TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

17 July 2019

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision

1   IT STRATEGY AND DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Head of IT will give a presentation on digital transformation and some of the aspirations Members might wish to establish for our Borough, at the start of the meeting.

Subject to any amendments required, Members are asked to recommend the draft digital strategy to Cabinet which is still being finalised at the time of writing this report and will be *circulated in advance* of the meeting.

Members are asked to note the purchase of mobile working software from the Invest to Save Reserve, and recommend to Full Council that it be included in the Capital Plan.

Finally, the Advisory Board is asked to note the progress in respect of the website review and the need for all Members to undertake cyber security training.

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1   At its meeting on 23 May 2018, Members of the Advisory Board approved a new IT Strategy for the period 2018 – 2022. The strategic objective areas are;

- Customers – improved use of the website by customers. Greater use of "end-to-end" digital services in order to deliver efficiencies in back office processes.

- Staff – ensure officers are provided with up to date and efficient tools and systems for the tasks they are performing. Officers will also be involved in all areas of the projects delivered under the strategy and provided with any support and training that is necessary.

- Members – provide regular technology training sessions for members so they are fully briefed on the latest developments.

- Partners – continue to participate on shared projects with other organisations where there is mutual benefit.

- IT Infrastructure – challenge our current use of legacy business systems and evaluate cloud hosted alternatives.

- Information Security – ensure that risks around information security are managed effectively and is understood at both Member and Management Team level.

- Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery – make sure that changes which arise from projects in the strategy are fully reflected in our Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery plans.

1.1.2 Members of this Advisory Board were updated in January this year on progress with the Strategy, and in particular the redevelopment of the website and the 'digital agenda'.

1.2   Digital Strategy

1.2.1 Members may be aware that the Council appointed a new Head of IT, Ganesh Thangarajah, who commenced in April and brings with him a wealth of experience, ideas and knowledge in developing digital strategies and digital transformation in local government.   **The Head of IT will give a presentation on digital transformation and some of the future aspirations Members might wish to establish for our Borough, at the start of the meeting**.

1.2.2 Prior to the Head of IT commencing and as outlined in the previous report to the Board in January, Management Team also took the decision to engage a 'head of digital' officer from another district council in Kent on a 'consultancy' basis in order to help us gather momentum.

1.2.3 Members are reminded that in September 2018 the Council became a signatory to the MCHLG's Local Government Digital Declaration. In signing the declaration, the Council has committed itself, along with over 150 other local government bodies, to:

- utilise research and data in our transformation programmes

- work towards a shared national service design standard

- procure new software to shared national standards

- share our knowledge with others to help improve service delivery

- share data and information to better serve our customers

- create common solutions that can be used across local government

- keep up to date with the changing digital and technology landscapes

1.2.4   At a more local level, we have been working closely with other councils in Kent to share knowledge, experience and projects, including through the Kent Connects network. This gives the Council access to information, training and advice on digital and technology issues. The Council is also a subscriber to the Smarter Digital Services (SDS) network, which also provides training and planning for digital transformation programmes, projects and reviews.

1.2.5   Our 'digital by default' officer group consisting of officers from across the Council, as well as being bolstered by our new Head of IT and our 'consultant', have been working hard to prepare for digital transformation.   Currently business process mapping is taking place across the Council with the assistance of SDS.

1.2.6   I am pleased to report that significant progress is being made in preparing our journey for digital transformation. I shall come onto the website later in the report (see paragraph 1.4) as this is an important lynchpin of our digital agenda and one which is of particular interest to Members.

1.2.7   In terms of our digital agenda there are a number of key drivers (in no particular order) that are integral to the strategy that the Council adopts:

- Increasing service demands;

- Diminishing resources;

- The green agenda;

- Evolution of customer expectations;

- Disconnected communities;

- Work life balance for staff;

- Loss of resilience in the local economy;

- Changing technological landscape.

1.2.8   As supported by Management Team, we believe the five core digital principles are:

1)   'One Council'

2)   An Efficient Workforce

3)   Demand Management

4)   Economic Growth; and

5)   A 'Smart' Borough

All of these core principles will be explored further in the presentation.

1.2.9 The mission of our digital strategy will be to deliver the priorities of the Council, through challenge, innovation and transformation underpinned by technology. The vision will be to become an authority where the communities and businesses we serve are able to engage and transact with us seamlessly, irrespective of the services they access.

1.2.10 This is a challenge of course, but sets a direction of travel that I believe is the one we need to take.

1.2.11 **At the time of writing, the draft Digital Strategy is in the process of being finalised for Members' consideration and will be circulated separately before 17 July.**

1.2.12 Members are requested to **review** the draft strategy and, subject to any amendments Members might have, **recommend** its adoption by Cabinet.

1.3   Mobile Working

1.3.1 One of the strands of digital transformation that has emerged from the one to one discussions with Directors and staff that the Head of IT has held is the pressing need for a robust and efficient digital solution for staff who work 'in-field' (examples include food safety, environmental health staff and planners).

1.3.2 The Head of IT has reviewed the business need and investigated potential solutions as set out in the attached capital plan evaluation **[Annex 1]** and this has the full support of Management Team. Members should note that the relatively modest capital cost of £23,000 can be funded from the Invest to Save Reserve and the annual revenue costs can be absorbed within the IT Software support budget.

1.3.3 In view of the pressing need to move forward, in liaison with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, Chairman of this Advisory Board, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the two Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny in order to seek delegated authority to place an order. Approval was given and an order was therefore placed. It is hoped that the solution can be ready to roll out to staff within a few months.

1.3.4 In accordance with the Council's normal procedures, this project needs to be added to the Capital Plan. This can only be done by Full Council so a **recommendation** through this report is for the Capital Plan to be updated accordingly.

1.4   Website

1.4.1   As mentioned earlier in the report, the website is an important lynchpin of our digital agenda and one which is of particular interest to Members.

1.4.2   The redesign of our website has to be approached in two parts: firstly from the "business/service" angle, and secondly from the IT design end.

1.4.3   The "business/service" review is being led by the Head of Licensing, Community Safety and Customer Services with a group of officers representing the whole Council. In redesigning the look, feel and content of the website it is critical to put the customer at the core.

1.4.4   The work on website design and content falls into two distinct categories:

- Core transactional (mainly statutory services)

- Commercial/Promotional/news website

1.4.5   Engagement with the users of TMBC's website is critical to understand '*How they are using it now?*'; '*What are TMBC doing right?*'; and understanding '*What they want to see?*'

1.4.6   To enable TMBC to understand clearly the answers to these questions, a number of short online surveys have been written by the Head of Licensing, Community Safety and Customer Services, covering

a) general website users

b) business community

c) visitors to the Borough

d) visitors to reception; and

e) TMBC staff and Members.

1.4.7   The Customer Service teams at Kings Hill, Tonbridge Castle and at the Customer Service Surgeries are engaging with customers in filling a very short survey for each visit. This is helping us very clearly to understand, if the query can be completed on-line and helping TMBC identify any awareness/training that is needed to support the development of the digital on-line agenda.

1.4.8   Over the last 3 years, users to the TMBC website have requested 278,759 unique searches, with searches on Council Tax, Parking, Planning, Waste Services, Housing and Jobs making up the top six.

1.4.9 The officers with the two groups have been developing the hierarchy of their respective service areas, identifying what the users will see first, then after the user has chosen that option, what the user will see next.

Example: (this is just a *small* extract from Housing)

1st tier	Housing		
2nd tier	Apply for social housing	Find a home	Get advice about homelessness
3rd tier	Complete an assessment	Apply to join our Housing Register	Online form – find out what help you might get.

1.4.10 The completed hierarchy will then be shown to the user, to enable TMBC to understand if the user is comfortable with the words used within the proposed hierarchy. Customers do not necessary group services and needs by TMBC Service areas.

1.4.11 Engagement with the users to test proposed hierarchy will be via on-line and group sessions using word cards. The group would like to also involve Members in this process, and perhaps the first port of call for this could be liaison with the Member Working group for the website which was being coordinated by the Leader following discussion at this Advisory Board in January 2019.

1.4.12 For information, the Leader has agreed that the Member group is to consist of:

- Cllr Martin Coffin (Chair)

- Cllr Matt Boughton

- Cllr Robin Betts

- Cllr Georgina Thomas

- Cllr Mrs Anita Oakley

1.4.13 The general timetable for the business/service work is:

- Engagement with Customers – July/ August

- Engagement with Members - July/August

- Recommendations to Digital Group/ Management Team regarding website specification – September

- Development of content - October onwards

1.4.14 Once the business/service end has been specified, the IT team can then procure and deliver the web platform for population of content by the business/service group.

1.4.15 Whilst it is difficult to say exactly when this work will be complete, we plan to have this ready by April 2020.

1.4.16 Naturally, officers will work alongside the appointed Members of the website working group, with meetings called as and when appropriate.

1.5   Training and Awareness for Members

1.5.1 Member will be aware of the heightened profile of cyber security. Some Members might recall that I reported to this Advisory Board in January following the LGA's cyber stocktake exercise, and since then we have prepared a separate risk register on cyber security as recommended through that exercise.

1.5.2 One of the other recommendations was that all staff and Members receive cyber security training. I am pleased to say that we have procured some on-line training which is already being rolled out on a phased basis. The training not only covers cyber security but also the use and retention of personal data, which has of course become extremely sensitive since the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations in May last year.

1.5.3 This training will be rolled out to Members by email and each Member will be asked to log in and commence their training. The training consists of a set of modules so can be done in small "chunks". We have received good feedback on the training so far, and I would encourage Members to undertake it as soon as practical – it is extremely pertinent from a business perspective of course, but it is also helpful on a personal level!

1.6   Legal Implications

1.6.1 None at this stage.

1.7   Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 Mobile working software can be funded from the Invest to Save Reserve.

1.7.2 The Invest to Save Reserve can also provide opportunities to support the implementation of other digital solutions as identified through the digital strategy.

1.8   Risk Assessment

1.8.1 The risk of not moving forward with the digital agenda is that the Council may not be providing services in the ways that our residents wish.

1.8.2   We believe that digital solutions can help to manage demand pressures and make limited resources/capacity go further.

1.9   Equality Impact Assessment

1.9.1   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.

1.10   Policy Considerations

1.10.1   Customer Contact

1.10.2   Human Resources

1.10.3   Communications

1.10.4   Community

1.11   Recommendations

1.11.1   Members are requested to:

1)   **Review** the draft digital strategy and, subject to any amendments Members might have, **recommend** its adoption by Cabinet;

2)   **Note** the decision taken in liaison with the Members set out in the report, to proceed with the purchase of mobile working software funded from the Invest to Save Reserve;

3)   **Recommend** to Full Council that the Capital Plan is updated to include the mobile working software;

4)   **Note** the progress in respect of the website review**;** and

5)   **Note** the need for all Members to undertake cyber security training.

Background papers: contact: Ganesh Thangarajah
                                                                                    Sharon Shelton
Nil   Anthony Garnett

Sharon Shelton
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