

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL  
29TH MARCH 2022**

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

Councillor Ward (Head of IT and Digital, Coventry City Council)

Head of Customer Experience  
Head of Planning and Regeneration  
Democratic Services Officer (EB) and Democratic Services Officer (SW)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gerrard and Needham

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.

9. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gerrard.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

11. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTEREST

No disclosures were made.

12. DECLARATIONS - PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

13. SCRUTINY SCOPING DOCUMENT

Considered and discussed, the scrutiny scope document for the Panel, updated following the previous meeting of the panel.

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

14. PROJECTS UPDATE

A report of the Head of Customer Experience to provide the panel with information related to projects, requested at the previous meeting of the panel, was considered.

Key points of discussion:

- i. It was not clear whether the McKinsey and Company report 'A global view of how consumer behaviour is changing amid Covid-19' would be updated. However, a number of reports had been published by McKinsey and Company which may be relevant to the work of the panel. The Head of Customer Experience agreed that she would highlight any relevant reports to the panel.
- ii. The use of corporate email inboxes was often not an efficient process, as it allowed for free text. A more efficient method of contacting the council was the usage of e-forms with specific fields for residents to populate as this would allow the council to request all relevant information required from the customer in one place.
- iii. It was requested that the panel received data on the usage of all forms used across the council so that the panel could identify customer needs. The Head of Customer Experience agreed to provide this information.

## AGREED

1. That the panel notes the content of the report.
2. That the Head of Customer Experience highlighted any relevant reports by McKinsey and Company to the panel.
3. That the Head of Customer Experience provided data on the usage of all forms across the council to the next meeting of the panel.

## 15. FEEDBACK ON TASKS

Members of the panel provided updates on the work allocated at the previous meeting.

Updates were as follows:

Task	Responsibility
<p>The front end/website experience of other councils, including successes</p> <p><i>Councillor Seaton had liaised with two councils and found that the appearance and feel of a website was significant to user engagement. It was not clear whether the councils that Councillor Seaton spoke to had a good rate of ongoing portal usage from customers that had signed up. Councillor Seaton agreed to enquire about this before the next meeting.</i></p>	<p>Councillor Seaton</p>

<p>Exploring apps available at other councils, including successes</p> <p><i>Councillor Charles liaised with four councils and had detailed feedback from two councils. He stated that these councils did not advocate the use of an app. Feedback ratings from customers using the app were poor and the councils did not recommend using an app.</i></p>	<p>Councillor Charles</p>
<p>Front end/website/apps experience in the Private sector, including successes</p> <p><i>Councillor Hamilton liaised with two private sector organisations. At British Gas, all of the customer tasks were available to complete across all platforms. It was also highlighted that the website reflected an app in terms of the look and feel. It was suggested that this approach could be beneficial because of the ease of use and familiarity, whilst not incurring a significant cost to develop an app.</i></p> <p><i>Councillor Needham was not in attendance and so no update was provided.</i></p>	<p>Councillors Hamilton and Needham</p>
<p>Services offered by Charnwood Borough Council that could be incorporated into an app/ experience for older people</p> <p><i>Councillor Gerrard was not in attendance and so no update was provided.</i></p>	<p>Councillor Gerrard</p>

**AGREED** that Councillor Seaton enquires about the rate of ongoing portal usage from customers at the councils she has previously liaised with.

16. DIGITAL COVENTRY

In accordance with the scrutiny scoping document, to review other Local Authority digitalisation and transformation strategies and processes to learn best practice, the Head of IT and Digital at Coventry City Council attended the meeting to discuss 'Digital Coventry'.

The following summarises the discussion:

- i. It was highlighted that Charnwood had rural areas which may not have the same broadband width as other areas of the borough, and so any services

- offered would need to consider this. An [interactive map](#) was available detailing the superfast connectivity in Charnwood. The Head of IT and Digital at Coventry City Council (CCC) stated that customer experiences of IT should be simple, functional and appealing and that with this formula, broadband width would not be a concern.
- ii. The Head of Customer Experience stated that a digital skills gap analysis was undertaken in Charnwood in 2020, detailing the highest risks in digital skills exclusion. It was agreed that the report containing this information would be shared with the panel before the next meeting.
  - iii. It was highlighted that it was difficult to incentivise customers to continue to use online portals due to the nature of services being offered. It was suggested that promoting the benefits of online portal usage over other methods of contact, could be advantageous (for example, the facility is available 24/7, often quicker, cheaper for the council). Another incentive would be to ensure service via online portals was good (for example, forms working correctly, quick feedback if required).
  - iv. The Head of IT and Digital (CCC) stated that he would provide statistics on the rate of ongoing portal usage at Coventry City Council.
  - v. It was suggested that the council would need to better understand customers in order to effectively enhance the website offering.
  - vi. The digital offer at Coventry City Council used attractive services to encourage sign up to the portal. For example, customers would have to create an account in order to book a slot at refuse centres or to book activities.

## **AGREED**

1. That the Head of Customer Experience provides the digital skills gap analysis report before the next meeting of the panel.
2. That the Head of IT and Digital (CCC) would provide statistics on the rate of ongoing portal usage at Coventry City Council.

*Post meeting note:*

*The Head of IT and Digital (CCC) responded to action 2) providing the following information:*

*Current number of MyAccounts (our online customer portal accounts) – 246,379*

*We have 485 online services in total via MyAccount*

49 of these services require users to be logged in (primarily due to having a booking or payment).

## 17. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The panel discussed concerns with the planning applications process with the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Head of Customer Experience.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration demonstrated the online planning applications portal to the panel and the council's i-Map mapping portal that enables spatial searches of planning applications to be made.

- i. The Head of Planning and Regeneration stated that that he would share a link to access the portal which could be used by members to identify specific planning applications.
- ii. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to find specific planning applications using the search functions on the Planning Explorer Portal as the results of searches were not always listed logically. It was highlighted that a new back-office system was currently being implemented and a new customer focussed applications portal would be available by July 2022. It was anticipated that the user experience of the portal would improve following this.

**AGREED** that the Head of Planning and Regeneration provide the link to access the portal which could be used by members to identify specific planning applications.

*Post meeting note: The Head of Planning and Regeneration provided the following link: [Cadcorp Web Map Layers \(charnwood.gov.uk\)](http://Cadcorp Web Map Layers (charnwood.gov.uk))*

## 18. IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The panel discussed key stakeholders for interviewing at a future meeting of the panel.

- i. The panel felt that there was a requirement to interview further witnesses in order to develop a better understanding of how the recommendations of the panel should be formed.
- ii. The Head of Customer Experience stated that she would consider suitable stakeholders with the intention of inviting witnesses to a future meeting.
- iii. It was suggested that the panel liaise with experts in the marketing field to identify ways to encourage website usage and self-service.

**AGREED** that the Head of Customer Experience considers suitable stakeholders with the intention of inviting witnesses to a future meeting.

19. 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.

No additional work was allocated to members of the panel for the next meeting of the panel.

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 25th April 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.