TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

16 September 2020

Report of the Director of Finance and Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Council Decision

1   IT STRATEGY UPDATE AND ENTERPRISE DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

An update on progress towards delivering the IT Strategy which was adopted in June 2018. Members are requested to note the progress made, and are asked to identify/suggest any relevant technology training that would assist Members in discharging their roles. In addition, Members are asked to consider a capital plan evaluation for an enterprise document management system and recommend to Full Council that this be transferred to List A and funded from the Invest to Save Reserve.

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1   At the last meeting of this Advisory Board in July, I updated Members with regard to a number of digital project and initiatives that are underway. The work on digital projects continues and I will update Members again in January with regard to progress.

1.1.2   For this meeting, I want to update on some aspects set out in our overarching IT Strategy which was approved in June 2018.

1.1.3   As a reminder, the strategic objective areas were agreed as:

- **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.

1.2 Progress

1.2.1 In terms of **Customers**, I have reported on progress in respect of the replacement website. At the time of writing, the implementation work has commenced and the completion of the technical cloud infrastructure is expected to be ready for software installation by Northgate and JADU on the 10th September 2020. One of the key priorities we have is to ensure the new website facilitates the digital end to end processes which provides not only a better experience for customers but also delivers efficiencies. Members may be aware from earlier reports that the new website provider is Northgate, in partnership with JADU. Northgate is also the provider of our current Revenue & Benefits system and the Citizen Access online customer interface. The new website, through its fully integrated JADU CMS platform, will enable our residents to access the relevant services through 'Single Sign-On', starting with Council Tax and Housing benefits services. Further updates will be provided as work progresses.

1.2.2 Aligned to this we have also been trialling the concept of a centralised call centre. Initially the call centre has dealt primarily with revenues and benefits, housing and community hub queries.   During the pandemic, this concept proved to be invaluable in supporting our Services and customers, through the economy of scale in terms resources consisting of multi-skilled call centre agents, who were able assist customers with queries relating to our varying disciplines of services. Management Team are in the process of considering whether this should be widened based on the positive experience to date.

1.2.3 Regarding **Staff**, Members are already aware through the COVID "experience", that staff have been provided with efficient tools to undertake their roles. Naturally, keeping the equipment and systems up to date will be a challenge as technological changes occur, but this is managed carefully.

1.2.4 Although at an early stage, Management Team has agreed that a feasibility study should be commenced in terms of the potential to create a centralised "*Digital Post-room*". This would cover the issues of opening, scanning and indexing incoming mail and dealing with external correspondence.   Whilst the feasibility

needs to be properly explored, the expectation is that this would help to achieve efficiencies across the Council. This concept will be considered by the in-house digital group at its next meeting in October. This will also help sustain the COVID19 health & safety requirements in terms of our staff travelling to and from the offices to collect and deal with posts.

1.2.5   Alongside this is a long held aspiration to adopt an Enterprise Document Management System for the whole Council. Members are referred to paragraph 1.3 for recommendations in this respect.

1.2.6   **Members** have received regular updates on progress with our digital strategy, and have been invited to undertake cyber security training. Generally, I think it is fair to say that the majority of Members have adapted well and embraced the virtual environment that has been thrust upon us via the COVID pandemic. I do appreciate that there are still challenges that we need to address. If Members have suggestions of technological training sessions that would be helpful, I will be happy to consider these.

1.2.7   The Council continues to work with other **Partners** in developing and obtaining best value for technological solutions. Kent Connects based at Kent County Council is as key partner, and we also subscribe to Smarter Digital Services based within Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.   Members are aware that we are working with all Kent councils and public sector partners on the Smart Kent & Medway project leading on the 'Smart city' agenda for Kent.

1.2.8   We continue to challenge our current use of legacy business systems and evaluate and implement cloud hosted alternatives within our **IT Infrastructure**. Given our Digital Strategy and the business demand for online services, making our IT infrastructure highly available (i.e. 24/7) has become a fundamental requirement. Hence, we are currently in the process of reviewing our line of business systems for 'Cloud' readiness. We have already migrated our Parking permit system and our Backup and Disaster Recovery systems to Cloud.

1.2.9   **Information Security** is clearly a fundamental priority. We have a duty to ensure that all IT systems, software and services are appropriately configured to reduce the level of inherent vulnerability. The Council commissions health checks on a regular basis to test compliance. Members will understand that this is an ever changing situation. New vulnerabilities arise every day given the fast pace of change in IT. One of the key tasks of the Technical Support team is to keep on top of vulnerabilities, mitigating them wherever possible.   Member should however be aware that there will never be the perfect situation whereby there are no vulnerabilities in existence and we can never be complacent. Thus far along with KPSN, we have been proactive in our infrastructure and data.

1.2.10 A health check by Surecloud took place in early August and I am pleased to report that the feedback was generally good. "*Overall the security posture of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's external network was found to be good*

with most of the issues raised in previous tests having been resolved. There was one high severity issue discovered which exposed a couple of sensitive ports to the public internet, however, most other finds were medium to low in severity…………. Generally, the network was found to be very well configured, and factors such as the strong password policy and patch management made exploiting the network very hard"

1.2.11   Members may be aware that any organisation taking receipts digitally must comply with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS), which sets out a series of requirements to protect both customers and the organisation when taking payments. IT services are currently in the process of resolving the last vulnerability identified within the IT heath check impacting the PCI-DSS compliance. We are hoping to have PCI-DSS certification test completed by October 2020.

1.2.12   Members will be aware that our **Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery** plans have been tested sine COVID due to unplanned power outages and also breakdowns in air conditioning units. Members are referred to a report to the July meeting of this Advisory Board. Due to the business continuity impact of these events, Management Team has asked Internal Audit staff to review the incidents to allow a better understanding of our resilience and to provide a level of assurance.

1.3   **Enterprise Document Management System**

1.3.1   The Council presently has 80 licences for the document management solution (DMS) Information@work used by primarily Revenues & Benefits, Customer Services and some teams in Housing.

1.3.2   Some Members may recall that it has been a long held aspiration to adopt an Enterprise DMS solution for the whole Council. To date, for a variety of reasons this has not moved forward but following discussion with Management Team and the supplier, it has been agreed that adoption of the existing DMS will achieve the holistic solution we have aspired to.

1.3.3   The advantage of this approach is that the infrastructure and knowledge is already in place and therefore the additional costs relate only to the purchase of additional licences. The provision of a Council-wide DMS will open opportunities for efficiencies in management of digital records and in the reduction in paper records, as well as enable the Council to comply with GDPR guidelines on electronic document storage, access and retention periods. In turn this initiative will improve the online service experience for our residents and businesses.

1.3.4   A corporate DMS will be the critical foundation for many digital initiatives and will facilitate the delivery of efficiency savings through associated projects. The cost of an additional 120 licences is £17,000 (capital cost) and there will be annual support and maintenance costs of £6,000 per annum.   The capital cost can be met from the Invest to Save Reserve.

1.3.5　A List C capital Plan evaluation is attached at **[Annex 1]** for Members' consideration and recommendation to Council via Cabinet.　This is a cost effective solution which will be the foundation for future digital projects and will enable the Council to meet its GDPR responsibilities.　The sooner this can be put in place, the sooner other projects can be escalated to achieve efficiencies.

1.3.6　Members are asked to recommend to Council via Cabinet that the project be transferred to List A to be funded from the Invest to Save Reserve.

1.4　Legal Implications

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

1.4.2　The IT Strategy takes into account the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation implemented on 25/05/2018.

1.5　Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1　A revenue budget and capital renewals programme for IT is approved annually by Members.　Funding for new capital projects is a decision for Members and requests are brought forward as appropriate.

1.6　Risk Assessment

1.6.1　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. Without a clearly defined strategy we may not be able to prioritise our resources correctly, leading to missed opportunities to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

1.6.2　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.

1.6.3　As the reliance on IT systems becomes even greater, opportunities are being explored to mitigate risks further – for example by assessing greater use of cloud services in line with the IT and Digital Strategy.　Consideration will also be given to the resource base within IT Services to ensure that there is adequate resilience and if appropriate proposals will be brought to the General Purposes Committee.

1.7　Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1　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.

1.8　Policy Considerations

1.8.1　Business Continuity/Resilience

1.8.2　Customer Contact

1.8.3   Communications

1.8.4   Community

1.8.5   Procurement

1.9   Recommendations

1.9.1   The Advisory Board is **REQUESTED** to:

1)   **NOTE** the progress in respect of the IT strategy; and

2)   **IDENTIFY** any technology training that might be helpful for elected Members;

and in addition, the Advisory Board is **REQUESTED** to:

3)   **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the List C project "Enterprise Document Management Solution" be transferred to List A to be funded from the Invest to Save Reserve.

Background papers: contact: Sharon Shelton
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