

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL – 28TH FEBRUARY 2022

Report of the Head of Customer Experience

ITEM 7 CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS

Purpose of the Report

To inform the panel of current and future projects demonstrating the approach to delivering services outlined in the ICT Strategy and the Customer Services Strategy and how technology will support this.

Action Requested

That the panel notes the contents of the report.

Reason

To ensure the panel are informed about the current and future projects being undertaken which will support the ICT Strategy and the Customer Services Strategy, and to develop ideas about how the work of the panel will support this.

Background

The Council has been developing its digital offering over the last 5+ years. Through a range of projects, the Council is now able to offer over 50 online forms, an online booking system for school holiday activities and market holders and access to multiple different social media platforms. There have been further improvements to our website to make navigation and information finding easier.

The Pandemic has seen even more customer choosing to access our services digitally. Over the last year we have seen over 40,000 forms submitted through our website an increase of 160% whilst at the same time visits to our website have increased by 33%. Furthermore, our engagement through social media channels has also increase with our followers of Facebook increasing by 88%.

In 2021 a new ICT Strategy and Customer Service Strategy were approved setting our approach to delivering our services but also how technology will support and enable us to do so. A clear mandate of the scheme is to rationalise the number of ICT software system and maximise the use of existing system. All projects from these strategies are monitored through the SWaP Board. In addition, there are also additional projects in progress at this stage.

Current and future projects

Details of all projects currently underway or in the planning stages that will support the digital aspiration of the Council for customer facing services can be seen here:

Project	Reason	Timescale
Replacement Website	The current website contract is due to come to an end and a procurement process must be completed to procure a new website	12-18 months
Replacement CRM system	The current CRM and forms system has been in place for many years and has limited capability. This provides an opportunity to replace the system with a system which meets the future needs of the organisation. This project has already commenced and is currently in the investigation phase we are working with suppliers to understand the art if the possible	Initial investigation work currently underway. Project completion expected to be end of summer 2023
Single system (Planning, Licencing, public protection and Strategic and Private Sector House)	The new system replaces several departmental systems and introduces the opportunity for directly integrated eforms in these areas that customer could access through our website	Project in progress completion Nov 2022
Replacement Telephone system	The current contract was coming to end and with no further opportunities to extend. A procurement exercise was undertaken a a new supplier confirmed, the new system provides opportunity to integrate social media responses in the contact centre.	Project in progress phase 1 completion April 2022, remaining phases TBC
Housing Online Portal	The Head of Landlordervice has engaged with IT to consider the implementation of an online portal to enable our tenants to be able to access a range of services including view their own rent account and reporting repairs etc. This was previously considered however as there was some research being undertaken to consider a single online portal, as the results of this work identify no business case to continue with a corporate online portal, this option is now being revisited.	Currently at the early initial investigation phase
Transformation Service Reviews	In line with the Service Transformation programme all departments will undergo a review of their services to identify opportunity to increase customer accessibility and digitisation and identify efficiency savings.	Underway and ongoing likely over 3-4 year period
Document Management System	The aim is to provide a solution for all users to scan/digitise and electronically	Currently at the early

	tag and store current and future incoming paper documents using the existing printers/multi-functional devices and the Office 365 applications (SharePoint/OneDrive).	initial investigation phase
Robotic Process Automation and Artificial Intelligence	Looking at technology solutions that would further support the efficient delivery of our service, improving customer experience and reducing costs	Not yet commenced.
Review of corporate email inboxes	A review will be undertaken to identify a more consistent and efficient way to handle customer emails coming into corporate inbox.	Not yet commence due to start March/Apr 2022

Current customer facing technology systems already in place:

Corporate Website – providing information and transactional services to customers. This also includes My Charnwood (<https://my.charnwood.gov.uk/>) which provide personalised information based on location/post codes

Online payments – secure online payment facility for all areas, which is also combined with face to face and telephony payment channels.

Verint Online Forms/CRM system – CRM system is used to record customer interactions that come in through a range of channels including our online forms

Capita Revs and Bens Customer Portal – Online portal allowing customer to access their Council Tax and Housing benefits information, Includes being able to report changes, make arrangement, request discount etc through online forms

Housing Connections – online system to allow customer to bid on homes

Planning Portal – national system that allows the submission and viewing of planning applications.

The online Planning Explorer system supports this further by allowing users to access information on current and historical planning applications, application plans, associated document and status details

Online Registers (<https://data.charnwood.gov.uk/>); queries back-office databases to provide information on;

- Licensing; https://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/public_register_of_licences
- Building Control; Competent Person Database
- Contract register; searches for active and archived procurement contracts

Online submission for job vacancies (www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/jobs) - this integrates with the HR application (iTrent)

Modern.Gov; online paperless systems for Committee administration, Member profiles, and also used for accessing and sharing committee documents.

Digital Considerations

When considering customer facing digital services, we must be mindful of several factors.

- **New Technology** - The impact of introducing any new technology on both back-office services and IT. The Council operates and supports many different IT systems, in line with the ICT Strategy is actively working to rationalise the number of systems. When considering the implementation of a new system it's important not to introduce inefficiencies such as 'double keying' into a process. Our current eforms package currently integrates seamlessly into several services e.g Whitespace (refuse and recycling) this means the customer information is only inputted once by the customer and then integrates seamlessly from one system to another with no officer intervention. However, this is by no means an easy task to complete and can be extremely costly, complex and time consuming to achieve. It was this level of complexity, costs and also the customer demand that previously determine a single online corporate portal would not meet business case requirements.
- **Customer demand** – is there customer demand for this service, there have been many discussions about introducing a Council App or online portal but what's important to understand is, is there a customer need for it that would justify the required investment. We would need to understand what would make a customer download a Council app or are there customers that access our services regularly enough to mean they would want to set up a council online account and access it regularly.
- **Customer capability** – we need to ensure any digital services introduced can be utilised by most of our customers and we are not providing different levels of service or discriminating against those customers that don't have sufficient digital capability to interact with us in this way. We must also ensure that any new technology that is introduced meets the full accessibility standards again, so we are not at risk of discrimination.
- **Costs** – All IT/improvement projects must consider any return-on-investment implications to ensure any investment will deliver:
 - Savings through reduced system costs
 - Increase in capacity of officers, this is not just within the service department this also must take into account support services such as ICT, Customer Services etc.
- **Resources** – do we have the right skills to develop and support the project, what capacity is there available to support the delivery of any projects. What will be the future support requirements.

