TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

06 January 2021

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   REVISION TO THE IT STRATEGY (2018 – 2022)

**The IT strategy was approved by Members in 2018 for a four year period. In the interim, the Council also adopted a Digital Strategy during 2019.
In the light of the changing environment we now operate within, the IT Strategy has been refreshed to bring it up to date and Members are invited to endorse the revision.**

1.1   Introduction

1.1.1   The IT strategy was approved by Members in June 2018 covering the four year period 2018 to 2022.

1.1.2   Members are reminded that the strategic objective areas contained in the Strategy 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.

1.1.3   In September 2020, I reported to this Advisory Board with an update on progress towards delivering the IT Strategy.

1.1.4   This report sets out, in the light of the changing environment, an update of the Strategy for approval.

1.2   Progress update on strategic objectives

Over the last two years since adopting the IT strategy, the Council has made significant progress and achievements against the objectives set out. Many of the achievements highlighted below have now become the catalyst for the Council and its staff being able to continue to provide public services to its residents and businesses during the pandemic since March 2020. It will also help sustain a good level of service should there be a 'no-deal' Brexit.

1.2.1   Customers

- We have carried out thorough analysis of our customer engagement and demand to improve their experiences of our online services. As a result, we have procured a market leading CMS platform solution and currently in the process of implementation.

- In order to improve overall service efficiency across the council, we have commissioned business process mapping exercises through our external Kent partner 'Smarter Digital Services'. We are currently reengineering the mapped business processes to automate and streamline the workflows to provide the most efficient services to our residents and businesses

- As part of the Website project, we will also be launching a new and integrated customer portal. Whilst adhering to the GDPR principles, it will help provide our residents and businesses with a consistent and seamless quality of service experience across all disciplines of council's services through single integrated account

1.2.2   Staff

- We have adopted a new device policy in July 2019 to cater for the growing demand of flexible working amongst staff.

- The 'Global-protect' end-user technology was adopted amongst council supplied devices to provide better user experiences to our staff irrespective of their geographical location (i.e. working from the office or home)

- We are currently in the process of rolling out Microsoft Office 365 product suite for all staff to help improve their user experience and to increase resilience during any system outages

- We have adopted the ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) service management methodology to improve the IT service experience of staff

- IT projects and system development lifecycles will be aligned to the 'Agile' methodology to ensure that the IT solutions are based on business outcomes and user experiences

1.2.3 Members

- Members have been provided with devices and digital facilities along with necessary training to conduct their council duties

- Microsoft Teams has been implemented as the virtual platform for council meetings, along with YouTube streaming functionality to cater for public viewing

- Members were offered 'Cyber Essentials' training as part of the effort to raise awareness of the potential threats associated with digital interactions

1.2.4 Partners

- We are engaged with multiple Kent partners on varying services and projects including:

  - Smart Kent & Medway Project (Kent Connects)

    To oversee the development and implementation of pilot IoT projects and to expand knowledge/share good practice amongst Kent Connects partners.

  - Network services (KPSN)

    For internet services and geographical coverage facilitates, including mobile roaming via public sector roaming ('Govroam') service.

  - Smarter Digital services (Tunbridge Wells)

    To carry out business process mapping across multiple services as part of the Website and Digital services projects

1.2.5   IT Infrastructure

- We have procured online customer engagement solutions for our Revenue & Benefit services (Citizen Access) on 'Software as a Service' (SaaS) basis and have successfully implemented the system for the Revenue services. Currently in the process of implementing it for Benefit services

- Our income collection system (Adelante) has been transferred to a cloud-based SaaS solution

- We have procured and implemented a cloud-based Backup and DR solution for the council on a 'Infrastructure as a Service' (IaaS) basis

- We are currently tin the process of procuring a cloud hosting solution for our production environment based on 'IaaS' option

- The new Website and Customer-portal solution will be cloud hosted on IaaS basis

1.2.6   Information Security

- We have established a lead representative for Information Security at officer (Management Team) and Member levels

- Progress has been made in regard to the PCI-DSS and PSN compliance, minimising the vulnerabilities significantly

- Annual IT health checks and audits are carried out independently by industry specialists to ensure information security is maintained across the organisation

1.2.7   Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery (BCDR)

- We have procured and implemented a DR network environment on a cloud-based platform and tested connectivity with our current environment.

- Wherever possible, we have built resilience into systems making them highly available

- Our recovery from recent DR situations with no data loss illustrates that our disaster recovery approach has strengthened our Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan.

- Established repository for backup within the cloud-based platform that we can restore to another cloud based DR environment or on-premises in a BCDR situation.

- Routine testing of the DR environment servers has been scheduled based on an annual or major system changes basis

- Currently working with Emergency Planning to create a platform to deal with various types of potential emergencies using the Cloud based solutions

1.3   Updated Strategy

1.3.1   The Strategy has been revised taking on board the issues above, but also rolling it on one year to 2023. The revisions are relatively modest, and are highlighted in yellow for ease of reading.

1.3.2   The reason for rolling on one year is that, since the IT Strategy was adopted back in 2018, the Council has also adopted a Digital Strategy which complements it. The Digital Strategy's timespan continues until 2023, and it will be helpful to align both strategies from a timescale perspective to underpin the Council's Corporate Strategy.

1.3.3   The updated strategy is set out at **[Annex 1]**.

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   By adopting "smarter" use of technology in our delivery of services we have the opportunity to improve efficiencies, therefore reducing cost and improving value for money to the resident.

1.5.2   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 supports 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.

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 at this stage

1.8   Policy Considerations

1.8.1   Business Continuity/Resilience

1.8.2   Communications

1.8.3   Customer Contact

1.8.4   Procurement

1.9   Recommendations

1.9.1   Members are asked to consider and **RECOMMEND** approval of the refresh to the IT Strategy.

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: contact: Ganesh Thangarajah

Nil

Sharon Shelton
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