

People Select Committee
Review of Digital Optimisation
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2018-21 themes and objectives:</p> <p><u>Our Council</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing digital access to our services ○ Using existing and new technologies to help us work differently ○ Ensuring that our policies, processes and procedures are as efficient and productive as they can be ○ Ensuring our infrastructure is fit for purpose for a modern organisation • Deliver effective communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to implement the programme to improve the Council's website including further development of digital and social media arrangements 	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>In November 2012, the <i>Government Digital Strategy</i> was published which set out how the government would become 'digital by default' – that is, digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who cannot are not excluded. It was estimated that moving services from offline to digital channels would save between £1.7 and £1.8 billion a year.</p> <p>The strategy acknowledged that most public services are provided by local organisations such as local Council's and the NHS, and that people often use a range of services, not just one at a time. It was also noted that most people and businesses do not differentiate between different levels and types of public services; they just want a good service.</p> <p>From a Council perspective, LocalGov Digital, with the support of the Government Digital Service (GDS), created the Local Government Digital Service Standard (LGDSS) which set out key recommendations to create and deliver excellent quality, user-centered, value for money digital services. Peer networks support Councils in adopting the Standard and publish guidance on how best to implement each of the 15 points it contains – though there is no such network in the North East of England, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council participate in the Yorkshire and Humberside</p>	

peer group events.

A 2012 SOCITM (society for IT/digital leaders) study across 120 local Councils estimated that the cost of contact for face-to-face transactions averages £8.62, for phone £2.83, but for web only 15 pence. The *Digital Efficiency Report* found that the average cost of a central government digital transaction can be almost 20 times lower than the cost of telephone and 50 times lower than face-to-face. Councils have huge numbers of customer interactions every year, and by channelling visitors away from expensive phone and face-to-face interactions and towards more lean and efficient user-friendly digital services, they can serve more customers whilst significantly reducing costs.

Increasing digital provision allows for better customer service and experience, and offers 24 hour-7 days a week access. This can in turn enhance the customer journey by providing greater interaction between the Council and its residents (e.g. Council responses to service feedback can be provided in a more timely manner, avoiding the need for the customer to contact services for an update, which could diminish the customer experience).

Of course, digital exclusion is a legitimate concern, and traditional channels still need to be provided to ensure that customers who are not online are not excluded from services. However, in the face of ongoing cuts to finances and increasing levels of demand, sound implementation and utilisation of technology and digital tools and approaches gives Councils the ability to deal with these challenges more effectively. By providing those residents capable of self-serving with the means to do so, Councils can focus precious resources upon those in society most in need. And supporting the community to develop self-help approaches can prevent some demand from arising in the first place (LGA: *Transforming local public services – using technology and digital tools and approaches*, 2014).

The aim of this review would therefore be to:

- assess how well Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is progressing in its provision of digital services;
- understand how digital services are being tailored to meet the needs of the Borough's residents (personalisation of service);
- consider to what extent the Council facilitates those who need access to digital services, mitigating for digital exclusion through the provision of technology in libraries and assisted customer self-serve;
- ascertain how the Council's digital services are being communicated, and how residents are being engaged;
- explore what can be developed in the future to further encourage the channel shift towards digital services.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What digital services are already provided by the Council, how are these used in comparison to other channels, and what has been the shift over time?

How does the Council ascertain customer satisfaction, and what feedback has it received in relation to issues around current digital service provision and suggestions on improving the customer journey when engaging with the Council?

How does the Council consult and engage with residents on changes to services, and how does it provide feedback on such consultations (including associated costs of this process)?

What will be the impact on traditional channels of increases in digitalisation?

What plans are in place for future digitalisation, and what has been / will be the impact on costs to the Council regarding this provision?

What learning can be established from the experiences of other Local Authorities?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council, residents across the Borough.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

6 months (report to Cabinet in January 2019)

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Government Digital Strategy – ‘Digital by Default’ (2012)
- Local Government Association: Transforming local public services – using technology and digital tools and approaches (2014)
- LocalGov Digital: Local Government Digital Service Standard
- Smarter Digital Services: Case Studies
- SBC: IT Strategy (2017)

New information:

- SBC: statistical information around digital provision (types of transactions, levels of engagement, costs of providing this service), including trends over time and how the Council compares to other Local Authorities.
- SBC: levels of online library usage and data on the proportion of the local population with digital access.
- Other Local Authority approaches to this issue.

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

Local Authority

- Customer Services

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

- Current Council strategy around digitisation, future planning / anticipated developments, and impacts on costs.
- Digital provision across all Council services.
- ‘My Stockton’ (easy access to online services)
- Business Continuity / Recovery Plan
- Statistical information around the main contact channels (face-to-face, telephony, email, online), both past and present.
- Information on volumes and types of transactions for Council services.
- Customer feedback on services provided.

• Communication Team	➤ Consultation and promotions/marketing ('Do it online' campaign).
• Web Team	➤ Website design and integration with customer 'self-serve'). ➤ Social media offer and development.
• Revenue & Benefits Service	➤ Volume and nature of transactional services in this area. ➤ Grant administration.
• Environmental Health	➤ Volume and nature of transactional services in this area.
• Care For Your Area	➤ Volume and nature of transactional services in this area.
Xentrall Shared Services	➤ ICT strategy and future digital development.
Other Local Authorities	➤ Their approach to digitisation and key considerations in improving digital services.

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)

Committee meetings, reports, benchmarking against other Local Authorities.

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?

Committee meetings, review of existing customer survey information ('My Stockton').

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

To add

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

To ensure that the Council is carrying out an appropriate Action Plan and reviewing the current online process, and is focusing on quick wins and understanding longer-term actions.

To examine and learn from best practice in other Councils.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	June 2018	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	13.06.18	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	18.06.18 (inc. background briefing)	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Local Authority Local Authority Xentrall Shared Services Other Local Authorities	16.07.18 17.09.18 22.10.18	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	19.11.18	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	December 2018	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	17.12.18	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	15.01.19	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	24.01.19	Cabinet / Approving Body