COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Item under consideration: DIGITAL BY DEFAULT

Date Considered: 3 October 2013

1   At its meeting on 3 October 2013, the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a report as part of its initial consideration of issues relating to a 'digital by default' approach to service delivery.

2   The Committee noted that the aim of any digital approach to service delivery was to achieve simple, clear transactions, in line with the Cabinet Office definition that 'digital by default means digital services which are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use digital services will choose to do so, while those who can't are not excluded.' The Committee discussed a number of key issues relating to digital service delivery, including accessibility (in terms of both physical access through electronic devices as well as the ease of use of the services themselves); confidentiality and security; establishing realistic cost comparison with other methods of service delivery; the need to involve residents and voluntary groups early in designing (not just testing) digital service delivery; and the on-going support requirements of those accessing services digitally. It was noted that digital by default should not be the starting point - services should be designed around the needs of residents, with technology as part of the solution to effective service delivery.

3   The Committee acknowledged the progress the Council had made in terms of improving digital access, notably through the Superfast Broadband programme and the provision of services such as school admissions and procurement. Directorate-level boards had been established recently, and these were helping directorates to drive digital service delivery and identify common issues within each directorate. The Committee also noted the work which was currently in progress in relation to the revision of the Council's website.

4   Whilst acknowledging that progress had been made, the Committee requested that a further report be presented to its meeting in December 2013 summarising the digital solutions already in place or proposed, and outlining the initiatives to co-ordinate the Council's approach to digital by default. It was noted that the Council does not currently have an over-arching strategy to guide its approach, and felt that this was something which the Cabinet should consider.

5   The Committee made the following **recommendations:**

(a)   That the Cabinet considers developing a high-level strategy document to help guide its approach to the digital delivery of both back-office and front-line services.

(b)   That consideration be given to identifying a Cabinet Member to take lead responsibility for the Council's overall approach to the digital delivery of services.

NICK SKELLETT
Chairman of the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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