

Overview Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 9 June 2022

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Jordan Meade (Chair)

Councillors: Gurdip Ram Bungar
John Caller
Sarah Gow
Leslie Hills
Leslie Hoskins
Lyn Milner
Emma Morley
Diane Morton

Darren Everden	Assistant Director (Transformation & IT)
David Herrington	Service Manager (Digital & IT)
Chris Wakeford	Committee Services Officer - Scrutiny (Minutes)
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Baljit Hayre; Cllr Leslie Hoskins and Cllr John Caller appeared as their respective substitutes.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 31 March 2022 were signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made

4. IT and Digital Strategy 2022

The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) and Service Manager (Digital & IT) informed members of the new Information Technology and Digital Strategy covering the period 2022-2026 and highlighted the following:

- The two strategies were separate but due to the fact they compliment each other it was decided to bring the two together.
- The overall aim of the strategy is to provide a clear direction of travel for the IT and Digital Teams in order to deliver the technology platforms required by the council.
- This direction is articulated via a number of Ambitions, Principles and Objectives.

- The contents of the strategy has taken into account the changes in working environment brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing expectation by our customers for technology focussed services, the impacts of our activity on climate change, improving resilience to a cyber-attack, and the move to new office accommodation in 2025/2026.
- During the life of the strategy, investment in IT and Digital will be required. Individual business cases will be built which will describe the changes in greater detail and identify sources of funding, any impacts on the Medium Term Financial Plan and IT Reserve.
- Provision of Member equipment will be reviewed ready for the Member induction in May 2023.
- A training session for Members on the IT and Digital Strategy has been arranged for 28 June 2022.
- The portfolio holder for Digital and IT is the Leader of the Executive. The monitoring and reporting of our progress against the strategy will be regularly taken through the Corporate Management Team to the Leader of the Executive, Cabinet, and other committees where there is an overlap of interest (such as the Finance and Audit Committee, and the Performance and Administration Committee).
- In addition to this, council members will be briefed on the progress of implementing the strategy via annual training sessions.

Following questions from the Committee, The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) and Service Manager (Digital & IT) highlighted the following:

- Hybrid meetings are referenced in the strategy, and this is the direction of travel that the Council is moving towards.
- The strategy does touch on climate change and the net zero target of 2030 but the majority of information on this matter is being captured separately under the Climate Change Delivery Plan. The Assistant Director (Transformation & IT) noted the suggestion by the Chair that it should be referenced in the strategy that the information on climate change is being captured elsewhere.
- The IT and Digital Strategy is not seeking to replace access to officers / services by non-digital means. Working remotely is subject to the needs of the business of the Council. The new telephony platform can be accessed externally or internally but departments still need adequate resources to answer the calls.
- The Council Tax rebate is quicker to process for residents who already have a direct debit set up with the Council; the process takes a little longer for those who are not already set up on the system as bank details need to be obtained and checks need to be made.
- Technology has really increased staffs remote working capabilities. The Council has also got a lot better visibility on the productivity of staff; evidence is based on performance.
- The Chair suggested that the impact of working from home might be a good scrutiny topic review.
- Member IT equipment (iPads) were issued to cover the lifespan of the current administration; this will be reviewed going forward with the aim to provide a wider range of technology for Members to choose from. This matter will be discussed further at the training session on 28 June 2022 and at future sessions ahead of the May Election.

- The Council understands people's expectations and the importance of having access to online services when they want to use them. The team work hard to make the systems as accessible as possible.
- The Queen's speech did not contain anything that would impact the delivery of the IT and Digital Strategy.
- Cyber preparedness is in the strategy and is an area that is constantly evolving to keep up with the threats. The Council has access to good support networks and receive very useful intelligence information, as well as liaising with Local Authorities who have been victims of cyber-attacks and understanding the key learning points from their experience. The Council regularly carry out training with staff on phishing attacks / simulations, password hygiene, Cyber security audits and scanning of systems.
- The Council has signed up to government funded cyber training for its IT staff.
- Discussions are underway with the Strategic Policy Manager on future Key Performance Indicators and these will be introduced for the next corporate monitoring period.
- It is hard to have an overall metric for 'value for money' with regard to the strategy but some areas could be captured in Key Performance Indicators.
- The strategy does not contain the use Artificial Intelligence; the Council uses data to aid understanding and make sure it is providing the best service.

Some Members of the Committee expressed their concern and frustration over the current IT provision for Councillors and made the point that it is essential that Members have the proper equipment to deal with casework.

Members also requested that residents' levels of IT literacy be considered when moving forward with the strategy.

The Chair commended the good work the IT & Digital Teams have done around cyber security.

Resolved that the Committee noted the report on the IT and Digital Strategy 2022

5. Member Training 2021-22 - Annual Report

The Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny) provided the Overview Scrutiny Committee with a summary of the training that had taken place for all elected Members during the 2021-22 municipal year.

The Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny) highlighted the follow:

- During 2021-22, eleven training sessions have been provided to Members on a wide range of topics
- Overall, the feedback received for the training sessions was positive, with the majority of Members finding the sessions useful and informative. Members also highlighted that the content of some of the sessions had been a lot to consume in one sitting and would benefit from being spread out over two sessions. Members also suggested that it would be beneficial to receive some of the information / text in advance of the session to equip attendees with a good background knowledge.

This information has been fed back to officers / trainers to assist improvements in training provision going forward.

- Members will continue to receive training throughout 2022-23 on an ad hoc basis as required and work has already begun on the Member Induction Programme 2023-24 which will be delivered in the wake of the Borough Elections scheduled for 4 May 2023, further details on the Member Induction Programme will be shared with Members in due course.

The Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny) noted a couple of typos in the Appendix to the report that would be corrected.

Members of the Committee raised the following matters:

- The following training topics would be beneficial to Members:
 - Scrutiny
 - Councillor Safety / Lone worker
 - Safeguarding
 - Health agenda (mental health, suicide prevention)
 - GBC day to day procedures / best officer contact routes for Councillors
 - First aid at work
- More training during the day, if possible
- Try and keep the training to one hour in length
- Provide PowerPoint presentations / information before the training session to aid knowledge.
- More online / virtual training that can be recorded and stored in an information library for all Members to access.
- Streamline the feedback forms and make them digital
- Create a forward plan of all training sessions.

Resolved that the Committee noted the Member Training attendance statistics and feedback for the 2021-22 municipal year.

6. Oral Update from the Sub-Group Chair on the progress of the Scrutiny Topic Review

In the absence of Cllr Baljit Hayre, The Committee Services Officer (Scrutiny) provided the following update on the Scrutiny Review of Street Cleanliness, littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough:

- The last meeting was held in March, were the sub-group met with four Street Champions in the Council Chamber.
- This was followed up with a school visit to Cecil Road in April to see the Council's talk on refuse and recycling.
- The sub-group will meet Street Cleansing Operatives at the Brookvale Depot on Wednesday 22 June at 6:45am.
- One more meeting will be held after the above mentioned meeting and the group hope to publish the full review report by the end of July / first week of August.

The Committee noted that Cllr Peter Scollard was no longer a member of the Overview Scrutiny Committee and clarity would be sought on the future membership of the sub-group for the Scrutiny Review of Street Cleanliness, littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough.

The Committee noted the progress of the Scrutiny Review of Street Cleanliness, littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm