

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Performance and Administration Committee
Date: 04 February 2016
Reporting officer: Darren Everden, Service Manager (IT)
Subject: Digitising Council Services Update

Purpose and summary of report:

Inform the Performance and Administration Committee on the continued drive for digitising Council Services and the projects arising from the IT Strategy (2015-2018).

Recommendations:

This report is for information purposes only.

1. Background

- 1.1. The IT Strategy (2015-2018) was agreed by the Performance and Administration committee in April 2015.
- 1.2. An enabler for improving service delivery was the provision of a solid infrastructure on which to build digital services.
- 1.3. The IT Services Department (Corporate Services) assist the Digital Team (Communities) with the technical element of the Council's digital presence including development of services, data extraction and system integration.

2. Key Work Streams

- 2.1. Two important areas were scheduled for upgrades following the adoption of the IT Strategy in order to provide greater capacity and improved performance for Council systems. These were;
 - Storage Area Network
 - Virtual Server InfrastructureBoth of these items have been upgraded and are delivering the anticipated improvements.
- 2.2. Working with the suppliers of the Council's business systems we have undertaken a programme of upgrades to ensure their software continues to run on the latest versions of Microsoft Operating Systems and to deploy enhancements present in newer versions of their products. Updates to the Council's major systems (Uniform, Revs & Bens, Document Managements and Financials) have been completed, Housing are in the final stages of User Acceptance Testing and smaller systems have been scheduled with the suppliers.
- 2.3. The Council's email system is scheduled to be upgraded to newer servers at the beginning of February 2016.

- 2.4. The WiFi system at the Civic Centre has been upgraded to provide the latest radio standards (802.11ac running at 5Ghz) with higher capacity access points installed in meeting areas (such as the Council Chamber) to deal with increasing demands.
- 2.5. iPad devices running the modern.gov committee management application have been provided for all Council Members and Management Team.
- 2.6. The Web Developer in IT Services has been working with the Digital Team and external consultants on the design of a new website for gravesham.gov.uk. The Web Developer is now translating these designs into the format required by the Council's Content Management System (Squiz Matrix).
- 2.7. Live Chat was installed and configured on the existing Council website by the Web Developer in IT Services and handed to the Digital Team for training and deployment to Customer Services staff.
- 2.8. Council Tax and Rent Balance online forms were developed by the Web Developer and Business Analyst in IT Services to extract information from the Revenues and Housing back office system and reformat and present the information for display on the website. These services have been promoted and marketed by the Digital Team leading to nearly 2,000 uses of each service in two months.
- 2.9. Service request forms for Bulky Waste and Green Waste have been developed by the Web Developer and Business Analyst in IT Services using a specification provided by the Digital Team. The form uses the central back office Local Land and Property Gazetteer to ensure address data is reliably and consistently captured by the system.
- 2.10. A Pest Control booking form has been developed by the Web Developer and Business Analyst in IT Services using a specification provided by the Digital Team. The form verifies customer information with current benefit claimants in the back office benefits system in order to calculate the correct charge for the service (benefit claimants receive a discount).

3. Future Projects

- 3.1. A number of future projects are either just starting or in the process of being planned. These include;
 - Installation of a new customer contact platform (Firmstep) to replace the existing Customer Relationship Management system (FrontOffice)
 - Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity improvements
 - Review of end user devices (Desktop PC's, Laptops, Thin Clients)
 - Virtual Desktop Infrastructure
 - Network Infrastructure
 - Telephony Infrastructure
 - Wider adoption of cloud services
- 3.2. In addition to this, Joint Kent Chief's recently commissioned consultants from the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) to review the future provision of ICT within Kent and what the role of County, Districts, and existing Partnerships (such as Kent Connects) will be.

3.3. A number of themes were identified for further exploration which include;

- Adoption of a standard wireless system across all public service buildings in Kent, allowing staff and Member's with wireless devices to connect to the internet whenever they are in one of those buildings.
- Promotion of technology for economic and business development in Kent.
- A single view of the citizen between district and county Council's.
- Adoption of a new approach to ICT procurement in Kent to provide a more joined up approach in realising savings from the acquisition of goods, services, and staff.

4. Background Papers

4.1 None

IMPLICATIONS		APPENDIX 1	
Legal	None		
Finance and Value for Money	Costs and savings relating to specific IT Infrastructure and Digital Transformation initiatives have been the subject of separate reports to Cabinet.		
Risk Assessment	None		
Equality Impact Assessment	Screening for Equality Impacts		
	Question	Answer	Explanation
	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	
	c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		
<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>			
Corporate Business Plan	Strategic Objective - Sound and self-sufficient council - a well-run and innovative council supporting its staff to realise commercial opportunities whilst transforming its services to deliver at the best possible value for money.		
Crime and Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.		