

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee**

**24 September 2019**

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#### **Interim report of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group**

**November 2018 to September 2019**

#### **Purpose of the report**

1. To present the work and findings of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group following its second year of meetings from 13 November 2018 to 4 September 2019, so that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) can assess whether the Task Group is adding value to the Executive's work within this area. The Task Group provided their first interim report to OSMC on [18 September 2018](#), following its first year of meetings in this municipal cycle (2017-2021).

#### **Terms of Reference**

2. OSMC endorsed the following Terms of Reference at their [5 June 2018](#) meeting:
  - a) Explore the options of the Microsoft Exercise and look at learning from other councils on how to potentially use these solutions
  - b) Look at the list of ICT projects and how things become projects - explore how these can be better vetted in future to ensure a project meets needs
  - c) Look at audit of existing software and how much we are/are not duplicating systems and costs
  - d) How we interface between service users/residents and the council and its digital systems

#### **Membership**

3. The Task Group is comprised of the following membership (as at September 2019):
  - Cllr Howard Greenman
  - Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)
  - Cllr Bob Jones MBE
  - Cllr Stuart Wheeler
  - Cllr Gordon King

#### **Evidence**

4. From 13 November 2018 to 24 September 2019, the Task Group met six times. These meetings have predominantly focused on Microsoft's Community Engagement work, the Council's ICT Strategy and the projects being delivered as part of the Microsoft Contract.

5. In November the Task Group looked at Microsoft's Community Engagement. This piece of work facilitates Microsoft's 'Value Added' section of the contract with the Council. The rationale behind 'Value Added' is that Microsoft are aiming to equip the UK with the skills it needs for the fourth industrial revolution and thus, when working with an organisation, Microsoft have committed to providing a suite of free activities and courses for the local community. The majority of these programmes are delivered online via Microsoft's website, however there are also workshops, such as 'Train the Trainer' for professionals and 'Coding Clubs' for young people.
6. December's meeting saw the Task Group considering the proposals for the Council's ICT Strategy, which was later expanded on in January's meeting – when a draft document was available. The Task Group heard that the Council's ICT was at a high-risk level and were shown strategies for how the Council intended to rectify this issue. Members were informed that it would take around two years for ICT to be at a medium-low risk level and were impressed with the transparency from witnesses, as well as their forward planning to deal with the matter.
7. Fundamental to the ICT Strategy was the Get Well Programme. This Programme relates to capital investment in ICT, which would see the Council's ICT department adopting a 'Business as usual' and 'change' approach model. The Programme would be monitored through the annual Staff Survey, ICT's User Satisfaction Survey and the Society for IT Practitioners in the Public Sector's (SOCITIM) confidential rating. Cost metrics would also be used to evaluate the success of the Get Well Programme. This confidential rating is assessed from SOCITIM visiting Wiltshire and analysing its ICT systems. Following this, the organisation would provide Wiltshire with an ICT rating relative to other Local Authorities. This rating would be kept confidential and would provide Wiltshire with a good benchmark for how its ICT is operating.
8. During March and June's meeting, the Task Group focussed on the Digital Programme's workstreams. The Digital Programme encompasses the work being carried out as part of the Microsoft-Wiltshire Council contract. The Task Group discussed the Executive colour-coding the workstreams with a 'Red-Amber-Green' status, as was IT's approach for the rest of their work.
9. When scrutinising these workstreams, it was detailed that there had been a conflict amalgamating the Council's new Digital Platform with the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management System (HIAMS). The Digital Platform represents the Council's entire customer-facing ICT infrastructure. Resolving this conflict would lead to the Council incurring additional expense. Previously, customers and staff reported highways issues, such as pot-holes, on the MyWiltshire app. HIAMS is the new system procured by Highways to undertake this functionality and it is seen to be superior to MyWiltshire, because it effectively removes duplicated reports. For example, when an individual reports a defect (such as a pot-hole), HIAMS can determine whether this defect has already been reported. The MyWiltshire app

currently sends defect reports to Highways, who are required to investigate, even if the defect has already been reported.

10. Although the conflict between the Digital Platform and HIAMS was only 10 per cent of HIAMS' total functionality, the Task Group highlighted that this represented 100 per cent of the customer-facing element. In other words, back-office processes would not be affected, however, the customer would suffer a negative service without the resolution. In order to resolve this, the Council would incur an additional cost of £300,000.
11. June's meeting also considered progress with the ICT Strategy. The Task Group was disappointed to read in a report to Cabinet on [26 March 2019](#), that the Council would be receiving a higher charge from Microsoft, as not all Council business applications were Cloud-compatible. Members heard that some applications are not Cloud-compatible and ensuring that they become Cloud-compatible is expensive. As a result, these applications would be managed on a case-by-case basis. The Task Group agreed that, going forwards, a key line of enquiry would be monitoring the number of applications that need to be made Cloud-compatible and the charge that the Council would incur for making this change.

## **Conclusions**

12. When considering Microsoft's Community Engagement work the Task Group initially felt that its scrutiny had been very stop-start and not added value. For example, the Task Group had originally been asked by the former Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, ICT and Operational Assets, to lead in this area. As a result, members began conducting independent work and reporting their findings back to the Task Group, the Executive and Officers. Subsequently, the Task Group felt that it was dictating policy, as opposed to helping shape it, and thus it was agreed that the Programme Office take the lead in this area. Since this change of tack, the Programme Office has appointed a designated officer to lead this work and the Task Group are satisfied with the progress being made.
13. The Task Group heard that it would take around two years for the Council's ICT to move from a high-risk to a medium-low risk level. Additionally, the longer it took for the Get Well Programme to be implemented, the greater the costs to the Council. However, Members noted the fact that higher risk items were being considered first; leading to the Council being able to reduce its risk level within the next six months.
14. In regard to the HIAMS-My Wiltshire integration, Members were satisfied with the Executive's response to this procurement matter, most notably that there has been a revision to the process for how digital procurement is undertaken; to help ensure that this issue does not re-occur.
15. The Task Group originally expressed concern at the lack of information provided to them in advance of a meeting. The consensus was that with minimal background paperwork, it was a challenge to conduct proper scrutiny and add value. Having

raised this with the Executive and at OSMC, from June 2019 onwards the Task Group's paperwork became more substantial and it received more open and transparent engagement from witnesses. The Task Group is grateful to the Executive for their willingness to help ensure that scrutiny can add maximum value and hopes that this positive relationship can be maintained and strengthened going forwards.

16. As digital transformation encompasses a vast number of projects and is seen to be something with no end date, the Task Group intend to continue as a standing Task Group and to provide annual interim reports to OSMC, to help the Committee assess the quality of the Task Group's contribution.

### **Proposal**

17. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee:

- a) Supports the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group in building and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Executive
- b) Acknowledges the work of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Task Group from November 2018 to September 2019, in providing valuable input into the Council's Digital Programme.

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

Report author: Natalie Heritage, Senior Scrutiny Officer. T:01225 718062 E:  
[natalie.heritage@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:natalie.heritage@wiltshire.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

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