Wiltshire Council

Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

28 January 2020

Final Report of the Digital Strategy & Implementation Task Group

Purpose of the report

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the task group for endorsement by the committee and referral to the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets for a response.

Background

2. The Digital Strategy & Implementation Task Group initially commenced as the MyWiltshire System Task Group in January 2016. One year later in January 2017, OS Management Committee agreed to widen the task group's remit to encompass the Council's Digital Strategy, which had recently been published. Thus, following the municipal elections, from June 2017 the task group became known as the Digital Strategy & Implementation Task Group and also had its Terms of Reference amended at this point (see below).

3. This task group links to the Council's Business Plan 2017-27 outcome of becoming an 'innovative and effective Council' and reports into OS Management Committee, as the scrutiny committee with responsibility for considering the digital portfolio.

Terms of Reference

4. As mentioned above, in June 2017 the task group amended its Terms of Reference (ToR) to the following. These were endorsed by OS Management Committee on 28 November 2017.

    - To meet at least four times a year and more frequently as required, when key milestones of the Strategy are identified
    - For the Task Group's Chairman to hold a position on the Digital Board

Culture Transformation:

    - To investigate how the Council is engaging different user groups to support the re-design of Council services
    - To help shape and implement the engagement of staff and members, as services are progressively automated

Technology and Platform:

- To provide an additional dimension of quality assurance on projects that emerge as a part of the Strategy
- To help shape and implement how the Council is maximising digital compatibility across all platforms, including legacy and partner systems

Service Re-Design

- To help shape how the Council prioritises its services for automation and the subsequent customer take-up of these services
- To monitor and review how the Council can make effective efficiencies through increased automated services and the cost and the implications of the technology to do so

5. As the task group had been established as a standing task group, the three headings were laid out: 'culture transformation'; 'technology and platform' and 'service re-design'. It was agreed that the task group work through each heading and its corresponding ToRs on an annual basis, concluding with the next municipal elections in May 2021. In other words, it had been planned that the task group would finish working through each of their ToR by May 2021.

6. However, after around 12 months in June 2018, it was agreed that the task group were not adding value. Therefore, new ToR were proposed by the Chairman and put forward for endorsement to OS Management Committee. The Committee endorsed these ToR on 18 September 2018. Subsequently, the task group have been working to the following ToR since September 2018:

1. Look at the audit of existing software and how much we are/are not duplicating systems and costs
2. Look at the list of projects and how things become projects - explore how these can be better vetted in future to ensure projects meet best needs
3. Explore the options of the Microsoft Exercise and look at learning from other councils on how to potentially use those solutions
4. How we interface between service users/residents and the council and its digital systems

Membership

7. The task group comprised the following membership:

- Cllr Howard Greenman
- Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
- Cllr Bob Jones OBE
- Cllr Stuart Wheeler
- Cllr Gordon King

Methodology

8. The task group is grateful to the following witnesses for contributing to the scrutiny review:

Ian Baker	Former Head of Programme Office, Wiltshire Council
Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling	Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets
Carlton Brand	Former Executive Director for Adult Social Care, Public Health & Digital, Wiltshire Council
Paul Bromley	Highways Asset Manager, Wiltshire Council
Sarah Cosentino	Former Portfolio Manager, Wiltshire Council
Liz Creedy	Head of Corporate Assurance and Programmes, Wiltshire Council
Paul Day	Former Director of Digital, Data and Technology, Wiltshire Council
Andi Foster	OD Consultant – Digital Programme, Wiltshire Council
Tony Gooden	Programme Manager, EMEA Business Applications Domain, Microsoft
Parvis Khansari	Director of Highways and Waste, Wiltshire Council
Tamsin Kielb	Strategic Business Partner, Wiltshire Council
Sarah Hedley	UK National Skills Lead, Microsoft
Cllr Ashley O'Neill	Former Portfolio Holder for ICT and Digitalisation
Ian Robinson	Director of Digital, Data and Technology, Wiltshire Council
Matt Tobin	Business Analyst, Wiltshire Council
Ceri Tocock	Head of Communications, Events and Marketing, Wiltshire Council
Robin Townsend	Director of Corporate Services, Wiltshire Council

| Steve Vercella | Head of ICT, Wiltshire Council |
| Cllr Philip Whitehead | Former Cabinet Member for IT and Digitalisation |

Alongside receiving evidence from the witnesses detailed above, the task group also considered other sources of evidence and these included:

- Customer Services at Wiltshire Council: listening into customer service's calls to understand the reason(s) customers contact the Council and whether an alternative digital option is available
- Microsoft Navigator Programme
- Microsoft's Value-Added initiative
- Wiltshire Council's Digital Programmes
- Wiltshire Council: Digital Strategy
- Wiltshire Council's Culture Change programme
- Wiltshire Council: ICT Strategy
- Wiltshire Council's Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS)
- The work of other Local Authorities in creating a Digital Strategy, specifically:
  - Aylesbury Vale
  - Bath and North East Somerset
  - Enfield
  - North Somerset
  - Wigan
  - Windsor and Maidenhead

9. Since the 2017 municipal elections, the task group have met 12 times and presented two interim reports, on an annual basis, to OS Management Committee. The first was received by committee on 18 September 2018 and the second on 24 September 2019.

Evidence

Microsoft Navigator Programme

10. The Council's total investment in the Microsoft Navigator Programme was around £7m, with the Programme's focus primarily centring on improving data management, cyber-security, the MyWiltshire app and the Council's digital platform. The Digital Board oversees the Navigator Programme and receives updates on work progression and any financial savings that have been achieved.

11. Enabling services to become increasingly automated could correlate to some financial savings. Should savings be achieved as a result of a department becoming increasingly automated (and in one sense 'more digital'), the Director would then not be able to increase spending elsewhere within their service

area. Instead, this saving would be recouped as part of the Council's digital savings.

12.   In other words, as the Council had committed in February 2018 to saving around £5m over a three year period from 2019/20, through becoming increasingly digital, any savings achieved by a directorate from digital processes would be recouped corporately; with the total figure saved unable to be spent elsewhere.

Microsoft Value Added Initiative

13.   It was originally agreed that the task group would take a lead in the 'Citizen Engagement' workstream of the Microsoft Value Added initiative. However, after working on this area for several months, the consensus was that the task group had begun to move away from its overview and scrutiny principles of acting as a "critical friend" and working alongside the Executive to help shape policy. As a result, a Project Officer was brought in to lead on this workstream and the task group re-directed their focus.

ICT Strategy

14. The Council's ICT Strategy contains three key strands:
- Investment – known as the "Get Well" programme
- ICT Reorganisation – ensuring that the right skills are located in the right areas
- Innovation – known as "change"

15. When the task group first began focussing on the ICT Strategy, members queried the number of applications on the Council's database and the fact that some of these overlapped in functionality. At this point, it was known that around 17 of the Council's applications were not compatible with Windows10. Thus, the Council began an audit of its entire application database; firstly, because it needed to accurately record which applications were incompatible with Windows10, as Windows7 would be disappearing at the end of 2019 and secondly, to account precisely for the total applications within its database.

Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS)

16. The HIAMS is a system procured by the Council's Highways service area. It is the Highways' line of business system for managing reactive maintenance. One of the key benefits of the HIAMS is that it effectively removes 20% of back-office duplication and has improved location accuracy, for when a customer reports a fault.

17. The HIAMS and the Digital Platform were integrated, to ensure full optimisation of all of the features of the HIAMS. This required the Council to

spend around £300,000. The outcome saw the HIAMS successfully embedded into the Council's new digital platform.

Conclusions

Microsoft Navigator Programme

18. When it came to how savings would be recouped from a service becoming increasingly automated, or a team utilising more digital processes, the task group had concerns about this approach, stating that it needed to be made clear to Directors and Heads of Service that they would not be able to make use of any digital savings elsewhere in their department. However, the Executive assured that the deployment of ICT Business Partners for each service area would allay this fear; as the Business Partners would help to establish a continual dialogue between Heads of Service and digital, creating an environment of two-way communication from the outset.

19. Additionally, the Executive stated that the creation of an 'Operational Board', which sits under the 'Digital Board', helps to ensure that the Council's digital systems are talking with one another and allows the opportunity for managers to see where there may be any app functionality duplication (which could lead to further financial savings). The Operational Board is composed of Heads of Service and Microsoft, with the Digital Board being composed mainly of Executive Directors and Directors.

Microsoft Value Added Initiative

20. As outlined in the task group's 2019 interim report to OS Management Committee, whilst the task group are satisfied with the progress being made in the Citizen Engagement workstream, it had found it frustrating that after several months initial agreement for the task group to take a leading role in this area had later been rescinded. For example, the members felt as though both sides, the task group and the Executive, had lacked clarity about where the task group could add most value and this had culminated in the task group's efforts not being useful, as well as leading to further confusion for all about the group's role and purpose.

ICT Strategy

21. The task group had concerns that, initially, the Executive did not know how many applications were in the Council's database. Their view was that some applications would have duplicated functionality and it could be a 'quick-win' for the Council to remove the apps where functionality was duplicated. However, it was positive that an audit had now taken place and records were accurate.

22. At the task group's most recent meeting in December 2019, members were encouraged to learn about the specific projects within the ICT Strategy and how these had been RAG rated. However, in the past, the task group had

often been provided with limited information; which did not enable them to properly prepare for the meeting and therefore, adequately fulfil their lay perspective role.

23. Alongside this, the task group felt that the ICT Strategy's roadmap should be shortened. In other words, its view was that the plan of work to ensure the Council's ICT was in a healthier shape would take too long and there was a need for this work to be completed sooner. The Executive stressed that local government's resources are never infinite, however, the ICT Strategy's plan was the best that could be achieved with the resources and time available. Whilst the task group appreciated this position, they felt that their comments and suggestions were not positively contributing to the ICT Strategy, and this led to members questioning their value in scrutinising this aspect of the digital portfolio.

Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS)

24. Whilst the task group agreed that the HIAMS had hugely improved processes and business for employees and the Council as a whole, it does not support Councillors in better representing their communities. For example, the task group had initially been involved in discussions about an updated system to MyWiltshire potentially including a Councillor portal; so that a member can view back-office information for their division. The fact that the HIAMS did not currently include this option was disappointing for the task group and thus, the members concluded that their suggestions or comments had not been taken on board; which again contributes to the view that the task group is not adding value.

Proposal

25. In the past, when it has been felt that the task group have not been adding value, the Chairman has held briefing meetings both with the Cabinet Member and senior officers, to agree a new way forward. Additionally, the Terms of Reference were amended to help improve the situation.

26. In spite of the best efforts from all involved to remedy these issues, the task group has come to the conclusion that it is neither adding value, nor is there currently clarity and consensus about what its purpose and role should be. As referenced in the task group's 2018 interim report, this is seen to be because the digital portfolio is so vast and therefore, it is not possible to adequately scrutinise every aspect.

27. It is proposed that the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group be disbanded and, when need arises, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of OS Management Committee meet with the Executive Members for ICT and Digitalisation and the Chairman of the Task Group, to agree a specific digital project where scrutiny engagement would be beneficial (e.g. the website re-design) and the parameters of scrutiny's role. This could be facilitated either

through the on-going dialogue between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of scrutiny and the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets, or through the annual OS Management Committee – Executive meeting on the digital portfolio.

28. The task group support a scrutiny representative maintaining a place on the Digital Board. The task group propose that this arrangement be subsequently confirmed and agreed by OS Management Committee, in consultation with the Executive.

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:
  i.   **Endorses the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group becoming disbanded until such a time as scrutiny engagement in a specific digital project (e.g. website re-design) becomes more beneficial**
  ii.   **Maintains its regular dialogue with the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets and involves the current Chairman of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group in any future discussions about potential scrutiny engagement**
  iii. **Endorses a scrutiny representative maintaining a position on the Digital Board, in consultation with the Executive members for ICT and Digitalisation**

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Digital Strategy & Implementation Task Group

Report author: Natalie Heritage, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 718062, Natalie.Heritage@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background documents

Links are provided within the body of the report