

**To:** City Executive Board

**Date:** 17 November 2016

**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee

**Title of Report:** Digital Strategy

## Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To present the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee on the Digital Strategy.

**Scrutiny Lead Member:** Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Susan Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

**Recommendation** of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

**That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the five recommendations set out in the body of this report.**

## Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the Digital Strategy at its meeting on 7 November 2016. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services and the Digital Development Manager for attending the meeting and answering questions.

## Summary and recommendation

2. The Digital Development Manager presented the report. The Digital Strategy sets out how the Council will use technology to improve services to residents and business. The Strategy has a customer focus and will look to provide automated services (for those who wish to use them) and broaden the range of services provided to customers using digital channels.
3. The Committee discussed the challenges of making services accessible for people who don't use computers. The Committee received assurances that the Council wouldn't be stopping services to those who are not online and that officers would still be available for members of the public to talk to. The Strategy

was about making more services accessible on-line. Technology was also recognised as increasing inclusiveness, through enabling people with disabilities to access council services online. The Committee welcomed the fact that the new Council website met AA accessibility standards and suggested a number of groups and individuals the Council could engage with around online accessibility, such as the student disability community and the University of Oxford's Accessibility Advisor.

**Recommendation 1: That the Council consults with disability groups on improving the accessibility of online council services.**

4. The Committee noted that the Strategy did not extend to visitors to Oxford, they felt that as many search engines directed visitors to the Council website there was a need for the Strategy and Action Plan to outline how the Council would direct these visitors to tourist providers.

**Recommendation 2: That the Digital Strategy and Action Plan considers the needs of visitors to Oxford, in particular how the Council website could direct visitors to tourist providers.**

5. The Committee felt that the planning part of the council website was quite difficult to navigate and improving this should be a priority in the Action Plan. The Committee heard that the planning software was provided by a national provider and that it would be a challenge to make significant improvements until such a time as the contract was due for renewal.

**Recommendation 3: That the Council prioritises improving the ease of use of online planning services, and includes this longer-term aim in the Action Plan.**

6. The Committee thought it would be beneficial to have access of the Council website at the community centres so that people without computers could access council services online.

**Recommendation 4: That consideration is given to whether the Council's website could be more accessible from community centres.**

7. The Committee thought the Digital Strategy could help transform how the Council engaged with its customers. The Committee suggested there may be scope to combine the Digital Strategy with the Community Engagement Strategy.

**Recommendation 5: That consideration is given to whether the Digital Strategy could be combined with the Community Engagement Strategy in future.**

**Name and contact details of author:-**

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**List of background papers: None**