

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD**

**09 January 2019**

**Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 IT STRATEGY UPDATE**

**A new IT Strategy was introduced to Members on 23 May 2018. This report provides an update with regard to the website development plan, and seeks Members' guidance on the setting up of a Member working group in relation to website development.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The current IT Strategy was agreed by FIPAB on 23 May 2018. The Strategy covers the period from 2018 to 2022.

1.1.2 Members expressed specific interest in the website development plan which is the subject of this report.

**1.2 Update on work relating to the website development plan**

1.2.1 The IT Strategy stated that consideration should be given to developing a number of complementary corporate strategies and ensuring a corporate change culture is embedded within the organisation.

1.2.2 To that end, initial work has commenced on scoping a "Digital Strategy" for the Council which will set the scene for the "business" side of service transformation alongside the "technology" side which is the IT Strategy. A Digital Strategy would feed into the website development plan the priorities and drivers for project work.

1.2.3 It is worth noting that the 'digital' agenda is one in which we are not currently well resourced at TMBC, and it is something that the Management Team have recently been reviewing.

1.2.4 It is important that both officers and Members understand that developing a digital agenda is not just an IT (technological) matter; it involves the coming together of Service driven initiatives informed by engagement/interaction with the customer working alongside the dedicated IT development resources. Further reports will

be presented as our thinking on this subject and the strand of work progresses, but for now, work carried out so far on a Digital Strategy includes:-

- Engagement with the Head of Service (Licensing, Community Safety & Customer Service) and the Gateway Manager in order to lead the Customer Service elements of a Digital Strategy.
- A visit to Aylesbury Vale District Council (winners of Digital Transformation of the Year at the Professional Service Management Awards 2017) to learn from their experiences and bring back valuable advice for our own projects.
- Discussion at Management Team on the benefits and drivers of a Digital Strategy.
- Initial discussions with a 'digital' officer from another council to explore what assistance can be given on a consultancy basis to develop a Digital Strategy.

1.2.5 Running concurrently with the consideration of a digital strategy, a Website Review document was compiled in the summer which contained the results of the Smart Digital Services customer testing of our website, and the feedback of the latest SOCITM Better Connected national review of council websites. This is a 'frank and honest' assessment of the website with the objective of providing a platform upon which we can move forward. A summarised document is attached at **[Annex 1]**.

1.2.6 The review document highlighted a number of areas for improvement, some of which could be acted on immediately, others were longer term aspirations. There were also some areas highlighted with third party systems that the council uses which required consultation with the relevant suppliers.

1.2.7 Amongst the work which took place immediately was;

- Improvements in content (wording and explanations) where it was confusing
- Providing the ability to return to the page where you started if a form required you to sign up for an account
- Better promoting tasks you can carry out in My Account
- Overhaul of the Council Tax web pages (currently implementing the Northgate Citizen Access system to address this)
- Improvements in the ICES parking website (currently implementing a new version of the ICES parking software)

1.2.8 One of the recommendations made in the website review document is that a Study Group be assembled to inform any further website development and this be comprised of both officers and Members. From a practical point of view it is likely that we would need to hold two separate groups, with the ability for the two groups to come together as needed. One of the key objectives for both groups will be to address the issues addressed in the review document. **Members' views on the setting up of an informal Member working group are sought.**

1.2.9 Whilst long term future development is considered, the current website continues to evolve and recent new developments include;

- Better integration of location based data into My Account
- Taking on board the requirements of the new Waste Contract, including publicity campaign and sign up / payment of garden waste bins.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 Procurement policy should be followed for all projects arising from the IT Strategy.

1.3.2 The IT Strategy will take into account the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation which came into force on 25 May 2018.

### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 Improvement of website services has the potential to encourage more use which in turn can improve the efficiency of the Council leading to a positive impact on the medium term financial strategy. Some projects may need to be considered on an 'invest to save' basis.

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 Corporate strategies, goals and priorities need to align and support each other. The IT Strategy will support the activities and goals set by the Council.

### **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.6.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users at this stage.

### **1.7 Policy Considerations**

1.7.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.7.2 Communications

1.7.3 Customer Contact

1.7.4 Procurement

## 1.8 Recommendation

- 1.8.1 Members are asked to consider whether an informal Member working group should be formed in order to assist with the website review, and to **RECOMMEND** to Cabinet accordingly.

The Director of Finance & Transformation confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

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Nil

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