



Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 December 2013

Digital update report - maximising the benefit of digital technology

Purpose of the report:

The purpose of this report is to give the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee an update on the council's progress and future plans to maximise the business benefits of digital technology.

BACKGROUND

Digital technology is a key enabler in the council's Corporate Strategy - 'Confident in our Future' and the 'Innovation Framework' - approved by Cabinet on 27 November 2012.

The council's approach to innovation includes both digital and non-digital components and looks to integrate IMT, HR&OD, Customer Services, and all service strategies.

INTRODUCTION

This paper contains the specific actions the council is taking to maximize the use of digital technology, in order to realise the significant cost saving required over the coming years, whilst improving service to residents.

It is important that we help everyone in Surrey to benefit from the digital age and to ensure that no one is excluded. This paper therefore also details what we are doing to help people take advantage of digital services, and how we are providing other ways to access services where necessary.

WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW

1. Digital leadership

Digital leadership is key to driving continuous, customer focused improvement and championing the improvement of digital services and information.

The Council is recruiting a Chief Digital Officer who will support the Corporate Leadership Team to develop the Council's Digital Strategy. The Digital Strategy will ensure that our future technological infrastructure improves the delivery of services to residents and provides best value for money.

The Chief Digital Officer Council will work closely with the existing Directorate Technology Boards and the Customer Service Group to prioritise and manage technology projects.

2. Redesigning services

We are re-designing services to improve the customer experience and realise savings through the use of digital technology. We are focusing on high volume transactional services to improve online access and uptake. Annex A shows the council's top 20 transactional processes including 'online uptake' and processes that are currently in development.

The council has just launched an online process for the application of student rail and bus passes, and is currently working on online systems for adults learning courses and the booking of registration appointments (i.e. births, deaths and marriages).

Various improvement methodologies are being used to improve services such as the "5Ds" model (discover, develop, design, decide, deliver), Rapid Improvements Events, LEAN design, 'Shift' Events, and customer journey mapping. These processes involve staff and service users in the design process to ensure better solutions.

3. Improving online access and information

The council's website is currently being redesigned to improve access, usability, and the "look-and-feel". The redesign of the council's website is being accompanied by a review of the 8,000 pages that currently make up the website. Phase one of the project went live in October 2013.

A quality assurance feedback mechanism has also been introduced to capture customer feedback to help us continually improve and deliver better quality content.

4. Improving digital infrastructure and systems

The council is currently working to improve its digital infrastructure. Our technical platforms are being updated and improved to better support delivery of digital services. The council's new data centre and UNICORN infrastructure will provide a platform on which to provide modern digital services.

5. Improving digital skills

We recognise the need to improve our staff's digital skills, increase capacity and introduce better technology. Various projects such as the 'modern worker project', 'smarter working project', 'IT Skills Assessment' and the 'Dynamic Learning Environment' are helping to improve IT skills and introduce new ways of working across the council.

6. Digital inclusion

The council is committed to helping everyone maximise life opportunities in a digital world. The council's Superfast Broadband project is improving Surrey's digital infrastructure and will give residents and businesses much better access to the internet.

The council is also working to improve skills in Surrey and has a 'Computer Buddies' scheme through which volunteers in our libraries are helping residents to use computers and improve their IT skills.

Whilst we are using more technology the council is committed to providing consistent services for people who have rarely or never been online. The Contact Centre will continue to provide help to those who find it difficult to access services digitally and is reviewing the management of all contact channels to improve services and meet changing customer expectations.

CONCLUSION

The council is working hard to maximise the business benefits of digital technology, however the task is complex and challenging. The development of a Digital Strategy and the other actions described in this report will help to maximise the use of digital technology throughout the organisation to help improve services and realise cost savings.

Annex

A. Online uptake on SCC's top 20 transactional processes

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