



**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

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To: Councillors Brookes (Chair), Charles, Gerrard, Hamilton, Needham and Seaton (For attention)

All other members of the Council  
(For information)

You are requested to attend the meeting of the Digital Transformation Scrutiny Panel to be held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices on Thursday, 16th June 2022 at 6.00 pm for the following business.

Chief Executive

Southfields  
Loughborough

8th June 2022

**AGENDA**

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 3 - 7

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the panel.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

Disclosable pecuniary interests and registrable interests relate to entries that are

included, or should be included, on a councillor's register of interests. Non-registrable interests relate to any other matters.

4. DECLARATIONS - PARTY WHIP

5. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions were submitted.

6. DRAFT PANEL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8 - 14

To consider the draft report of the panel and to propose recommendations to the Scrutiny Commission.

The draft report does not include the appendices referred to in it. These will be added once the report is finalised.

7. ACTIONS AND TIMETABLE FOR REVIEW

To confirm any further actions required.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL 27TH APRIL 2022

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Brookes)  
Councillors Charles, Hamilton, Needham and  
Seaton

Councillor Rollings (Cabinet Lead Member for  
Transformation)

Head of Customer Experience  
Communications Manager  
Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gerrard

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. He also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

20. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gerrard.

21. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th March 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

22. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures were made.

23. DECLARATIONS - PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

24. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURE 11.16

No questions were submitted.

25. SCRUTINY SCOPING DOCUMENT

Considered and discussed, the scrutiny scope document for the Panel, updated following the previous meeting of the panel (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

**AGREED** that the scrutiny scope document be noted.

26. PANEL UPDATES

A report of the Head of Customer Experience to provide the panel with information on previously discussed items (supplementary item 7 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

**AGREED** that the panel notes the contents of the appendices.

27. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Manager at Charnwood Borough Council attended the meeting to discuss marketing and communications in relation to digital transformation (item 8 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Communications Manager highlighted the work of the Communications team within the council, which included the management of internal and external communications, social media, press releases, email alerts, website content management, newsletters, a 'What's On?' information page, design and liaising with external partners.
- ii. The Communications team created an average 160-70 press releases and responded to approximately 160 media enquiries annually.
- iii. The Communications team issued 900 email alerts annually and there were approximately £15k members of the public subscribed to receive email alerts.
- iv. The council's social media accounts achieved a reach of approximately 20k people. This was considered to be a good rate in comparison to other local authorities of a similar size. Information on the number of Charnwood residents that used social media in general was not known, although it was estimated that the vast majority of residents did use social media, in line with national trends.
- v. The number of social media followers of the council's accounts had increased by 13.5% on Facebook and 4% on Twitter, during the last 12 months. There was a substantial increase in social media followers during the Covid-19 pandemic, of approximately 400%.
- vi. The area within Charnwood with the most social media followers was Loughborough. The most common age group was 35-44 and most of the council's followers on Facebook were female.
- vii. It was highlighted that average reach for a post on social media from the council's account was 1k, although this varies substantially depending on the nature of the post and reach can be as high as 20k. The council engaged residents with posts on high interest events such as the Queen's Jubilee and the Loughborough Fair.

- viii. The Communications team did regularly promote the council's online services via their social media pages.
- ix. It was highlighted that some members were not confident in using their personal social media accounts to communicate with their residents, and that some members were unsure of how to share content. The Communications Manager stated that the Communications team were able to provide advice and guidance to members that were unsure.
- x. It was stated that by tagging Charnwood Borough Council on social media posts, an alert would be generated and the Communications team would be made aware of the post. This would provide an opportunity for the Communications team to share the content to reach a wider audience in Charnwood.
- xi. It was acknowledged that it was not possible to reach some customers through online channels. It was difficult to ascertain who and where these customers were, although the council had methods of attempting to communicate. The council attempted to reach these customers through offline channels, such as through partner agencies that work closely with communities, print media and by highlighting online services during phone calls with customers.
- xii. It was highlighted that the council encouraged Digital Champions to support residents that were not confident in using digital channels. Many members of staff at the council used IT and digital portals in their day-to-day work. This was valuable because these members of staff were able to support residents, family and friends in using online systems if required.
- xiii. It was acknowledged that members were a valuable resource in enabling the council to connect with residents in the community, enabling information to be communicated. It was suggested that the panel recommended that members could consider becoming digital champions within their wards, assisting residents to become more comfortable with the online services offered by the council or promoting what is available. In order to enable this, members would need to attend a member development session which would cover information on the online services provided by the council and a guide on using social media to reach members of the community.
- xiv. The council's approach was to post interesting and engaging information for residents to acknowledge and share. This would increase the reach and the council's online presence and provide a large audience for further posts containing important information.
- xv. It was suggested that another way to make contact with hard to reach members of the public was through parish councils and parish council clerks.

## **AGREED**

1. That the panel notes the information.

2. That the panel consider a recommendation to encourage members to become digital champions within their wards, assisting residents to become more comfortable with the online services offered by the council or promoting what is available.

28. DEVELOPING SURVEY

In accordance with the scrutiny scoping document, the panel discussed the development of a survey to identify customer needs and preferences (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The following summarises the discussion:

- i. It was highlighted that work was being undertaken to ensure transformation of services was involved in all areas of the council. It was also highlighted that the online services offered by the council were good and that the panel had previously decided there was not a need for an app.
- ii. Online services were promoted through various channels and the Communications team at the council was actively creating content to increase followers and the number of residents engaging with online services.
- iii. The panel agreed that through the discussions of the panel at the previous meetings and at the present meeting, a resident survey was no longer required. Members were content that residents were receiving an appropriate online service and that was being undertaken to improve this further and to encourage and support residents to use online services where possible.

**AGREED** that the resident survey on digital transformation of services was no longer required.

29. WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY TASK PLANNING

To schedule the key tasks in the scrutiny scoping document to be considered at the next meeting of the panel and to consider any work to be allocated to members of the panel in advance of the next meeting (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The panel had agreed that a residents survey was no longer required which meant that there would be no items on the agenda for the next meeting of the panel.

The panel were satisfied that no further information was required and that they felt that they were able to make recommendations at the next meeting of the panel.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 4th July 2022 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication

of these minutes.

2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Digital Transformation Scrutiny Panel.

## **DRAFT REPORT OF THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **Foreword by Councillor Brookes, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel**

Today we live in a society in which is highly reliant on digital services. This is even more so following the Covid-19 Pandemic. Many of us use digital services for shopping, booking appointments and working. It is vital that we, as a Council, ensure we meet the expectations of our customers by providing the most convenient and easy to use services. At the same time, the Council faces a shrinking funding base and the need to identify ways to make services more efficient. This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Digital Transformation Scrutiny Panel which sought to gain information into how the Council can further support the digital offering of Council services and to make recommendations as appropriate.

The Panel would like to thank the internal and external witnesses who gave up their time to provide evidence to assist the Panel with its deliberations. These individuals are outlined in Section 4.



## 1. Background

The topic for this Panel was agreed at the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 28th June 2021 and agreed to be progressed at the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 10th January 2022.

The Panel's first meeting was on 28th February 2022, followed by subsequent meetings on 29th March 2022 and 27th April 2022. After the third meeting the Panel concluded its initial business on 16th June 2022.

## 2. Panel Membership

Chair: Councillor Brookes

Councillors Charles, Gerrard, Hamilton, Needham, Seaton.

## 3. Terms of Reference and Reason for Scrutiny

The Panel's Terms of Reference, agreed by the Panel at its initial meeting on 28th February 2022 and confirmed by Scrutiny Commission on 10th January 2022 were as follows:

*This panel will:*

- *Identify which forms were most used throughout lockdown and whether more forms should be created to support our customers*
- *Identify whether there is a need to create a personalised front-end login portal*
- *If there is a need, would this be for:*
  - *All customers*
  - *Council tenants only*
  - *Another key customer group*
- *If a front end portal is required, what information should be displayed and how will this integrate with existing software.*
- *Identify economies of scale and potential savings for the Council and/ or service.*

The Scope Document for the scrutiny review undertaken by the Panel is attached at **Appendix 1**. This sets out the above Terms of Reference and Reason for Scrutiny. The document outlines the position at the conclusion of the Panel's work and, therefore, includes additional stakeholders and resources identified by the Panel as its work progressed, notes added to assist the Panel, and a summary of the progress made by the Panel.

## 4. Evidence, Stakeholders and Witnesses

The Panel received information from the following stakeholders and witnesses:

#### Information from officers within the Council

- Introduction from Head of Customer Experience on the current position with respect to commercial income generation
- Updates and further information as requested from the Head of Customer Experience and the Information Technology Delivery Manager.
- A demonstration and guidance on the Council's i-Map mapping portal from the Head of Planning and Regeneration.
- Discussion on the communications and marketing strategies used by the Council from the Communications Manager.

#### Information from other Councils

- Discussion and information regarding the 'Digital Coventry' report from Head of IT and Digital at Coventry City Council, Paul Ward.

#### Information from other sources

- Insight from Lead Member for Transformation, Councillor Rollings.
- Research findings from panel members on website experience of other Councils and in the private sector and apps used by other Councils and in the private sector.

#### Documentation

The Panel reviewed documentation as follows:

- Charnwood Borough Council [Corporate Strategy 2020-24](#)
- Charnwood Borough Council [Customer Service Strategy 2022-25](#)
- Charnwood Borough Council [ICT Strategy 2021-23](#)
- McKinsey and Company – [A global view of how consumer behaviour is changing amid Covid-19](#)
- Lloyd's Bank – [UK Consumer Digital Index 2021](#)
- Lloyd's Bank – [Essential Digital Skills Report 2021](#)
- Coventry City Council - [Digital Coventry](#)
- Citizens Online – [Digital Inclusion in Charnwood](#)

Technical Support was provided to the Panel by:

- Karen Barnshaw – Head of Customer Experience
- Ayman Khan – Information Technology Delivery Manager

## **5. Summaries of Panel Meetings**

Summaries of the work undertaken at each meeting of the Panel are set out in the "Progress of Panel Work" section of the Scope Document at **Appendix 1**.

Full details of the information provided by witnesses and the issues considered by the Panel are detailed in the notes of the Panel's meetings listed in Background Papers section of this report, also attached at **Appendices 2**.

The Panel met a total of four times as follows:

- Meeting 1 – 28th February 2022
- Meeting 2 – 29th March 2022
- Meeting 3 – 27th April 2022
- Meeting 4 – 16th June 2022

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The Improvement and Organisational Development Manager stated that the need for an Equality Impact Assessment would be considered following the final submission of the report. (to be confirmed).

## **7. Key Findings**

The Panel obtained evidence from a range of sources both internal and external as described in Section 4 above. In doing so the Panel made use of the evidence provided of practice at other councils and organisations with different digital offerings. The following summarises the key findings of the evidence considered by the Panel.

### Ideas for Digitally Transforming Services

The Panel considered methods by which the Council could implement digital transformation where it was not already planned. Considering evidence provided, suggestions included:

1. Developing an app which could be used by customers to make interactions with the Council easier.
2. Developing a 'hook' which would encourage residents to download an app and continue to use it. A hook would also be beneficial if the Council decided not to develop an app but to promote use of the website more. Some suggestions included continually promoting the benefits of using online services over other methods (time, convenience), ensuring online services are very easy to use and unlikely to cause issues and to link online services to high profile events, such as the Queen's Jubilee.
3. That the Council further developed its virtual meetings capacity to allow residents to meet with officers and customer services through virtual platforms.
4. That the Council's website could be simplified for ease of use and to encourage more engagement.
5. That members of the Council become more involved in the digital transformation of the Council. This might include members receiving training to become 'Digital Champions' within their communities, as well as becoming more active on social media.
6. That Parish Councils and Parish Clerks become involved in the digital transformation processes by working with the Council to identify potentially hard to reach members of the public that may be digitally excluded.
7. That after initially requesting a survey of Charnwood residents to understand their requirements and preferences with regards to the digital transformation of services, this was no longer

## Developing an App

The panel had initially felt that the development of an app would be beneficial as it would allow residents to quickly and easily interact with the Council. It was highlighted that many people find using a smart phone easier than using a computer and so it was felt that an app would increase the number of residents interacting with the Council through digital channels. The panel compiled a list of other Councils that had developed an app and were tasked undertake research relating to this.

Following this research, and after further information provided from the Head of Customer Experience and the Head of IT and Digital at Coventry City Council, the panel decided that the development of an app to increase resident engagement was not viable. Other Councils had had negative experiences following the launch of an app and usage rates were typically low. In addition, the cost of developing of an app would be substantial and was not within the Council's budget.

## Identifying a 'Hook'

Evidence from the Head of Customer Experience, the Head of IT and Digital at Coventry City Council and the Communications Manager had suggested that the identification of a 'hook' would be beneficial in the digital transformation of services. Across other local authorities, online portal usage rates were low. In order to improve engagement, it was necessary to find an incentive to encourage customers to start using online services and then continue to use them.

It was estimated that 80-90% of customers made contact with the Council once a year at present, so it was difficult to incentivize use of online services. The panel were informed that a neighbouring authority had only 5% of total residents regularly using the online services provided by the Council. It was explained that this 5% of residents were mainly accessing self service functions on the Council's online portal, involving accessing financial support.

At a subsequent meeting, the panel received information on the most used online forms and the least used online forms available through the Charnwood Borough Council's website in order to try to identify reasons why some forms were more used than others.

A number of solutions were suggested for 'hooking' customers and retaining their interest. For example, continual promotion of the Council's online services (via social media, during telephone calls with customers). Another example was to ensure the online offering was simple and easy to use and caused very few issues in order to encourage customers to return to the website over using other channels. A further example was to tie online services into other popular events or services. Booking a popular service could require customers to sign up to the portal, such as using a tip.

## Digital Inclusion

It was highlighted that digital inclusion remained an issue within the Borough. There are large rural areas within Charnwood which may not have sufficient broadband capacity to support some of the Council's digital services. In addition, the panel reviewed a digital skills gap analysis which was undertaken in 2020, detailing the estimated digital exclusion risk. There are also many individuals within the Borough that do not want to engage with the Council through digitally, preferring more traditional channels.

The Council continues to support more traditional communication channels such as telephone and in-person conversations, and the Council's Transformation Service Reviews are ongoing to ensure all departments within the Council are updated to provide the best customer service experience possible, and this includes creating easier and more convenient services for the customer. Therefore, the Council is committed to support customers in using online services where possible.

It was highlighted that some members of the community that were at risk of digital exclusion were difficult to reach. In order to overcome this, the Council attempted to reach these customers through offline channels such as through partner agencies working within the community. It was suggested that working with Parish Councils and Parish Clerks may be beneficial to further improve contact with hard to reach members of the community.

It was also highlighted that members of the Council were a valuable resource in connecting with members of the public. It was suggested that members could consider becoming digital champions within their wards, assisting residents to become more comfortable with the online services offered by the council or promoting what is available.

## Ongoing Digital Transformation

At the first meeting of the panel, the Head of Customer Experience gave an outline of the Transformation Service Reviews. Information was provided on areas that each department within the Council had identified could be transformed in order to improve efficiency. The panel was informed that a significant amount of work was already in progress and that some of this would involve digital transformation of services. This included the improvement of the i-Map feature demonstrated by the Head of Planning and Regeneration at the panel's second meeting.

The website management contract was due to be procured in 2023. This would provide some opportunities for upgrading the website. The Panel felt that the procurement should be scrutinized by the Scrutiny Commission at the relevant time.

After receiving information from the Head of Customer Experience, the Information Technology Delivery Manager and the Lead Member for Transformation, the panel acknowledged that the work being undertaken and planned in the future involved all areas of the Council and would substantially improve the digital offer of the Council.

## **9. Recommendations made by the Panel**

In undertaking its work the Panel reached xxxxx conclusions regarding how the council could improve digital transformation .....

The Panel also concluded that ....

The Panel is making the following recommendations to address these issues.

## Recommendations to the Cabinet

### Recommendations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

reasons

### Observations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- .....

## **10. Background Papers**

Agenda Papers and Notes of Panel meetings available on the Council's website at:

<https://charnwood.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=251&Year=0>

Appendix 1 - Scope Document

Appendix 2 – Meetings Notes – 28th February 2022, 29th March 2022, 27th April 2022, 16th June 2022