Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

Purpose of Agenda Item

1. To provide an update to Members about progress in delivering the priorities of the Technology Service since the report to the Committee in September 2017.

Context

2. The Committee received an update on the council's technology service in September 2017. The report provided background information about the way in which the service is configured and set out some of the key areas of focus for the service which included:

   - Improvements to the stability and quality of current technology service
   - development of a new corporate digital work plan
   - Review of Technology Services contracts

3. This report provides an update on these areas together with further priorities that have emerged.

Leadership Capacity

4. A number of changes have recently been made to provide additional capacity to the leadership of the council's technology services.

5. Leadership of the Council's digital team has moved to Customer Services, in recognition of the need to use digital channels to improve the customer experience of our services. A new Head of Digital Services has been appointed and will join the Council in June.

6. The County Council and the NHS have agreed to recruit a Joint Strategic Director of ICT. This post is designed to enable us to develop and deliver a joint transformation programme across the Council and the NHS and will be critical in the delivery of the local Integrated Care System. Benefits will include the opportunity to develop a shared approach to the use of technology and data across the NHS and Adult Social Care to promote prevention and better health outcomes for residents. In addition, we are currently recruiting a Director of ICT Operations for the County Council.

Strategy

7. The Council is currently developing a new five year technology strategy which sets out our ambition for supporting the delivery of the council's Strategic Plan through technology.

8. The Council have approved around £15m of investment in ICT developments over the next four years to ensure that staff and Members have the tools do their jobs efficiently and that we use smart technology to transform our services..

Some of this investment is specific, for example enhancements to our cyber security and the replacement of the Adults Social Care AIS system. Other areas of investment remain subject to detailed business cases which are under development in tandem with the draft strategy.

9. It is proposed that the strategy will be made up of five themes:
    - Smarter County – using technology to create opportunities and ensure Buckinghamshire thrives
    - Smarter Communities – safeguarding our vulnerable and building self-reliant communities
    - Smarter for Customers – making it easier for people to access our services
    - Smarter Council – creating an efficient organisation, helping staff and Members to do their jobs
    - Enablement – delivering this strategy and ensuring value for money
    - The strategy is due to be presented for a key decision in July.

Governance

10. As part of the strategy development, we have identified the need to establish clearer governance for ICT projects and procurement.

11. The current landscape is the sum of individual business unit projects and requirements rather than the product of a single, coherent strategy for the council. This manifests itself in a number of ways: the number of ICT applications we have (1,400+), an inconsistent approach to which systems are supported by the central ICT team versus external suppliers and a website that has all the technical capabilities it needs but has been downgraded to 2 * (out of 4) by Socitm for accessibility and consistency.

12. A key priority for the current year is the establishment of a clear architecture map for the Council, with the principle of first seeking to reuse technology that we already have before buying new applications. This will manage down costs and risks, while making it easier to share data between a smaller number of systems for a single view of the truth.

13. This will mark a big change for the council, moving from a model where service areas often choose and procure their own technology solutions to one where service areas work with Technology Services to turn their business plans into projects that will form a prioritised pipeline of technology work, against agreed corporate criteria.

14. A Customer, Digital and Technology Board, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Resources, is currently being established which will provide oversight of the strategy and associated investment. The Customer, Digital and Technology Board will have a key role to play in driving the delivery of a coherent technological architecture, whilst ensuing we are flexible in responding to the needs of individual services.

Contracts

15. Technology Services runs one major outsourced contract through Capita Networking Solutions (formerly Updata). This contract covers all networking provision to the council, the council's mobile phone contract and the new computer based telephony solution. Microsoft Lync. This contract was signed on a five year basis in 2012 with options for 4 further years of extended service on a 2+2 year basis. The contract expires in 2019 and a major priority for the service is the procurement of the service for the future.

Digital Developments

16. The main BCC website has over 2 million visitors a year and consists of nearly 2,000 pages. The focus of the digital team in recent years has been on the development of digital process improvements and the maintenance of our existing web content has been given a lower priority as a result. A recent review has identified the need to renew and update our existing web content to make it far more usable and effective for the target audience. The Customer Experience and Digital Team have therefore developed a programme of improvements to the Council's website with the aim of providing a more effective digital front door to the organisation which enables our customers to interact with us 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

17. In addition to the main website, there are currently 80 known Microsites associated with Buckinghamshire County Council. Whilst there have been legitimate reasons for establishing these, they generally lack technical support and present risks in terms of the future sustainability of the content. Work is therefore taking place to migrate the sites back to BCC in order to ensure that economies of scale are utilised and that developments are implemented to ensure the best customer experience across all of our sites. Where there is a case for a microsite, these will be built within the secure and robust platform manged by the digital team.

18. Within the context of the emerging technology strategy, the team is also refreshing the council's pipeline of digital projects for delivery in 2018/19. This will be considered by the new Customer, Digital and Technology Board in June.