved online housing repairs service for tenants allowing them to choose appointment times and see their repairs history. We are making further improvements to this to allow changing appointments and to include gas servicing.
 - We redesigned our online forms based on user feedback and advice from national experts to improve the customer experience.
 - We have worked to improve accessibility for our online services through improved design, easier to read content and tools that assist people (e.g. Browsealoud, which reads out web page text and can translate into different languages).
 - We have launched new websites for Oxford Town Hall, Direct Services and the District Data service using the approach as our main website, and are working on two replacement sites to launch this year (Oxford Strategic Partnership, Oxford West End).
6. We are starting to see the impact of these recent improvements;
 - More people are contacting us using online channels; our year to date performance for September 2016 was 31.1% of all contact we received representing a 5.4% increase over the same time last year.
 - More people now using mobile devices than desktops to view our website (42% in December 2015 increasing to 50.3% in September 2016)
 - There has been a 4% increase in the number of customers completing our online forms rather than abandoning them midway through.

- We currently deal with over 102,000 online transactions each year, with 184 separate online services made available to customers through our website.
7. To keep pace with increasing customer expectations and to encourage even more online interaction to help reduce costs we need to build on this success and look to national best practice in this area to guide our direction of travel.

Adopting national best practice

8. The Government's digital strategy, and the formation of the Government Digital Service (GDS) to implement it, has had a major impact on the approach to designing and implementing online services in the public sector. Focusing on high-volume transactions (e.g. renewing a tax disc), GDS has used extensive testing to identify approaches that work best for customers through introducing standards, simplifying language and design and adopting project management techniques that have been proven to deliver. It has also championed openness and transparency in how it works to share its learning with others.
9. To date, Local Government has not had the same coordinated approach to online services. However, in April 2016 LocalGovDigital, a sector-led body of digital professionals working in local government, adapted the Government's approach to produce the Local Government Digital Service Standard (appendix 3). This is intended to help local authorities to work together better to solve common problems, improve standards, press digital suppliers to improve their products and offer better services to their customers. Oxford was one of 12 local authorities involved in shaping this Standard, and many of its principles form part of the proposed digital strategy.

Our vision and objectives

10. The proposed Digital Strategy, attached at Appendix 1, is formed around five key themes. These have been designed to focus on improved outcomes for customers while addressing the areas that have arisen through internal consultation and data analysis.
11. Our vision is to deliver world class digital services to our customers through;
- Being Digital by Design; making our digital services so good, convenient and easy to use that people make them their first choice and are able to succeed the first time unaided
 - Promoting inclusion; ensuring everyone has the capability to access and use digital services to do things that can benefit them day-to-day
 - Putting the customer in control; enabling our customers to engage with us in ways that best suit them and designing digital services that put customers first.
 - Supporting business growth; Supporting local economic growth through by improving digital infrastructure and partnering with business to exploit new digital opportunities
 - Using collaboration; achieving better outcomes through working together, sharing good practice and making our data open by default

12. An action plan (Appendix 2) sets out how the Strategy will be implemented. This will be reviewed annually to ensure that it keeps pace with changes in customer priorities and new developments in the sector.

Financial implications

13. A budget provision of £15,000 for 2017/18 and 2018/19 has been proposed to cover the implementation of the strategy, namely;

- a. Development work to improve the accessibility of our digital services
- b. Development work to focus on improving website satisfaction.
- c. Resourcing customer research and user testing to help us design better digital services.
- d. Supporting a skills and awareness training programme to help with digital inclusion

14. Other projects arising from the Strategy will be funded from within this budgetary provision or from other existing resources. If they cannot be funded from these, new bids will be brought forward as part of the budget process.

Legal issues

15. There are no known legal issues.

Level of risk

16. A completed risk register is attached as appendix 4.

Equalities impact

17. Adoption of this Strategy will have no adverse impacts on equality beyond current policy and practice. Inclusion is a key theme for improvement in the strategy, and the action plan sets out steps to improve this.

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Background Papers: Glossary of terms used