REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2017

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from Policy Committee to establish a One Council 'digital first' approach to transformation.

2. To seek approval to further develop and implement the Digital Development Plan 2013-17.

Information and Advice

3. It is important to note that whilst digital channels are growing in importance and use, digital is only one part of the variety of methods the Council uses to communicate and engage with customers and deliver services.

4. A One Council 'digital first' approach to transformation is outlined in the digital development plan 2013-17. This has been developed following extensive research and identification of best practice, including learning from the Government Digital Service (GDS).

5. 'Digital first' is a commitment to providing digital services so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so, whilst those who can't are not excluded.

6. The Council uses a range of customer-focused digital platforms, which need to be reviewed and maximised in order to meet the changing nature of customer needs. Increasingly, customers look online as a primary source of information and to access services. However, there are a range of alternative ways that the Council uses other than online, such as telephone, face to face and paper communication which will continue to be supported.

7. 'Digital first' is also an aspiration to transform the Council and the way that customers access services, so that savings already identified can be realised and further financial benefits can be achieved in the long term.

8. It is about having digital at the forefront of people's minds when considering customers' needs. It is both a culture change and transformation programme, which ultimately supports the achievement of the Council's Strategic Plan.

Specifically, a 'digital first' approach will help realise higher customer satisfaction and enable financial savings to be made:

- **Financial savings** - Channel Shift is one of the main programmes of work to deliver savings (forming a key part of many of the Outline Business Cases) and involves moving appropriate transactions online to save money and meet customer expectations. In addition to transactions, digital information and communication will play an increasingly important role in helping to establish customer expectations and support the avoidance of need/self-help agenda. Improved digital platforms will help to maximise savings by increasing accessibility.
- **Customer satisfaction and engagement** – as well as being able to complete more transactions online, users will be better informed about Council services and feel more engaged with the democratic process by having more chances for two-way engagement. Both of these measures are key drivers of satisfaction.

9. 'Digital first' includes designing customer-friendly digital services; being innovative and solution-focused; fully integrating digital and traditional communications channels; reaching and engaging with online communities; and making savings through online service delivery where appropriate.

10. The Channel Shift programme will provide the tools for Council services to transform (e.g. eforms, epayments etc). The 'digital first' agenda will ensure that customers can access such tools through digital platforms (e.g. the website). Together, Channel Shift and 'digital first' will enable services to be delivered and accessed online.

11. The Council's Communications and Marketing team currently manages a range of digital platforms including its website, intranet, 'emailme' (an email marketing system which uses GovDelivery), digital TV screens, Wired (an extranet for schools), Eureka! (employee suggestion scheme which uses Wazoku) and a YouTube channel. It also has a range of social media platforms with accounts on Twitter, Yammer, Facebook and Flickr. In addition, there are a number of other digital systems and tools which the Council uses to conduct its business.

12. While there has been some progress made in meeting customer needs through digital channel and platforms, it is recognised further improvement is needed to fully deliver the new Strategic Plan and maximise the cost savings. For example, the Council's website does not fully support the average 30% (and growing) number of visits to it which are from mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

13. The digital development plan is composed of two key strands:

- **An organisation-wide culture change and transformation programme** – to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan and the wider culture change and transformation programme. This involves a One-Council approach to the appropriate and consistent use of digital to realise higher customer satisfaction and enable financial savings to be made.

- **A road map for developing key digital channels and platforms** – to develop digital communication channels and platforms which are designed around the customer's needs and which will support the delivery of key transformation programmes (such as Channel Shift and Lean+, as well as supporting the Superfast Broadband agenda), plus other organisational strategies.

14. The plan will form a key part of a revised Communications and Marketing Strategy that is scheduled to be updated in the New Year, as well as linking with the new ICT Strategy and existing Customer Access Strategy. It has also been designed to help form part of the transformational narrative that is being developed at the Council (as one of the main strategic pillars behind the authority's vision).

15. The plan seeks to pull separate programmes closer together (including Channel Shift, Lean+ and Superfast Broadband) by articulating an overarching vision and providing a platform that facilitates more transactions and better service delivery.

16. A number of individual projects to improve key digital channels and platforms are identified as part of the plan and these have been prioritised and phased. A timetable is included in the Digital Development Plan. The projects address some fundamental aspects such as website hosting and content management system (CMS). Another key project will be the website redesign so that it works for the increasing numbers of visitors from non-desktop devices (smartphones and tablets).

17. A key part of the reviewing and scoping of the specific projects to improve digital channels and platforms, will be to identify how each project supports savings that have already been identified and could drive through further financial benefits in the long term.

18. A review of the intranet to improve performance and satisfaction figures is viewed as another high priority project following the results of the recent Employee Survey 2013 where 15% of employees did not feel the intranet helped them to do their job.

19. It is anticipated that there will be the need for some invest-to-save transformational resource. The amount will need to be assessed as more detailed plans are developed and any financial investment will be carefully considered and will be based on the ability to make greater savings on service delivery in the future.

20. Other parts of the Council will need to contribute resources to the 'digital first' agenda, for example the already approved investment in ICT. Any underspends in Communications and Marketing will be considered as part of any investment needed. If there is not sufficient money, then a business case will be presented to the Transformation Board.

Other Options Considered

21. By continuing with the current systems, infrastructure and prioritisation of work - or designing systems which are not customer-friendly - there is a significant risk that optimal levels of digital take-up, customer satisfaction and channel shift will not be achieved. This means potential cost savings will be lost to the Council.

22. Use of digital and non-desktop devices to access services and information is expected to continue to increase. Therefore failure to make suitable provision or iterate in line with technology and customer behaviour poses a significant risk to the organisation over time.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

23. Customers are increasingly carrying out more transactions online and the Council needs to support this movement, which also delivers considerable cost savings.

24. Overall reputation – digital development affects the key corporate performance measures of overall satisfaction, residents feeling informed and those agreeing that the Council provides good value for money.

Statutory and Policy Implications

25. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

Further work will be done as part of each of the work streams to identify the level of resource that will be needed for delivery. Any financial investment will take into consideration available resources and the opportunity to deliver on-going savings and efficiencies.

Where investment is required outside of already approved budgets in ICT and Communications and Marketing, a full business case will be presented to the Business Transformation board for consideration before being presented to Members.

The Council is proposing to set up a Transformation Fund which may provide some of the resource to meet the potential cost of this programme.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of this plan.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1)   That a 'digital first' transformation is adopted
2)   That the further development and implementation of the Digital Development Plan is approved
3)   That a progress report is brought back in 12 months

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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Clare Yau, Group Manager Media Relations (Acting) on 0115 9773851 or email clare.yau@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (SLB 20/11/2013)

24.   Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report; it is responsible for the Council's internal and external communication policy and its implementation.

Financial Comments (SEM 21/11/13)

25.   The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- Communications and Marketing Strategy 2012-2014
- Equality Impact Assessment

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All