TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

22 July 2020

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 DIGITAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The 'Digital strategy 2019-23' was developed with a customer centric focus around the residents and businesses within Tonbridge and Malling. In alignment with the Council's Corporate Strategy, the Digital Strategy's primary drivers are based on improving the overall quality of life for our residents through proactive and seamless engagement through the digital platform. Having completed the first year of the four year strategy, this report aims to provide Members with an update on the progress made to date.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The mission of the Council's digital strategy is to deliver the priorities of the Council through challenge, innovation and transformation underpinned by technology.
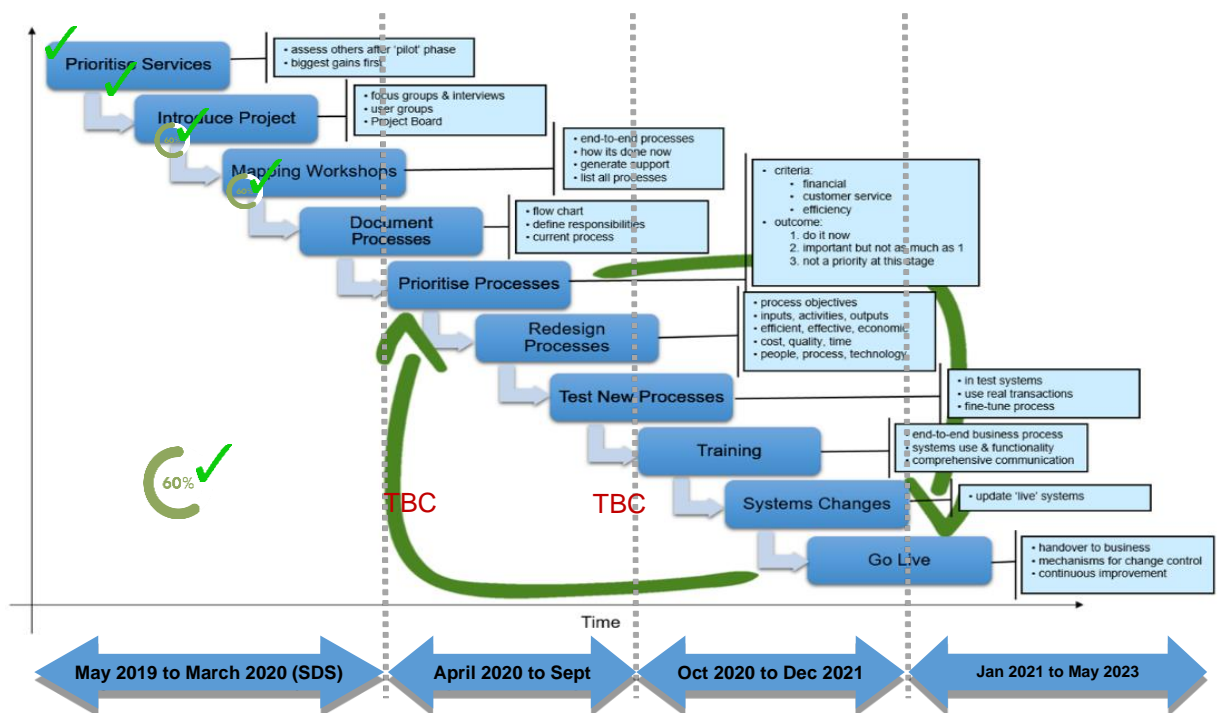
1.1.2 Since adopting the strategy in 2019, the pandemic has highlighted even more the importance of the digital agenda and its place in the delivery of our services to the public. When formulating the strategy a number of key drivers were recognised and these still hold true. For Members' information these were:

- 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

1.1.3   In addressing the above drivers/challenges, the Digital strategy focused on five priorities. For members information these are:

1. **One Council** – To provide our customers with consistent quality of service from all council's services, enabled by Digital technology

2. **Efficient Workforce** – To equip our staff with technologies and to align their working practices to achieve optimum efficiency

3. **Demand Management** – To switch from a traditional 'meeting demand' approach to a more proactive and preventative 'managing demand' approach

4. **Economic Growth** – To support and improve local economic growth though investment in infrastructure and website

5. **Smart Borough** – We will aspire to use the Government's 'Smart City' agenda to coordinate and manage our assets in collaboration with other Kent authorities through increased connectivity and sharing of data and information

1.1.4   Progress overview on the digital transformation approach and timeline:

As part of the Digital journey we instigated a detailed review of current business processes and the technologies that are being used to underpin them within all of our key services. Albeit the progress being hindered by the pandemic, there have been progress made on a number of key initiatives, based on the 60% of the Business process mappings workshops completed thus far.

1.1.5   Before picking up and commenting on some of themes from the above list of priorities, it is firstly important to update Members on progress with the website given that this is effectively the digital 'front door' and a catalyst to improving all of our services.

1.2   Website (One Council & Demand Management)

1.2.1   I reported to the meeting of this Advisory Board in January with a broad timetable for the delivery of the website.

1.2.2   Unfortunately, but inevitably, due to the escalation of coronavirus and the subsequent declaration of a pandemic, priorities were shifted and there was some slippage in the timetable below (see 1.2.5).

1.2.3   Despite the above unforeseen delays, I am pleased to say, that the tender process did go ahead and a number of tenders were received and evaluated against the stated criteria. The successful tenderer, Northgate Public Services Ltd, offered the market leading JADU platform; which is being used by many digitally matured local governments within UK, including a number of leading Kent authorities.

1.2.4   The contract is currently going through legal processes of being signed and is expected to be completed by 10 July 2020.

1.2.5   The following timetable is an estimation and is subject to confirmation of resource availability by the suppliers and the Council's service representatives:

Prepare platform for population of content ("empty shell")	By: 30 September 2020
Creation of customer portal (My Account) on new CMS	By: 30 November 2020
Incorporation of Citizen Access (Revenues & Benefits) into My Account portal	By: 31 December 2020
Development of key priority areas (other than Citizen Access for Revenues and Benefits)	By: 31 March 2021
Development of TMBC app and "official" launch of website	By: Summer 2021
Development of other service areas for inclusion in portal subject to prioritisation	By: 31 March 2022

1.2.6   As Members are aware from previous reports, responsibility for the design and editorial content of the website will rest with the Head of Communications in liaison with the Head of Customer Services.

1.2.7   At the General Purposes Committee on 17 June, Members agreed to establish a new post of Digital Content Editor within the Media and Communications team to take primary central responsibility for website content. At the time of writing this

report we are preparing to interview candidates and hope to make an appointment within the next few weeks.

1.2.8   As indicated above, the timetable has slipped due to the need to focus our limited resources on the response to the pandemic, but in outline terms the 'content' side of the programme will be developed over the next 10 to 12 months under the leadership of the Head of Communications.

1.3   Home/Flexible Working for staff and Virtual Meetings (Efficient Workforce)

1.3.1   As Members are aware from reports to the Cabinet, the majority of staff have been working from home almost seamlessly since the lockdown began. This was possible due to the investments that had already been made (i.e. Laptops, Intune, Global protect VPN, Windows 10, O365) as part of our digital strategy to enable flexible working (although we hadn't imagined it would be tested quite so immediately or rigorously!).

1.3.2   The value of this investment has been repaid many-fold with staff continuing to offer vital Council services, including new demands and responsibilities, from their homes.

1.3.3   Virtual meetings and remote working have been enabled though cloud based Microsoft Office 365 (O365) product suite, offering higher availability and richer features for various Council demands.

Office 365 E3 includes

Word   Excel   PowerPoint   Outlook   OneNote   SharePoint   OneDrive   Microsoft Teams

1.3.4   Since the pandemic was declared, the IT team have implemented Microsoft Teams from the above list of applications, which are being widely used for internal staff meetings. In addition this platform, with the assistance of some consultancy support, is now being used for hosting public facing 'virtual' council meetings (such as this one).

1.4   Digitisation & Automation of internal workflow (Efficient Workforce)

1.4.1   A number of projects have been initiated as part of the overall strive to improve the efficiency amongst frontline and back office services. These include the following:

Mobile working solution for in-field officers

1.4.2 Despite the delays faced due to the pandemic, the digitisation of the paper based inspection forms and automation of workflow amongst our Food safety team has been started and currently undergoing final stages of the field testing. Go-live is expected to take place in July 2020. Other frontline service areas will follow based on priorities and demand for efficiency. The outcome of this project will also contribute towards the reduction in creation of paper records.

Digitisation of manual workflow

1.4.3 In order to increase the efficiency in recording, submitting, calculating and managing manual data entries into various corporate and line of business systems, we have initiated an electronic solution. Starting with the mileage claims form, this initiative will be focusing on all internal end-to-end workflows. The Mileage claims form is currently undergoing final stages of the testing and expected to go live. Just as the Mobile Working project, this initiative will also focus on stopping the production of paper records.

Back scanning of existing paper records

1.4.4 Based on the findings from the business process mapping exercise, it has been acknowledged that dealing with paper records counted for a significant proportion of the inefficient/unproductive efforts within both frontline and back-office services. In addressing this, a project has been initiated with a view to adopt a corporate solution for converting all existing paper work in to digital records through back scanning. Comparative estimates have been received from suppliers to ascertain the viability of the concept and we are currently in the process of developing and qualifying the business case.

Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS)

1.4.5 Based on the acknowledgement, that on completion of the digitisation of existing paper records, a solution will be required to provide a structured and secure storage of the electronic records, along with controlled access to staff across the council. The controlled access to the records held will also apply to our residents and businesses via the website customer portal. Hence, we are currently in the process of looking at the viability of adopting the one of the council's existing document management systems as the corporate EDRMS.

Virtual Parking permits

1.4.6 As part of the efforts in adhering to security compliance requirement whilst improving efficiency and customer experience of the parking permit services, we have upgraded line of business system from 'Permit Gateway' to the 'PermitSmarti' system: a virtual permit system. In turn this has enabled our residents and businesses to engage with the Parking services and manage their permit requirements online without much manual interventions. By adopting the

new system the service has significantly reduced its administration such as the need to print and post permits to residents thus increasing the overall service efficiency.

1.5   Smart Kent & Medway project (Demand management, Smart Borough & Economic Growth)

1.5.1   In the efforts to further enhance the quality of life for the residents and business within Tonbridge & Malling, we are joining a number of Kent authorities including Kent County Council (KCC), and other public sector partners such as Kent Fire, NHS, schools and other emergency services through the Kent Connects and KPSN partnerships in leading on the 'Smart city' agenda for Kent. We (TMBC) have lead on producing the proposal (attached) for a soft-market research to be carried out on behalf of Kent Connects. The outcome of the research will provide the involved authorities with the potential solutions and benefits to be gained through the Smart agenda. Discussion are currently taking place amongst similar aspiring authorities within Kent to take a joint effort with KCC, as for majority of the District councils does not own any infrastructure assets including street furniture and highways.

1.6   Legal Implications

1.6.1   The new website (CMS) contract documents are currently undergoing Legal signatory requirement with Northgate Public Services (NPS) and aimed to be completed by 10 July 2020.

1.7   Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1   A budget for the website was approved by Full Council in October 2019, and revenue costs were built into base budget through the preparation of Estimates 2020/21.

1.7.2   Consultancy support for the implementation of virtual council meetings was obtained.

1.8   Risk Assessment

1.8.1   Reliance on digital services can also bring risks. If services are down for prolonged periods, productivity of staff is compromised as are services to the public.   Disaster Recovery measures are therefore imperative.

1.8.2   Given the significance of the project, a risk 'assessment' for the website project will be undertaken by the project team to cover timing, budget, functionality and resilience.

1.8.3   Members are referred to a report elsewhere on the agenda setting out the disaster recovery measures following incidents, the primary one of which was outside of the Council's control.

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 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.10.2 Customer Contact

1.10.3 Communications

1.10.4 Community

1.10.5 Procurement

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