People Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Digital Optimisation

(DRAFT) Final Report
December 2018

People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
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<u>Contents</u>

Select Committee - Membership

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Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank the following people for contributing to its work:

- Lorraine Dixon (Digital Transformation and Customer Services Manager) – SBC
- Reuben Kench (Director of Culture, Leisure & Events) – SBC
- Councillor Steve Nelson (Elected Member & Cabinet Member for Access, Communities & Community Safety) – SBC
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- Carly Dixon (Communication, Consultation and Engagement Manager) – SBC
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<u>Foreword</u>

<mark>TBC</mark>

Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell
Chair
People Select Committee

Cllr Louise Baldock
Vice-Chair
People Select Committee

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2018-21 themes and objectives:

Our Council
- Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services
  - 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
  - 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?

In November 2012, the *Government Digital Strategy* 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.

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.

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 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?

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.

1.0   Executive Summary

1.1   This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Digital Optimisation.

1.2   In November 2012, the *Government Digital Strategy* 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.

1.3   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-centred, value-for-money digital services (see Appendix 1 for LGDSS poster). 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 peer group events.

1.4   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.

1.5   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).

1.6   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).

1.7   The main focus for the review was to assess how well Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is progressing in its provision of digital services. A central feature of this was to ascertain how the Council's digital services are being

communicated, how residents are being engaged, and how digital services are being tailored to meet the needs of the Borough's population (personalisation of service).

The Committee felt it was vital to consider the extent to which the Council facilitates those who need access to digital services, mitigating digital exclusion through the provision of technology in libraries and assisted customer self-serve. Moving forward, this review also aimed to explore what can be developed in the future to further encourage the channel shift towards digital services.

1.8   The Committee found that Local Authorities across the country have for some time now recognised the benefits in providing more of their services online, with improved customer experiences and a reduction in Council costs key drivers in the increasing implementation of digital options. Set against the backdrop of continuing financial pressures, finding new, more efficient, ways of delivering services to residents is becoming not so much an ambition, but a necessity.

1.9   All Councils are at a different place in their 'digital journey', and whilst there are encouraging signs around the increasing *My Stockton* take-up, the real challenge for SBC is to raise self-serve rates. Residents across the Borough continue to predominantly use telephone and face-to-face channels (totalling nearly 87% of the contacts in 2017-2018) when dealing with the Council, therefore there is significant potential for benefits if SBC can adopt the right approach to digitalisation, which puts the customer at the heart of future development.

1.10   Strong performance of the current ICT architecture, as well as the ability to add capacity and cope with increased online demand, puts SBC in a good place to enhance and extend its digital offer. The robust security measures that safeguard the Council's ICT systems are essential in giving confidence to customers who use the Council's digital channels.

1.11   Whilst it was acknowledged that to ensure services meet the requirements of the Borough's residents, including those for whom digital services are difficult to access, the Council must seek and understand customer needs and digital capability, it was noted that a specific piece of work around why a large number of people do not use the Council's digital services has yet to be undertaken. The need for this knowledge is recognised within the Local Government Digital Service Standard ('To help increase digital take-up on an ongoing basis it is important to find out why people aren't using the digital service, to gain an understanding of how they currently interact with the service, and why they prefer non-digital methods'), and should form an important part of future planning.

1.12   The Committee was encouraged by the open-minded approach to digital transformation and the use of technology of those Council services who receive the highest number of customer transactions. Clearly, encouraging the channel shift from traditional forms (telephone, face-to-face) to online contact in these services can significantly impact on the Council's self-serve statistics, but as evidenced through other Local Authority focus on Adults and Children's Services (departments under the greatest financial pressures), the potential for digital solutions cuts across the whole spectrum of Council activity.

1.13   It was widely recognised that some of the Borough's residents lack the technology and / or skills to access digital services, and that there will also be people who prefer to use traditional avenues. For the former, the Committee were pleased to hear and see the Council's approach to providing support within the Customer Service Centres and Libraries, and noted the positive comments received by members of the public. In terms of the latter, the Committee welcomed the frequent acknowledgement from all contributors that digital was not the only way, and that other means of communication with the Council needed to be preserved for those unable or unwilling to utilise online options.

1.14   Input from other Local Authorities reflecting on their own digital journeys was a key ingredient of this review, and emphasised the importance of senior management and political support for digital development, a customer-centric and collaborative approach, digital engagement in the community, and the value of an internal digital team and tech partner. The Committee fully support continued dialogue between SBC and other Councils to share ideas and best practice, and it is hoped that new relationships can be built upon with those who contributed to this review, some of whom are recognised as digital leaders within local government.

1.15   Engaging with customers is paramount if the Council are going to encourage a shift to online services. It is one thing to offer digital channels, but residents need to be made aware of what digital options are available to them. The Council should make the benefits of such services clear so those who can use them choose to do so – the essence of 'digital by default'.

1.16   SBC has positive plans in place for digital service provision (reflected in the similar themes heard from other Local Authorities who contributed) which recognise the potential significant benefits of digitalisation, and outline what must be done to achieve these – indeed, a number of developments are already underway in the form of digital pilots and through the Council's 'smarter working' principles. This is balanced with the acknowledgement that digital services are not for everyone, and every effort must be made to ensure those who do not have the required means or want to access online provision can still appropriately engage with a Council service they need. The new Digital Services Group is an encouraging step to enhancing collaboration between departments, and providing focus on those digital projects with the most potential for customer and Council benefit.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

1) **A review of *My Stockton* with regards content and layout be undertaken.**

2) **Work be undertaken to understand why too few of the Borough's residents are using the Council's digital services (in line with the Local Government Digital Service Standard).**

3) **Digital service options on the Council's home page be made more visible / explicit (e.g. 'sign up for *My Stockton*').**

4) **Information on where to get WiFi or access to a computer within the Borough be provided on the Council's website (as per Wigan Council's website).**

5) **SBC should ensure that senior management are able to recognise the potential benefits for digital services across all departments and ensure this is reflected in the culture of the Council.**

6) **Consideration be given to expanding the role of the Council's Digital Services Group to develop SBC Digital Champions within each directorate and to engage with the community.**

7) **SBC embraces the iDEA (The Duke of York Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award) concept, both within the Council itself, and for residents young and old.**

8) **Appropriate skills be developed and resources prioritised within the Council's workforce to design, progress and implement digital services.**

9) **A digital skills development section is included within Council staff appraisals (individual and team requirements).**

10) **Consideration be given as to how, in addition to those areas with the highest number of customer transactions, further digital solutions can be identified and implemented in those Council services with the greatest spend (Adults and Children's Services).**

11) **Collaboration between service areas, ICT and communications and web teams continues to ensure a joined-up approach, as well as fostering wider learning through regular liaison and joint working with other Local Authorities, both regionally and nationally.**

12) **The Council's Digital Services Group provides leadership and opportunities for collaboration for the Council to deliver greater value through digital service delivery.**

13) **Bids for funding of digital projects continue to be submitted, where appropriate, to build on the Council's current digital offer.**

2.0   Introduction

2.1   This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Digital Optimisation.

2.2   The main focus for the review was to assess how well Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is progressing in its provision of digital services. A central feature of this was to ascertain how the Council's digital services are being communicated, how residents are being engaged, and how digital services are being tailored to meet the needs of the Borough's population (personalisation of service).

The Committee felt it was vital to consider the extent to which the Council facilitates those who need access to digital services, mitigating digital exclusion through the provision of technology in libraries and assisted customer self-serve. Moving forward, this review also aimed to explore what can be developed in the future to further encourage the channel shift towards digital services.

2.3   To this end, the following key lines of enquiry were undertaken:

- 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?

2.4   The Committee received evidence from a number of internal departments and external organisations:

- Local Authority
  - Customer Services
  - Communications Team
  - Web Team
  - Revenues & Benefits Service
  - Care For Your Area
  - Environmental Health
- Xentrall Shared Services
- Other Local Authorities
  - Milton Keynes Council (LGC Digital Council of the Year 2018)
  - Newcastle City Council
  - Wigan Council (LGC Digital Council of the Year 2016 & Digital Leaders: Digital Council of the Year 2016)

2.5   The Committee were provided with the full results of the Customer Services Satisfaction Survey 2017/18 and the *My Stockton* Consultation Survey 2018. Two visits to the Stockton Customer Service Centre were undertaken to understand how the Council facilitates those who need access to digital services and to observe the assisted customer self-serve offer.

2.6   In addition, recognising the increasing pressure on the Council's finances, it is imperative that in-depth scrutiny reviews promote the Council's policy priorities and, where possible, seek to identify efficiencies and reduce demand for services.

3.0   Background

3.1   In November 2012, the *Government Digital Strategy* 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.

3.2   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.

3.3   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-centred, value-for-money digital services (see Appendix 1 for LGDSS poster). 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 peer group events.

3.4   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.

3.5   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).

3.6   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).

3.7   Whilst this review seeks to understand and assess digital service provision at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, a key focus will be around customer engagement with, and experience of, these services which are central to the analysis of current digital channels and future planning and delivery.

4.0   Findings

Digital Services and the SBC approach

'Our ambition is to provide customers with the opportunity to access a range of Council services anytime anywhere through the delivery of high quality digital services. We're on with it.'

(Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

4.1   The Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Plan includes objectives around improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, and delivering effective communication. Key to this is the provision of digital access to services, using existing and new technologies that are fit for purpose to work differently (an ongoing challenge as technology and the services the Council delivers evolve), ensuring the Council's digital policies and procedures are efficient and productive (not providing digital services for the sake of it), and continuously improving the Council's website via development of digital and social media channels.

4.2   There has been a rapid increase in digital technologies and services in recent years, with an increasing number of customers expecting to conduct business online, anytime and anywhere. To this end, the Council has done a great deal to provide information and services via the web and social media, including the citizen portal *My Stockton*, which provides a personalised experience of the Council.

4.3   However, the telephone and face-to-face visits to the Borough's Customer Service Centres continue to be the two preferred channels of choice, representing a sizeable majority of customer contacts in the year ending March 2018. The high costs associated with these communication methods, allied to the continuing pressures on Local Authority budgets, therefore compels the Council to consider if it is doing things as efficiently as it can, and whether it is investing the money it does have in the people who need it most. Increasing the delivery of services through digital channels <u>for those who want it</u> provides a clear opportunity to reduce costs and focus resources on those individuals for which the involvement of a person is a necessity.

4.4   Developing digital services presents a number of challenges to the Council:

- The wide and varied range of Council services – constant challenge in maintaining the optimum delivery of services.
- The availability and cost of digital solutions, and the interoperability between systems required to achieve end-to-end delivery.
- Integration between systems – can be technically complex.
- Digital skills in the workforce and supplier partners – there are a number of ICT Development vacancies in the North East.
- Marketing and promotions – customers knowing what is available.

- Changing customer habits – customers not realising options of engaging online / self-serve.
- Digital exclusion – still providing channels for those unable / unwilling to utilise digital services.

4.5   The Council are committed to ensuring that a positive customer experience is at the heart of any digital solution, though recognise that digital is not always the most appropriate method for service delivery. Where this is the case, the Council should be taking advantage of the benefits that digitalisation brings.

4.6   It was also acknowledged that to ensure services meet the requirements of the Borough's residents, including those for whom digital services are difficult to access, the Council must seek and understand customer needs and digital capability – engaging with customers via consultations (to understand views and experiences), marketing and promotions (raising awareness of available services), and offering digital assistance (supporting people to use online channels, for example, digital assistants in Customer Service Centres) can help achieve this. A 'continuous improvement' ethos allows the Council to use customer views to inform and improve its digital provision.

4.7   Working in partnership between Council departments / services, with other Local Authorities (sharing resources and best practice to achieve more with less), and with digital suppliers are other important factors that can contribute to the delivery of effective and efficient online services.

Current SBC Digital Offer

4.8   The Committee were provided with the current digital service catalogue, which gave a baseline position of services that the Council has online. Central to this is the SBC website, accessible via desktop and mobile devices, which includes a list of 'Top Tasks' on the home page (see below).

It was noted that the process of identifying other services through the 'Smarter Working' programme had begun, and that a review of all current online options has been undertaken to ascertain the quality and effectiveness of the self-serve customer experience and inform a programme of improvement work.

4.9   A key feature of the SBC website is 'Do it Online', a list of the most popular web pages, as well as links to payments and transactions (see below).

4.10   The Council allows online-users to personalise their services on the basis of where a resident lives and their own specific needs. This is facilitated via *My Stockton*, a platform which enables those registered to view planning applications that are under consideration within their area, bin collection days, local Ward Councillors, Council Tax Band, gritting routes and roadworks (see right for an example of the personalised home page).

The Committee were informed that take-up is slowly increasing year-on-year, reaching over 13,200 *My Stockton* users in June 2018 (see below).

Total My Stockton Accounts

Month	My Stockton Accounts
Nov-17	9170
Dec-17	9132
Jan-18	9661
Feb-18	10071
Mar-18	10570
Apr-18	11172
May-18	11405
Jun-18	11674
Jul-18	11962
Aug-18	12250
Sep-18	12624
Oct-18	12919
Nov-18	13261
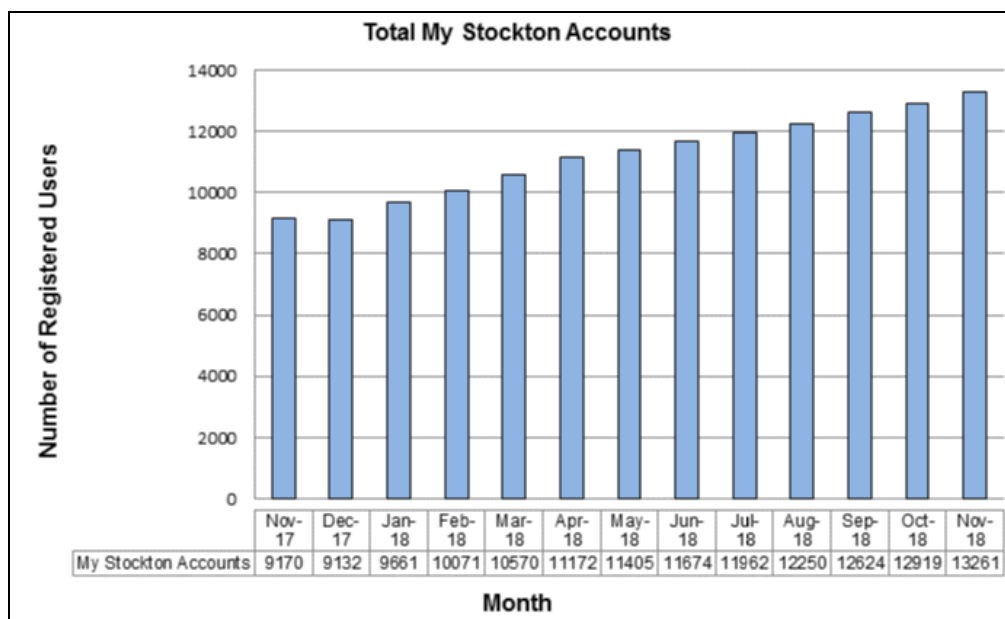
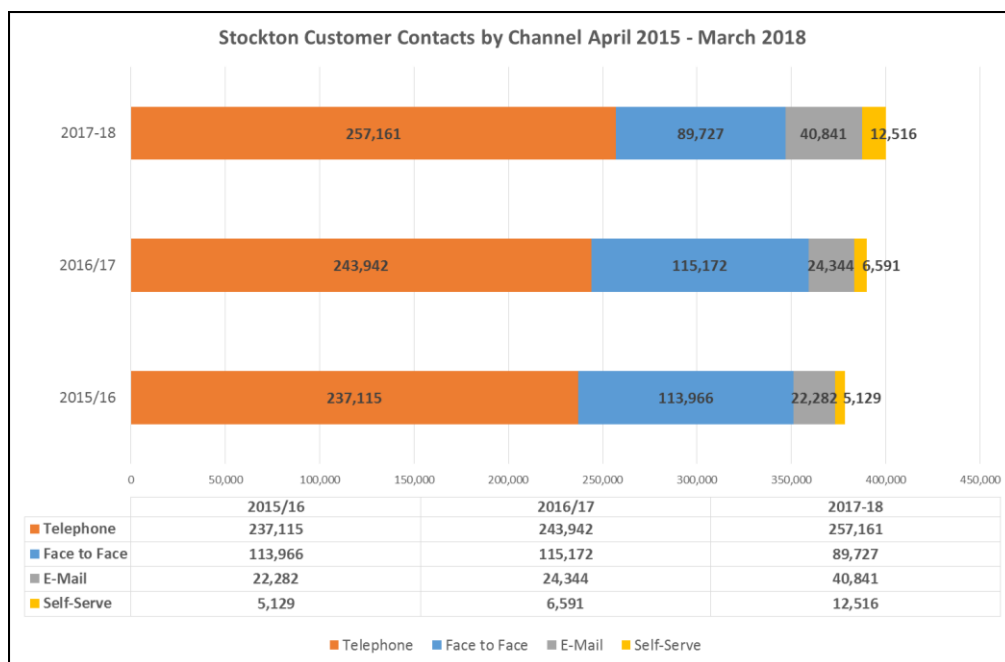4.11 The Committee drew attention to a perception that the *My Stockton* dashboard is too cluttered, and asked if there could be more use of headings with the detail behind it, and whether it can be more self-configured / user-selected. It was also felt that the bulky waste offer needs to be tighter and that feedback on service requests can be terribly slow. Some may feel it is quicker to phone the Council rather than personalise *My Stockton*.

4.12 It was queried if the Council had explored how people can report anonymously (e.g. enforcement), and whether there is a need for such a facility within *My Stockton*. The Committee were informed that people do not need to be in *My Stockton* to report issues, and do not need to leave their name when reporting fly-tipping.

4.13 Reflecting modern communication methods, SBC has its own social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) which are constantly monitored. Whilst these are useful platforms to disseminate information to residents, the Council also receives interesting discussion threads via these mediums. Should a service request be discovered, this is captured and forwarded to the relevant department / team (though requests through social media are not encouraged).

A further benefit of such accounts is that Council messages can be put out through these social media feeds should any issues be identified (thereby avoiding large numbers of residents contact the Council).

Customer Services Contact Analysis

4.14 To understand the current levels of online transactions in the context of overall customer communications with the Council, a breakdown of contacts by channel was requested. The chart below shows the number of telephone, face-to-face, email and self-serve (online) customer contact for the three financial years between April 2015 and March 2018.

19

Stockton Customer Contacts by Channel April 2015 - March 2018

	2015/16	2016/17	2017-18
Telephone	237,115	243,942	257,161
Face to Face	113,966	115,172	89,727
E-Mail	22,282	24,344	40,841
Self-Serve	5,129	6,591	12,516

As shown above, last year (2017-18) saw a total of 400,245 contacts, mostly via telephone (257,161 (64.3%)) and face-to face (89,727 (22.4%)). Email accounted for 40,841 (10.2%) contacts, whilst self-serve numbered 12,516 (3.1%).

4.15 Since 2015-16, contact has increased year-on-year for all channels apart from face-to-face, which saw a large drop between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Whilst self-serve contact nearly doubled in this same period, email (the least efficient of all the channels as they are unstructured (free form) and require processing by a customer operative) contact also significantly increased.

4.16 These statistics demonstrate the huge challenge in shifting contact from the traditional, well-established means to more modern platforms. Although more people are using the digital services available, the Council needs to be prepared for greater future uptake.

4.17 Local Authority Officers were asked if the Council leads people who contact a Customer Service Centre towards digital options. Council staff are indeed pro-active in doing this, and when people come into a Centre for assistance, they are registered on *My Stockton*.

4.18 Considering the effects of encouraging the channel shift towards self-serve, it was questioned if a move to increased digitalisation will equate to job losses for the Council. The Committee were made aware that this was not necessarily the case, as encouraging such a shift will require the re-directing of Council resources in terms of the development and delivery of digital services at SBC. This was further emphasised via a 'Working in a digital Council' video which highlighted the changing nature of job roles following a commitment to increasing the availability and uptake of digital services (https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/workforce-and-hr-support/workforce-videos/working-digital-council-aylesbury-vale-video).

Digital Capability

4.19 Xentrall Shared Services, a public sector partnership between SBC and Darlington Borough Council delivering key back office transactional services, informed the Committee of the current ICT strategy, plans for future digital development of SBC services and implications on ICT capacity.

ICT Strategy 2017

4.20 The ICT Strategy 2017 is based upon 8 principals of how the Council should be managing its ICT assets:

1) Services putting technology at the core of service transformation and ensuring value for money.
2) Officers and Members having the correct ICT systems available to them and the skills to use them.
3) Migrating services online should be the default position of any service review and an end-to-end approach should be adopted.
4) Existing ICT assets should be reviewed, rationalised and exploited.
5) Taking a corporate approach when there is similar requirements across services.
6) Ensuring ICT as a catalyst for change, not on obstacle. It should be resilient, scalable, secure and easy to use.
7) Ensuring systems use modern and flexible interface standards to allow us to connect and share data more easily, in turn to provide better customer experiences.
8) Ensuring we aren't at risk from out-of-date unsupported software.

4.21 The strategy also sets out three strategic themes for ICT:

- ICT Governance and Service Development – how the ICT resource is governed and managed, and also covers the compliance regimes to which the ICT service adheres.
- ICT Strategic Architecture – ensuring that the Council-wide technologies on which all Council ICT systems run are fit for purpose (high performing, timely, secure, flexible, accessible, resilient and affordable). Committee also received a Technology Vision Summary document outlining the Council's approach to the future options relating to the provision of ICT systems and how these can benefit customers and employees of the Council alike.
- Council Service Development and Transformation – where the technology provision and skills of the ICT service underpin the Council's service development and transformation programme, and raising the skills and confidence of all users of ICT systems to facilitate efficiency and collaboration both within and outside of the Council.

All three themes tie into and form part of the Council's smarter working programme and digital agenda. The customer-facing digital experience, although service lead, is wholly reliant on effective ICT and those commissioning and using it.

Future Digital Development and Implications on ICT Service Capacity

4.22   Xentrall's national benchmarking exercises show that it performs very well across the four benchmarked areas of economy and efficiency, impact on organisation, satisfaction, and modern practices. The digital developments of the Council can take many forms and will call on all areas of the ICT service, from project management right through to end-user support. Should capacity or capability emerge as potential issues, this would be addressed through the service governance mechanisms to raise awareness and understanding, and to seek a resolution.

4.23   When peaks in workload occur, the ICT service takes on additional capacity through temporary contractors and temporary roles. Capability in specialist areas is also sometimes supplemented with consultants and specialist companies – whenever specialist help is brought in, the opportunity to shadow and skill-up Xentrall's own team is taken where possible. The standards, discipline and capability of the ICT service is high, but it can always be supplemented with additional capacity when required (Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) permitting).
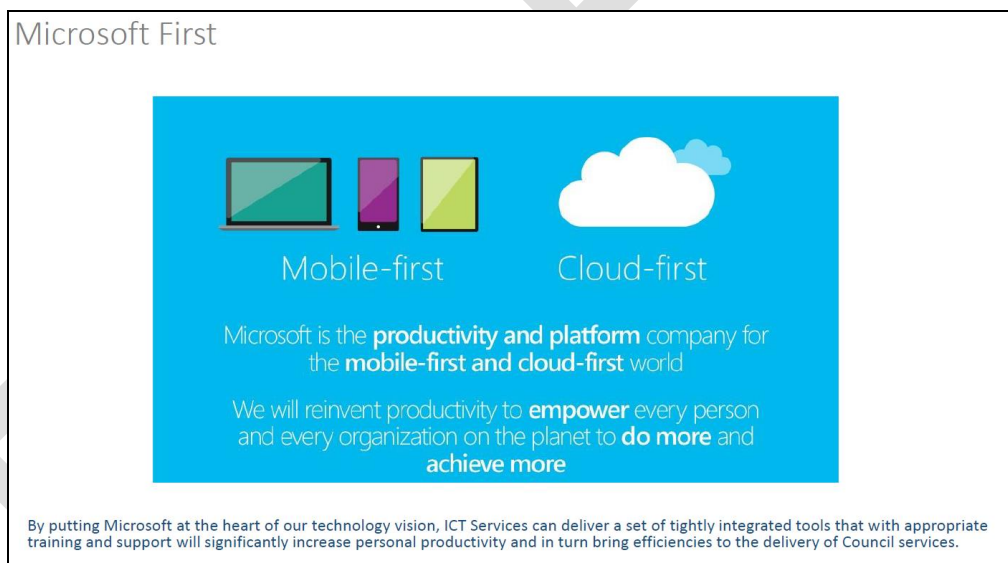
Security

4.24   The volume or increasing amounts of digital data is not an issue, as the Council needs to ensure all of its data is held, shared, used and disposed of in an appropriately secure manner, no matter how large or small the volumes. In terms of security provision, the ICT service and the ICT infrastructure are regularly tested and audited to confirm suitability, with a comprehensive regime including regular internal audits, compliance with national and international standards, and monthly vulnerability scanning to identify any potential security weaknesses. A vigorous patching control programme ensures up-to-date security and less susceptibility to cyber threats.

4.25   However, what has been shown is that the end-user can be the strongest but also the weakest link. Similar to undermining physical building security by holding open a secure door to someone, the deliberate, or more likely accidental, actions of the end-user can server to undermine investment in secure infrastructure. Awareness-raising across the user community through briefings, training and learning from incidents should they happen is adopted.

4.26   More recently, Xentrall are looking at types of external hosting as a means of mitigation against distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks, which can block access to a website by flooding it with fake requests.

Coping with Increased System Demand

4.27   The ICT architecture is designed in such a way to be able to be right-sized in terms of both capacity and performance, and this encompasses such things as servers, storage, networking and cloud computing – all are very modern and resilient platforms, and are capable of being increased or decreased as and when required.

4.28 The network inside and between buildings, and the connections to the outside world and the internet, are also high performing and resilient. The latest network design will increase capacity at all sites again to ensure ongoing high performance. Disaster recovery is another critical element and Xentrall's ability to failover from systems at Darlington to backup systems at Stockton have received full assurance from audit (note: the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan 2018, Contact Centre Business Continuity Plan 2018, and Stockton Telephony Disaster Recovery Plan 2018 were all shared with the Committee).

4.29 The Committee questioned if SBC was at all hampered by not having the most up-to-date technology. Assurance was given that there had been a big improvement in the Council's digital capability in the last two years and a further update is forthcoming. Search engine development was also being looked into, as well as content audits and the use of chatbots.

4.30 With regards the commitment to utilising Microsoft in the shared 'Xentrall Shared Services –Technology Vision Summary', it was noted that Microsoft is not the only browser, and that all of the Council's systems will need to work with various operating systems / browsers – compatibility with all technologies (particularly mobile devices) was key and should be at the forefront of thinking when developing digital services. Xentrall stated that they build in compatibility for all devices.

Microsoft First

Mobile-first   Cloud-first

Microsoft is the **productivity and platform** company for the **mobile-first and cloud-first** world

We will reinvent productivity to **empower** every person and every organization on the planet to **do more** and **achieve more**

By putting Microsoft at the heart of our technology vision, ICT Services can deliver a set of tightly integrated tools that with appropriate training and support will significantly increase personal productivity and in turn bring efficiencies to the delivery of Council services.

Communication & Marketing

4.31 In terms of consultation and engagement with residents regarding changes to services, SBC had previously held focus groups with a range of residents, Council employees and young people to gain feedback on layout / design and ease of use of the website, including online services. Representation depends on what is being consulted upon, and appropriate groups would be invited (including panellists from the Council's Viewpoint. As a result of the focus groups, changes have been made.

4.32 Digital services are being communicated through a campaign called 'Do it Online' (selected as one of SBCs key campaigns for 2017-2018); the main aim of this was to increase awareness of the range of Council services that

are available online, and encourage residents to channel shift. This was initially focussed on Bulky Waste but will be extended to change of address and single person tax applications. Activity has not yet been fully evaluated but anecdotal evidence shows an increase in the number of people accessing the bulky waste service.


4.33 The Council has learned from websites which are cited as best practice from SOCITM (used as the benchmark across all authorities) reports and use web analytics to track user journeys to help audit content. However, whilst there are ongoing development plans to improve the online customer services user experience, no specific work had been carried out to determine why people are not using digital services (something the Local Government Digital Service Standard states is an important undertaking in increasing digital take-up).

4.34 Difficulties in managing the online forms package on the website and the amount of information that needs to be delivered to all Council customers was raised – work was being carried out regarding website content which it was felt was moving in the right direction. It was also noted that those websites which work best often have a narrower focus – the Council however has an enormous range of services, customer types and volume of information to provide and process.

4.35 The Communications and Web teams work closely with Customer Services and are represented in the Council's Digital Service Group (see paragraph 4.81).

Customer Consultation

4.36 To gain insight into customer satisfaction levels, as well as the feedback SBC has received in relation to issues around current digital service provision and suggestions on improving the customer journey when engaging with the Council, the results of two surveys were provided:

My Stockton Survey (January 2018)
- Undertaken to understand customer experience of *My Stockton* – when, why and how often they choose to use it and how it can be improved.
- Feedback generally positive, with suggested ideas for improvement being incorporated into its development.
- Half of the survey respondents accessed the Council's services through *My Stockton* only – need to understand why others access services via a combination of *My Stockton*, telephone and / or by calling into a Customer Service Centre.
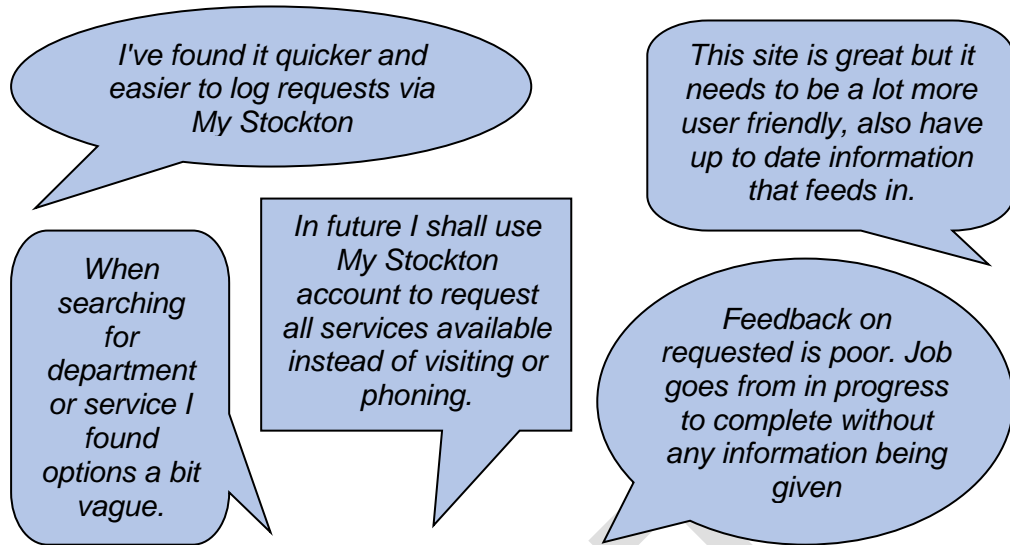
Customer Satisfaction (2017-2018)

- Regular feedback via surveys, telephone and customer comments, achieving 93% satisfaction rating for 2017-2018.

Transactional Demand

4.37 As part of the Customer Services contact analysis (see paragraph 4.14), the Committee were made aware of those Council services which received the most transactions in 2017-2018. The chart below breaks down the total number of contacts (400,245) during this period.
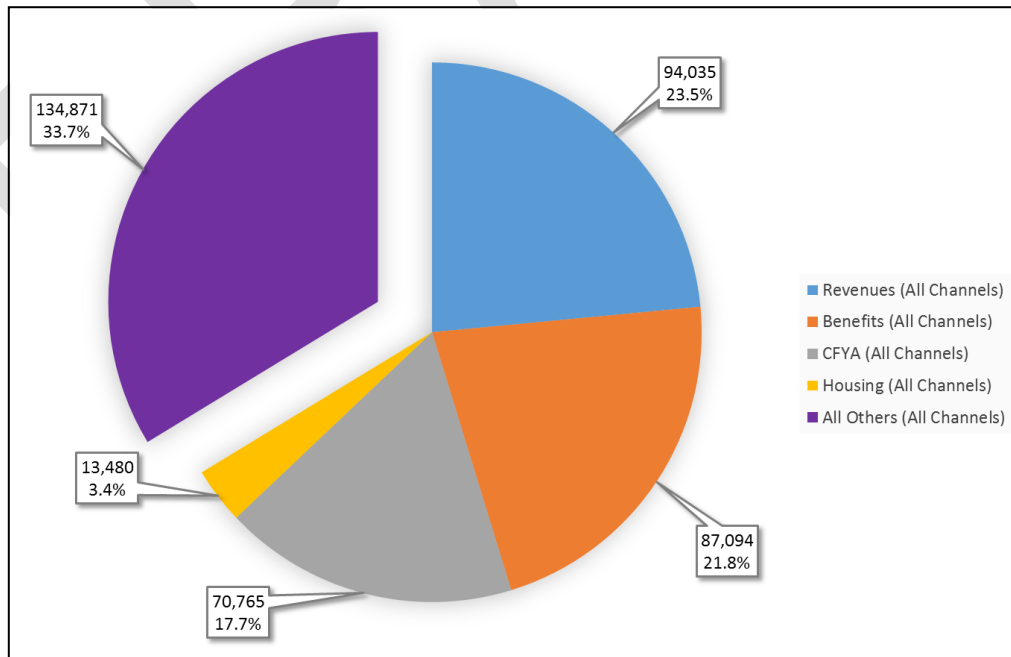
The three Council services with the largest number of customer contacts during 2017-2018 were Revenues, Benefits and Care For Your Area (CFYA).

The Committee were therefore keen to investigate the current provision of digital services in these area, as well as key considerations in widening this offer (if appropriate).

Revenues and Benefits Service

4.38   Following the 2015 approval of 'The Big Merger', the Revenues and Benefits Service offers an array of provisions including Council Tax billing / discounts / support, in-house enforcement, business rates, housing benefit, and welfare rights. There is a clear commitment to income collection and supporting the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), but there is also a recognised requirement to support vulnerable residents. There are extreme variations in the needs of people who use the Service, and it is acknowledged that more vulnerable individuals can lack the technology and / or skills for digital platforms.

4.39   In 2005, the Service embarked on a significant change in working practices which involved moving from an electronic document and record management system to an integrated processing system and mobile working – this now allows for information to be accessed both in the back office and customer-facing.

4.40   Current digital and self-serve options for customers include viewing Council Tax accounts online, electronic billing, benefit calculator, online payment facility, self-serve telephone payment facility, Post Office payment option, Payzone outlet, and the Council's website (e.g. Council Tax Band look-up). Developments in online forms and transactions include change of address, reporting a change in circumstance, providing evidence online, and authorisation to share information with landlord – these facilities are the result of collaboration between the Service and Customer Services, and would not have been possible a year ago.

4.41   Plans for enhancing future digital provision centre around giving customers access to the services they want – some ideas include text messaging (to broaden the Council Tax recovery approach), improved access to online accounts, e-notifications (allowing Housing Benefits notifications to be provided if desired), an open portal (lessening the need for residents to contact Customer Services), and Housing Benefit and Council Tax support applications (so staff do not need to input information themselves).

4.42   To encourage increased take-up of digital services, internet access opportunities, ICT skills development (of residents) and support for vulnerable clients were all key considerations. From an organisational perspective, investment in resources (financial and staffing) to develop and implement change, smarter working principles (what's right for the customer, not what's the most expensive tech), training needs for staff and enhanced customer awareness (marketing/promotions/communications) of the services available were vital factors. A crucial message is that one size does not fit all, and that providing positive customer experiences whilst recognising differing customer needs is perhaps the biggest challenge.

4.43   When considering vulnerable customers, the Committee highlighted the potential for increased exclusion if more information is moved online – digital development needs to ensure that problems are not created. It was also noted that staff are more familiar with the Council's online systems through everyday use, whereas residents use them less frequently – when designing forms, they should be easy to understand and use so the Council gets the information it needs, and customers are clear on what they need to provide.

Care For Your Area (CFYA)

4.44   CFYA provide a number of frontline, operational activities which are accessed by many residents, and whilst these services are varied in their nature and generate a significant level of customer contact, the main services revolve around waste and recycling collection, grounds maintenance and street cleansing.

4.45   Focus has been directed to the increased use of technology within CFYA services to mitigate the loss of resources linked to savings reviews (i.e. to ensure that staff are utilising their time effectively), whilst also making it simpler for customers to access services, especially as many of these services are extremely popular with residents.

4.46   The CFYA service centre (which manages many of the services) received nearly 40,000 calls for CFYA in 2017-2018, more than 4,000 face-to-face visits, 4,000 e-mails and 8,000 self-serve requests. Data comparing previous years (see below chart) demonstrated a gradual channel shift with telephone calls and face-to-face interactions decreasing, and an increase in self-serve requests.

Service Area						Care for Your Area				
Annual										
	Volumes					Percentages				
	Calls	F2F	EMail	Self Serve	Total Contacts	Calls	F2F	EMail	Self Serve	Total
2012/13	44,228	5,957	6,156	1,607	57,948	76.3%	10.3%	10.6%	2.8%	100%
2013/14	46,187	6,404	5,716	2,394	60,701	76.1%	10.6%	9.4%	3.9%	100%
2014/15	40,651	5,716	6,438	3,373	56,178	72.4%	10.2%	11.5%	6.0%	100%
2015/16	41,785	7,796	5,401	3,948	58,930	70.9%	13.2%	9.2%	6.7%	100%
2016/17	42,285	4,768	4,907	5,034	56,994	74.2%	8.4%	8.6%	8.8%	100%
2017/18	39,739	4,202	4,198	8,373	56,512	70.3%	7.4%	7.4%	14.8%	100%
2018/19*	12,056	1,669	1,521	3,646	18,892	63.8%	8.8%	8.1%	19.3%	100%

2018/19 stats above are up to end of July 2018

4.47   Many of the requests that are received relate to services which are either available online or via the website (e.g. collection days or to book a bulky waste collection service, an option which helps avoid items being left at the roadside and are part of the measures to reduce fly-tipping). Whilst ongoing improvements in technology to allow more self-serve requests should be high on the list of priorities, it is also important to effectively engage and

communicate these channels – the Council should not assume that residents knows these options exist.

4.48 Current technology used within CFYA was outlined including the current iteration of the Civica System (formerly Flare) – the system that is used for the majority of back-office functions within the service area. GIS/Maps@Stockton was used regularly by staff to check land ownership, pinpoint specific locations (e.g. fly-tipping removal requests) as well as providing an asset register for a range of assets that the Council maintain. Use of handheld units was ongoing and had been extremely useful in increasing performance and efficiency. For the last five years, residents have been able to log onto the Council website to check their normal collection day for waste and recycling collections which, by making this information available and up-to-date, allows residents to check themselves without the need to make a call or send an email.

4.49 In terms of future planning, CFYA are committed to exploring the use of technology wherever appropriate and where efficiencies can be obtained or service improvements delivered. The use of handheld technology was at the forefront of all plans, and work is currently ongoing to adopt new handhelds within the Highways Maintenance teams. CFYA would also look into issues around the logging of abandoned vehicles.

Environmental Health

4.50 Environmental Health comprises a number of services including pest control, animal welfare, animal health, public nuisance, food safety, occupational health and safety, and environmental protection. However, only a very small percentage of requests are made via self-serve (majority are telephone contacts to a combination of Contact Centre and Environmental Health Technical Admin).

4.51 Current technology used within the Service includes Civica to gather information, GIS and digi-pens for pest control. Implementation of the latter enabled a number of benefits including:

- a real-time automated mobile solution accurately updating locations, amounts and types of bait, traps and stations left at properties;
- ability to take photographic evidence which automatically uploads to back-office system;
- provides a more efficient service with no further manual input needed once first record has been produced via the form;
- increased reporting and recording for stock control and costing for invoices.

4.52 Future developments could include the increased use of social media to promote services and signpost residents to self-serve requests, and the implementation of an intelligent system that gets information direct to Officers to enable them to undertake their work.

4.53 It was reported that Environmental Health sections on other Local Authority websites are either similar to SBCs or are so complex to navigate that users are likely to drop off as the customer journey is so poor. The importance of well-designed website forms was again re-iterated as more work could be created if Officers have to seek clarification about a request.

4.54   General discussion ensued in relation to digitalisation issues pertinent to these high contact Council services, as well as other areas of SBC activity. In particular, it was questioned how residents know if what they have requested has been actioned, and whether there should be a direct route back to the person who made the request (also allowing them to make any comments which could further improve the service).

Council Officers felt this was challenging due to the number of requests received and the limited employee resources which have declined over recent years (e.g. budget's across Community Services (which incorporates CFYA) are down by £3.1m since 2009 which is made up of staffing reductions (16 street cleansing staff, 16 gardeners and 11 countryside ranger staff lost), supplies and services, vehicles and other associated revenue costs). However, the Committee received assurance that a feedback loop was now being considered and built into any new services.

4.55   The Committee cautioned that it may not be intuitive for residents to report an issue under the right service if they are not clear what that service is made up of. Wording used on the website has to be made simple for residents to know where to look; clear web pages that give a clear overview of a particular service.

4.56   It was widely recognised that there are some issues where the Council would not advise residents to make requests online, and would instead advocate a call to ensure problems or concerns are dealt with promptly. The Committee agreed that there was always going to be certain areas of work that require a telephone call or face-to-face communication, but that a better usage of digital services was possible and appropriate.

Access to Digital Services and Mitigating Digital Exclusion

4.57   SBC facilitate a number of ways in which residents who may not be equipped with the technology or skills can access digital services. These include:

- Free WiFi in Customer Service Centres and Libraries
- Provision of ICT facilities in Libraries
- ICT training programmes being developed by Libraries team
- Assisted Customer Self-Serve
- Assisted Digital Support (someone who sits with a customer and helps them go through an application)

4.58   Mindful that they are dealing with customers who are often vulnerable, the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service also highlighted further efforts in mitigating for digital exclusion through the Infinity Partnership (digital mapping exercise with Voluntary Sector partners, particularly ahead of the recent Universal Credit roll-out across the Borough), new claim interviews, home visiting service and partnership working (particularly Thirteen Housing Group who do 'soft tests' for the Council when new forms are rolled-out).

4.59   For an example of the Council's provision of technology in its libraries, and to see how assisted customer self-serve works, Committee Members visited the Stockton Customer Service Centre as part of this review. The SBC Customer

Centre & Improvement Manager, Customer Services Team Leader, and Customer Services Officers were also present to answer any queries.

Details of what was observed, who Committee Members spoke to, and what key issues arose from the visits are provided in Appendix 2). Overall, Committee Members were impressed by the service provided, particularly the knowledge and helpfulness of the Customer Services Officers.

Milton Keynes Council

LGC Digital Council of the Year 2018

4.60   Milton Keynes Council's (MKC) vision is a leading, smart, digital city, where everyone has the choice to access services through both self-service and traditional assisted channels. Since beginning its partnership with contractor Firmstep in April 2015, the Council have both enhanced services for local people and delivered efficiency savings in excess of £650,000.   Two years on and local people are demonstrating their strong preference for self-service, with over 70% (24,000) of all 2018/19 Q1 customer services enquiries being handled as wholly self-service transactions.   Over 71,000 customers have registered onto the self-service platform.

4.61   Senior managers have a clear vision for the digital future of the Council, and the Customer, Digital and Transformation Team put the customer experience at the heart of all our digital developments.   Customers are kept updated about the progress of their issue through each stage of its journey from logging, through assessment, corrective action to resolution.   11 key 'back office' systems have been integrated, and there are over 70 forms on the Council's digital platform covering over 250 service request types (this number is constantly increasing as more service processes are redesigned).

4.62   Regarding future plans, more Service Managers at MKC are recognising the potential of working with the corporate Customer Services team to drive up service performance and reduce costs, and leading projects in development for launch in 2018-2019 involve online hospital referrals, allowing customers to book appointments directly with staff via online and assistive services, and redeveloping an established online service that assesses eligibility to homelessness support from the Council to be compliant with the Homelessness Prevention Act.   The Council are currently undertaking a complete review of demand coming into MKC and using a demand management approach to design the next iteration of digital transformation.

4.63   MKC have demonstrated that to deliver a successful digital transformation programme you need; a 'customer first approach', to find solutions and overcome barriers, to improve outcomes and make rapid adjustments to changing requirements, and adapt to better meet the needs of customers.

Newcastle City Council

4.64   Newcastle City Council (NCC) have invested in 'digital' to support transformation of services, improvement of the customer experience and delivery of challenging budget reductions, and provided an overview of their 'digital narrative' reflecting current strengths and globally recognised assets, in addition to ambitions for the future. Utilising an 'innovation lab' approach (supported by FutureGov), a multi-disciplinary team using a 'double-diamond' service design approach focused on developing design patterns which can be used across different service areas.   This led to the development of 'WasteBot', an SMS (text)-based process for taking a van to the household waste recycling centre (more

than 3,500 customers signed up since Nov 17), an 'Adult Social Care Chatbot' (web-based) providing triage and advice on a range of social care topics with a projected budget saving of £50,000, and a prototype 'Bin Information Bot' developed to provide real-time information on bin collections and 'missed' bins to support £500,000 savings required from the Corporate Contact Centre.

4.65   Other relevant projects have included improving the online repairs reporting service to reduce 170,000 calls to the Contact Centre, the development of a federated single customer portal (NCC Connect) to improve the customer experience, and the transformation of the world's first electricity lit street into a new 'smart street' as part of the Great Exhibition of the North 2018 celebrations, demonstrating the possibilities of smart technologies (e.g. intelligent lighting, smart parking and waste management).

4.66   Moving forward, to realise future ambitions, NCC are seeking the support of an external tech partner to provide financial resource and technological expertise for the development and deployment of financially compelling business cases which utilise innovative technology to reform public service delivery (e.g. use of technology to supporting the vulnerable in their homes at reduced cost, to designing services in a way which reduces digital inclusion barriers, to making the City a greener, cleaner environment to live).

4.67   Key message: this is not all about ICT – this is about business solutions which ICT can enable. Collaborative approaches (internally between service areas and ICT staff; externally by sharing experiences and working with other Council's and partners) are vital, as is Senior Management and political buy-in/support.

4.68   The Committee was interested in understanding NCCs rationale for increased digitalisation of its services. It was noted that NCCs Cabinet investment has been on a separate team that should pay for itself (and then some) in terms of savings identified through changes to the way services are delivered – in essence, funding driven on an 'invest-to-save' basis.

4.69   With reference to NCCs search for an external tech partner, the Committee queried if there was a shortage of tech experts in the North East. In response, it was felt that filling development roles is more challenging than filling tech roles, but that expertise was lost to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) when they came to Newcastle as they pay more – hard for Local Authorities to compete regarding salaries. There is now a greater focus on growing tech people in-house and succession planning.

Wigan Council

LGC Digital Council of the Year 2016
Digital Leaders: Digital Council of the Year 2016

4.70   Wigan Council (WC) was one of the hardest hit Local Authorities in terms of savings required following changes to government policy around Council funding, and it was within this context that WC embarked on a digital journey that has gained national recognition and a number of awards.

4.71   WC created 'The Deal' (see Appendix 3), a new relationship with residents that stated both the Council's commitment to the people of Wigan and the

responsibilities residents also have. A Digital Taskforce was established involving people from the private, public and voluntary sector, as well as those who live and/or work in the Borough, and Cabinet funding was granted for community investment to increase digital skills, improve digital infrastructure and appoint a Digital Growth Advisor. Some excellent work has been undertaken with community groups around digital inclusion activities (e.g. 'Appy Days' – free sessions to solve computer woes), inspiring young people in STEM subjects and helping tackle issues around loneliness, a current national concern.

4.72 Key components in WCs digital strategy include:

- My Account: currently have 132,000 residents using this portal, and a lot of work went into how residents wanted it to look (a good start to the digital relationship between the Council and the people of the Borough).
- Destination Digital: free events in the Town Centre to showcase WCs digital journey so far and promote Wigan Borough as the destination for a digital future. Delegates had the chance to get inspired and hear from digital leaders across different sectors explain how harnessing digital technology has helped them – also gave attendees the opportunity to get advice, collaborate on ideas and explore how the digital age can be exploited.
- My report it: reporting environmental issues (42,000 reports through the app this year). Also used for Elected Members to log residents' issues (My Councillor report it). Important for the Council to deliver if seeking requests from the public (need the right auto-response giving realistic timescales in dealing with issues raised).
- WiFi: significant reduction in Council office accommodation, with staff having to work in an agile way.
- iDEA (The Duke of York Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award): the digital and enterprise equivalent to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, this is a free online tool where people earn badges for digital skills development. As well as engaging young people, there is a need to ensure Council staff have adequate digital skills too (staff culture important so employees are not frightened / threatened by digitalisation).

4.73 Local businesses who do not embrace digital do less well, so WC have encouraged organisations to develop and grow via its Digital Growth Service (providing a fully-funded programme of specialist digital growth advice through 1:1 support, masterclasses and workshops) and Digital Business Network Concept (investigating the potential of an online platform to support digital growth). From investing just £5,809 into a 'Get Broadband Faster' voucher scheme, businesses across the Borough have saved around £80,000 in connection fees, with many seeing significant boosts to their business as a result of improved broadband speeds.

4.74 Due to the huge pressure on budgets, building self-reliance in Health and Social Care has become a big area of focus for WC. Initially working with a North East company (Alcove) to get started, embracing home technology is changing lives and saving on costs.

4.75 One of WCs biggest success stories has been the implementation of an online Registrars Service, with only 10% of transactions now taking place on a face-to-face basis. With this in mind, there is now a strong feeling that residents expect digital transactions on a wider scale (culture change).

4.76   WC noted that whilst a lot of work goes into how residents use services, a Council must be able to step back and review their offer, particularly if things are not right for the customer. In the past they have previously put something online without thinking of residents and how they use it – it is crucial to think from the customer perspective.

4.77   In light of the developments and achievements taking place in Wigan, the Committee queried how the balance is struck between staff dealing with digital requests and staff actually delivering a service. WC emphasised the need for robust work to be initially undertaken around service priorities which can then be reflected upon to determine how resources are balanced. It is also important for this balance to be constantly monitored.

4.78   The Committee were particularly struck by Wigan's work on 'big ticket' (Adults and Children's) items, as SBC and Newcastle seemed to be looking more at environmental aspects. SBC and Newcastle stated that they are aware of issues within Adults and Children's Services, though it is not easy to make in-roads in these areas due to their people-centric nature and the significant change to the working practices of the Social Care workforce.

It was noted, however, that SBC were successful with a recent expression of interest to the Local Digital Fund, and were invited to proceed to submit a bid for funding for a Care Needs Assessment tool, working in partnership with Looking Local and Nottingham Council. SBC were also a partner in a further expression of interest submitted by Gateshead Council to develop a Great North Care Record (Integrated Health and Care Records) – this project was in partnership with North East Local Authorities and NHS services. Unfortunately, neither project had been successful in securing funding on this occasion.

4.79   Mindful of the change in data privacy regulation, Local Authority contributors were asked what impact the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has had / would have on digital service provision. Identifying data held has been a huge job and staff have needed to be trained / educated on the new regulations. Councils have the ability to be selective about future data coming into the organisation – the challenge is around what information is already held.

Future Digital Service Planning

SBC Digital Customer Services - Delivery Plan 2018

4.80   The Committee was provided with the Council's Digital Customer Services – Digital Plan 2018, which describes the objectives, guiding principles and delivery plan for the next phase of SBCs digital engagement with customers.

It states that realising the opportunity of digital service delivery requires the Council to:

- maintain a clear understanding of the role of technology in service delivery, placing a positive customer insight and experience at the heart of design decisions (thereby increasing the chances of take-up and delivering efficiencies these opportunities offer);
- recognise that digital service delivery is not always the most appropriate method for customer engagement, and there will be a requirement to maintain contact with those who are most vulnerable or have complex needs;
- identify potential opportunities to apply digital solutions to services in ways that will make a real difference to customers;
- understand customer needs and digital capability to ensure that services meet the needs of all customers, including those for whom digital services are difficult to access;
- understand the marketplace for services and technologies in order to take advantage of opportunities, and to ensure value-for-money in procurement;
- appreciate where investments in digital have already been implemented successfully and delivered tangible benefits to customers;
- recognise what resources, including appropriate skills, are required to implement digital tools and approaches in a public sector context, and develop or procure the appropriate capacity – looking at this internally, including apprenticeship schemes and joined-up working with other Local Authorities;
- actively raise awareness and promote self-serve options for customers;
- consider and plan for the impact on resources and customer service during the transition towards increased digital service delivery.

SBC Digital Services Group

4.81   The Committee were informed of a new SBC Digital Services Group (see Appendix 4 for the Terms of Reference) which will have strategic Council-wide oversight of the development of digital services, systems, technologies and solutions, and will identify where resources should be spent in order to get the greatest value. Developing the workforce by building digital skills / capacity is another key feature.

The Local Digital Declaration

4.82   Details were provided on *The Local Digital Declaration*, a joint endeavour initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of Local Authorities and sector bodies from across the UK (see Appendix 5). This declaration affirms the Councils collective ambition for local public services in the internet age and the commitments to realising it. It commits the Council working on a new scale to:

- Design services that best meet the needs of citizens.
- Challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services needed.
- Protect citizens' privacy and security.
- Deliver better value for money.

4.83   By signing up to this declaration, Councils are then able to access funding if they put forward a project that solves a problem within a year. SBC have

signed up and have agreed to work with Darlington Borough Council to deliver a Tip Permit system based upon a Microsoft 'BOT' in accordance with the Local Digital Declaration principles.

Summary

4.84 SBC has identified a number of key priorities in order to drive forward its digital service offer:

Customer
- Improve customer confidence in digital technologies through advice, guidance and digital assistance – confidence in using the technology is key for all.
- Ongoing customer consultation – ensure we don't make assumptions.

Digital Capability (Council's ability to deliver these services)

- Improve existing online services to take advantage of new technologies (currently taking stock of current catalogue).
- Develop new online services in line with customer preferences and Council priorities for improved efficiency and effectiveness (need to ensure decisions taken are giving greatest benefit to Council).
- Develop workforce digital skills and capability.
- Marketing and promotion (maximising customer engagement).

4.85 By acting on the above priorities, the Council and the Borough's residents can benefit from digital opportunities including an improved customer experience, increased service effectiveness, and strengthened local democracy (e.g. increased connectivity and ability for Councillors to engage online with residents; encouraging people to vote).

customer experience

boosting the borough

Digital Opportunities

service effectiveness

local democracy

5.0   Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1   Local Authorities across the country have for some time now recognised the benefits in providing more of their services online, with improved customer experiences and a reduction in Council costs key drivers in the increasing implementation of digital options. Set against the backdrop of continuing financial pressures, finding new, more efficient, ways of delivering services to residents is becoming not so much an ambition, but a necessity.

5.2   All Councils are at a different place in their 'digital journey', and whilst there are encouraging signs around the increasing *My Stockton* take-up, the real challenge for SBC is to raise self-serve rates. Residents across the Borough continue to predominantly use telephone and face-to-face channels (totalling nearly 87% of the contacts in 2017-2018) when dealing with the Council, therefore there is significant potential for benefits if SBC can adopt the right approach to digitalisation, which puts the customer at the heart of future development.

5.3   The Committee was provided with assurance around the technological capability and capacity in which the Council was operating in, and were pleased to hear of the emphasis on raising the skills and confidence of all users of ICT systems to facilitate efficiency and collaboration both within and outside of the Council. Whilst it is crucial for customers to have confidence in using online services, staff also need to have the wherewithal to utilise the technology behind it.

5.4   Strong performance of the current ICT architecture, as well as the ability to add capacity and cope with increased online demand, puts SBC in a good place to enhance and extend its digital offer. The robust security measures that safeguard the Council's ICT systems are essential in giving confidence to customers who use the Council's digital channels.

5.5   Whilst it was acknowledged that to ensure services meet the requirements of the Borough's residents, including those for whom digital services are difficult to access, the Council must seek and understand customer needs and digital capability, it was noted that a specific piece of work around why a large number of people do not use the Council's digital services has yet to be undertaken. The need for this knowledge is recognised within the Local Government Digital Service Standard ('To help increase digital take-up on an ongoing basis it is important to find out why people aren't using the digital service, to gain an understanding of how they currently interact with the service, and why they prefer non-digital methods'), and should form an important part of future planning.

5.6   The online service, *My Stockton,* elicited a number of comments during the course of this review, and the Committee felt there was scope for improvements to be made, particularly around its content and layout. The commitment to incorporating the suggested ideas for improvement from the *My Stockton* consultation survey in early-2018 was welcomed.

5.7   The Committee was encouraged by the open-minded approach to digital transformation and the use of technology of those Council services who receive the highest number of customer transactions. Clearly, encouraging the channel shift from traditional forms (telephone, face-to-face) to online contact in these services can significantly impact on the Council's self-serve

statistics, but as evidenced through other Local Authority focus on Adults and Children's Services (departments under the greatest financial pressures), the potential for digital solutions cuts across the whole spectrum of Council activity.

5.8   It was widely recognised that some of the Borough's residents lack the technology and / or skills to access digital services, and that there will also be people who prefer to use traditional avenues. For the former, the Committee were pleased to hear and see the Council's approach to providing support within the Customer Service Centres and Libraries, and noted the positive comments received by members of the public. In terms of the latter, the Committee welcomed the frequent acknowledgement from all contributors that digital was not the only way, and that other means of communication with the Council needed to be preserved for those unable or unwilling to utilise online options.

5.9   Input from other Local Authorities reflecting on their own digital journeys was a key ingredient of this review, and emphasised the importance of senior management and political support for digital development, a customer-centric and collaborative approach, digital engagement in the community, and the value of an internal digital team and tech partner. The Committee fully support continued dialogue between SBC and other Councils to share ideas and best practice, and it is hoped that new relationships can be built upon with those who contributed to this review, some of whom are recognised as digital leaders within local government.

5.10   Engaging with customers is paramount if the Council are going to encourage a shift to online services. It is one thing to offer digital channels, but residents need to be made aware of what digital options are available to them. The Council should make the benefits of such services clear so those who can use them choose to do so – the essence of 'digital by default'.

5.11   SBC has positive plans in place for digital service provision (reflected in the similar themes heard from other Local Authorities who contributed) which recognise the potential significant benefits of digitalisation, and outline what must be done to achieve these – indeed, a number of developments are already underway in the form of digital pilots and through the Council's 'smarter working' principles. This is balanced with the acknowledgement that digital services are not for everyone, and every effort must be made to ensure those who do not have the required means or want to access online provision can still appropriately engage with a Council service they need. The new Digital Services Group is an encouraging step to enhancing collaboration between departments, and providing focus on those digital projects with the most potential for customer and Council benefit.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

1) **A review of *My Stockton* with regards content and layout be undertaken.**

2) **Work be undertaken to understand why too few of the Borough's residents are using the Council's digital services (in line with the Local Government Digital Service Standard).**

3) **Digital service options on the Council's home page be made more visible / explicit (e.g. 'sign up for *My Stockton*').**

4) **Information on where to get WiFi or access to a computer within the Borough be provided on the Council's website (as per Wigan Council's website).**

5) **SBC should ensure that senior management are able to recognise the potential benefits for digital services across all departments and ensure this is reflected in the culture of the Council.**

6) **Consideration be given to expanding the role of the Council's Digital Services Group to develop SBC Digital Champions within each directorate and to engage with the community.**

7) **SBC embraces the iDEA (The Duke of York Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award) concept, both within the Council itself, and for residents young and old.**

8) **Appropriate skills be developed and resources prioritised within the Council's workforce to design, progress and implement digital services.**

9) **A digital skills development section is included within Council staff appraisals (individual and team requirements).**

10) **Consideration be given as to how, in addition to those areas with the highest number of customer transactions, further digital solutions can be identified and implemented in those Council services with the greatest spend (Adults and Children's Services).**

11) **Collaboration between service areas, ICT and communications and web teams continues to ensure a joined-up approach, as well as fostering wider learning through regular liaison and joint working with other Local Authorities, both regionally and nationally.**

12) **The Council's Digital Services Group provides leadership and opportunities for collaboration for the Council to deliver greater value through digital service delivery.**

13) **Bids for funding of digital projects continue to be submitted, where appropriate, to build on the Council's current digital offer.**

Local Government Digital Service Standard

1. Understand user needs. Research to develop deep knowledge of who the service users are and what that means for the design of the service.

2. Ensure a suitably skilled, sustainable multidisciplinary team, led by a senior service manager with decision making responsibility, can design, build and improve the service.

3. Create a service using the agile, iterative and user-centred methods set out in the Government Service Design Manual.

4. Build a service that can be iterated and improved in response to user need and make sure you have the capacity, resources and technical flexibility to do so.

5. Evaluate what tools and systems will be used to build, host, operate and measure the service, and how to procure them, looking to reuse existing technologies where possible.

6. Evaluate what user data and information the digital service will be providing or storing and address the security level, legal responsibilities, privacy issues and risks associated with the service.

7. Use open standards, existing authoritative data and registers, and where possible make source code and service data open and reusable under appropriate licenses.

8. Be able to test the end-to-end service in an environment similar to that of the live version, including all common browsers and devices.

9. Make a plan for the event of the digital service being taken temporarily offline, and regularly test.

10. Make sure that the service is simple enough that users succeed first time unaided.

11. Build a service consistent with the user experience of government digital services, including using common government platforms and the Government Service Manual design patterns.

12. Encourage maximum usage of the digital service (with assisted digital support if required).

13. Identify performance indicators for the service, incorporating existing indicators and publishing to a performance platform, if appropriate.

14. Put a process in place for ongoing user research, usability testing to continuously seek feedback from users, and collection of performance data to inform future improvement to the service.

15. Test the service from beginning to end with appropriate council member or senior manager responsible for it.

LocalGovDigital

localgovdigital.info/digital-service-standard
Release date: April 2016

APPENDIX 2: Site Visit Feedback – Stockton Customer Service Centre

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Select Committee Member Visit

Service visited: Stockton Customer Service Centre	
Date of visit: Monday 29ᵗʰ October 2018	**Time of visit: 3.00pm**

Details of main contact during visit
Name: Claire Raw
Job Title: Customer Centre & Improvement Manager   **Tel no:**

What did you see?

We visited the Stockton Customer Service Centre and looked at many aspects of what the service has to offer residents, be it help with issues ranging from Universal Credit and help with online forms, to phone calls to other agencies. In addition to a main reception desk near the front entrance, there are self-service computers where the customer can log on themselves to navigate and get signposted to other areas for help with issues. Customers can use the self-service machines available to either request a dedicated staff member to help with an issue or query, or just to report an issue (e.g. Care For Your Area street lighting or refuse problem, or to order a bulky waste collection).

The staff are trained in all aspects of customer-related issues that may arise, and if they cannot directly help, customers will be signposted to another avenue that can. The staff have tablets they use to input data and help customers download forms on their own phones if appropriate. If the customers are willing, staff help them onto the _My Stockton_ webpage to enable them to report issues without needing to come to the Customer Service Centre, or to get online options for Council services. The staff also signpost customers if they need extra help with digital skills by offering a free beginner's digital skills course.

We observed a Customer Services Officer assisting a customer with a Universal Credit problem, and he was helping to get her started on the right track to being able to claim as it is an online process. Although the lady did not have access to the internet, he was able to put her on the phone to the right department.

Who did you talk to – staff / service users / family / carers?

Customer Centre & Improvement Manager, Customer Services Team Leader, and Customer Services Officer.

What were the key issues arising from the visit?

- High number of Universal Credit queries since roll-out across the Borough in July 2018.
- One of the self-serve PCs was out of order during the visit – need to ensure this is promptly fixed.
- Seemed to be a very fluid operation where other staff members from the Customer Services back-office can come out to help customers if it gets busy.
- Customer Services Officer very helpful and attentive – good that people are receiving this level of service, particularly as some may be vulnerable.

Any recommendations / feedback for consideration?

- Could the use of QR codes help customers get information to other areas of self-help from partner agencies?

Signed: Cllr Gillian Corr	**Date:** 7ᵗʰ November 2018

Select Committee Member Visit

Service visited: Stockton Customer Service Centre	
Date of visit: Wednesday 31st October 2018	**Time of visit: 11.00am**

Details of main contact during visit
Name: Claire Raw
Job Title: Customer Centre & Improvement Manager   **Tel no:**

What did you see?

We looked at the main reception area with the computerised check-in for customers and the pod reception. We also saw the individual interview cubicles where staff saw customers and helped them with their enquiries / problems. The Customer Centre & Improvement Manager explained the range of services offered so that customers experienced a 'one stop shop' advice and help centre. All Council services were covered, with Care For Your Area (CFYA) and Benefits being among the top reasons people accessed the service.

There were comfortable seating areas for people waiting to see an advisor. A very useful and appreciated service was the roving advisor (Customer Services Officer) who could help people access computers to request services such as online applications for Universal Credit or the removal of dumped rubbish from CFYA – this also acts as something of a teaching role to customers who are not computer literate or are unaware of digital service options.

It was noted that the two Customer Services Officers whom people see when they first come into the Centre have no idea what queries / requests they will have to deal with, and these can be wide-ranging.

Who did you talk to – staff / service users / family / carers?

We talked to the Customer Centre & Improvement Manager, Customer Services Team Leader and the Customer Services Officers, and asked questions as to the range of services offered and the different expertise required to deal with enquiries.

Members spoke to a number of customers who were all satisfied with the Centre and the help they received. One lady from Thornaby had a Housing Benefit / Council Tax benefit change of circumstance to report and allowed a Member to sit in with her for the interview. The advisor was thorough and very pleasant, and despite having to return with a document, the lady was pleased with the service which she said was worth travelling from Thornaby for. A couple were after a bus pass for their disabled son and a Member joined them when they spoke to staff – they were dealt with very well and were very happy with the service they received on the day.

What were the key issues arising from the visit?

- The whole range of issues dealt with, and the organisation and smooth running of the Centre. Waiting customers were approached in order to establish the reason for their visit and where assistance could be given in order to reduce unnecessary waiting time.
- Members commented on the heat in the area which some felt was overwhelming, but the staff and customers did not appear to mind.
- The cubicles are good but not very private, so hopefully people whose circumstances required more privacy would be offered a closed-room interview (it was confirmed this option was available).
- Noted that self-serve PCs are available in all Customer Service Centres (including Billingham and Thornaby). Customers can also access the library computers if required.

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• Investment in iPads mean the Customer Services Officers can go to the customers and assist them directly, rather than them having to wait in a queue. This technology is very useful for customers providing evidence (this was demonstrated to Members). • Uptake in use of the Centre following Universal Credit roll-out across the Borough, mainly due to residents having to apply for this online. The Council has worked in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions so staff are clear on how they can assist claimants.
Any recommendations / feedback for consideration? The atmosphere in the Centre was calm and very professional, and Members were impressed by the excellent range of services provided. What is the length of time an advisor sits in the cubicle and if this is compatible with computer use (i.e. do they get sufficient time away from the screens?)? Free Digital Skills for Beginners courses – what are the levels of uptake for these?

Signed: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Elsi Hampton, Cllr Stefan Houghton, Cllr Barbara Inman, Cllr Eileen Johnson.	**Date:** 7th November 2018

Digital Services Group: Terms of Reference

Core group: Digital Transformation & Customer Services Manager (Chair)
Assistant Director - Information and Improvement Services (Vice Chair)
Assistant Director - Xentrall Shared Services
Communication, Consultation and Engagement Manager
ICT Business Analysis & Projects Manager

Project leads / Service Reps: As required

Governance: Reports to SWIS board / CMT / Cabinet as required.

Key functions:

Digital Developments

➤ Strategic council-wide oversight of the development of digital services, systems, technologies and solutions

- Developing and capturing ideas and initiatives

- Ensuring a robust evidence base to support the ideas and initiatives

- Ensuring the ideas and initiatives fit with the Council's priorities and the Smarter Working in Stockton principles

- Agreeing the high level feasibility of ideas and initiatives to go forward to the gateway approval process

- Agreeing purchases of solutions, systems and technologies, ensuring strategic fit and value for money, this includes working with services to provide advice and guidance to inform decisions

- Developing the learning and capacity across the organisation to deliver the requirements

➤ Strategic council-wide oversight of Directorate Information Systems Strategies and the associated Xentrall ICT Services work programme

- Identifying opportunities for consolidation and shared developments

- Prioritisation of Digital and System development activities, including the Xentrall ICT Services work programme

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Governance

➢ Develop and oversee the gateway approval process

- Ensuring that each initiative is supported by a robust business case with clear outcomes, timescales, resources, funding and benefits
- Authorisation through the relevant gateway stages
- Ensuring that all relevant services are involved at the appropriate stages
- Approving tolerances on outcomes, timescales, resources, funding and benefits
- Approving changes through exception plans and change controls
- Providing direction on escalating and reporting of risks and issues as required

Key roles:

➢ Digital and Customer Lead: Digital Transformation & Customer Services Manager (Chair)

➢ Information & Improvement Lead: Assistant Director - Information & Improvement Serv. (Vice Chair)

➢ Technology Lead: Assistant Director - Xentrall Shared Services

➢ Web and Communications Lead: Communication, Consultation and Engagement Manager

➢ Xentrall ICT Programme Lead: ICT Business Analysis & Projects Manager

➢ **Project Leads / Service Reps**
This list is not exhaustive as membership of this group is expected to be flexible to enable individuals to join if there are key developments or projects impacting on their service area.

- Adults, Health and Children's Strategy and Commissioning
- Adults Services
- Adults Systems
- Democratic and Administration and Licensing
- Children's Services
- Children's Systems
- Community Services
- Council GIS
- Council Procurement
- Council Website
- Culture, Leisure and Events
- Customer Services
- Economic Growth and Development
- Environmental Health
- Information Governance
- Legal Services
- Revs and Bens
- Xentrall Finance
- Xentrall HR
- Xentrall ICT

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Meeting Structures:

Governance
Attendees: Core Group + Project Leads by invitation as required
Regularity: Monthly
Purpose: Compliance with strategies;
           Prioritisation of projects, including Xentrall ICT work programme;
           Gateway review and approval;
           Exception and change management;
           Management of escalated risks.

Digital Developments
Attendees: Core Group + Project Leads / Service Reps
Regularity: Quarterly
Purpose: Development of ideas and strategies;
           Feasibility, definition and monitoring of projects;
           Alignment of projects with strategies
           Evaluating options and defining solutions;
           Sharing information, experiences and resources;
           Advice, guidance and support for Council Services.

Project Delivery
Attendees: Project Leads + project teams
Regularity: As required.
Purpose: Development of project documentation to inform each Gateway process;
           Identification of project benefits, costs and plans;
           Management of projects within agreed tolerances;
           Escalation to Digital Services Group (gateway reviews, exceptions, change
           control and risks).

The Local Digital Declaration

A common aspiration for the future of local public services

July 2018

Introduction

This declaration affirms our collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it. It commits us working on a new scale to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

This joint endeavour was initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. We invite all local authorities and the organisations we collaborate with to join us by signing the Declaration and committing to deliver a first action from which we can all benefit.

The opportunity

Never before has it been possible to collaborate so effectively, to deliver services across so many boundaries, to interrogate our data so insightfully, to realise such great efficiencies, and to reshape public services for the benefit of all while retaining local sovereignty.

Great work has already been done to transform our services using digital tools and technology. But we have an opportunity to do more.

Our ambition

We want to co-create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where technology is an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for citizens and officials to use. We know that one size doesn't fit all, but by developing common building blocks local authorities will be able to build services more quickly, flexibly and effectively. Only in this more open and flexible market will we unlock our full potential for innovation.

Our ambition requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, and we've agreed 5 principles to help us do it:

1. We will go even further to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.

2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively. This means insisting on modular building blocks for the IT we rely on, and open standards to give a common structure to the data we create.

3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively.

4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.

5. We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our commitments

MHCLG will establish a delivery team to support all Declaration co-signatories in realising this ambition. It will play a leadership role within central government, advocating for the approach set out in this declaration. It will work with councils as equal partners to create the tools and conditions for reform, delivering common technical patterns and routes to procurement for core services. And, as part of a collective effort alongside local government networks, it will help local authorities find out about priority projects that support this mission and support the continued growth of the local digital community.

In addition, each co-signatory will commit to the following activities:

Our leaders, service managers, board members and politicians will:

A. Make sure that digital expertise is central to our decision-making and that all technology decisions are approved by the appropriate person or committee. This will ensure that we are using our collective purchasing power to stimulate a speedy move towards change.

B. Have visible, accessible leaders throughout the organisation (publishing blogs, tweeting and actively participating in communities of practice), and support those who champion this Declaration to try new things and work in the open.

C. Support our workforce to share ideas and engage in communities of practice by providing the space and time for this to happen.

D. Publish our plans and lessons learnt (for example on blogs, Localgov Digital slack; at sector meetups), and talk publicly about things that have could have gone better (like the GOV.UK incident reports blog).

E. Try new things, from new digital tools to experiments in collaboration with other organisations.

F. Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of our digital services and systems.

Our transformation, information technology and digital teams will:

G. Research how to reuse existing user research, service design, common components, and data and technology standards before starting to design or procure something new.

H. Build capacity in service-design, so that each service we transform is informally tested by our peers against our national service standard where appropriate (GDS will be publishing a local-friendly iteration).

I. Where appropriate every new IT solution procured must operate according to the technology code of practice, putting us in control of our service data, using open standards where they exist and contributing to their creation where they don't.

J. Share knowledge about digital projects where there is an opportunity for potential reuse or collaboration with others.

K. Work together to establish the trust frameworks we need to safely analyse and share personal data. This will allow us to better serve our shared customers and reduce the need to ask citizens for the same information multiple times.

L. Work together to create common solutions that allow us to check people's eligibility for services with central government and others in real time with their consent.

M. Take inspiration and ideas from a wide range of sources, and participate individually in communities of practice and interest outside the organisation (for example, LocalGovCamp, OneTeamGov, and related networks and events).

Co-publishers