



CABINET – 12TH JUNE 2019

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

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- 1.1 The attached report, which outlined the draft Customer and Digital Strategy and associated Strategic Action Plan for Caerphilly CBC, and which sought the views of Members on its content, was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 28th May 2019, ahead of its presentation to Cabinet for endorsement.
 - 1.2 By way of an interactive digital interface that will be made available on the Council's website and will be continually updated, the Scrutiny Committee were referred to the key sections of the Strategy as appended to the report. Members were advised that the Strategy sets out a proposed vision for "Investing in our Future by Opening the Digital Front Door". The Strategy includes a number of guiding principles and a narrative for #DigitalCaerphilly, including connectivity with customers and staff via this "Digital Front Door", helping and supporting business by driving innovative solutions, will embrace the wider Welsh agenda by adhering to digital principles and development of digital service standards, and will connect internally with a digital culture to promote and support the use of modern day technology. The Action Plan attached to the Strategy sets out a forward work plan and activities to deliver on the Key Objectives of the Strategy, and the Strategy will set the scene for future direction of travel for the service and the Council.
 - 1.3 It was explained that the Strategy will put the customer at the heart of service delivery, whilst also continuing to support traditional customer service and a personal approach. Officers emphasised that the Strategy will not take away existing customer services but rather, is intended to enhance these services. It was noted that it is important for the Council to retain its ability to direct its own resources to the successful delivery of this strategy, and whilst this by no means closes the door on future collaborations of ICT and digital provision, will allow the Council to focus on the tasks at hand at a key time in its transformation journey. Although Cabinet has approved the setting aside of £600k to fund some of the key initial investments to support the Strategy, it is anticipated that further investment will be required moving forward and will be subject to further Cabinet reports as matters progress.
 - 1.4 Discussion took place regarding the possible impact of the Strategy on customer interaction, and Officers emphasised that the new Abavus Customer Portal being launched as part of the Strategy will not take away the existing face to face service preferred by some customers. Rather, this will create more avenues to contact the Council and will offer greater flexibility for residents, particularly those who prefer to contact the Council in the evenings. It was explained that the system will rely on help points and an automation service outside of office hours, and will be set up in such a way as to reduce repetitive tasks for staff in daytime hours.

- 1.5 In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that the system will not replace staff and will offer support for back office staff and allow them to be retrained to concentrate on other customer services areas. It was also confirmed that Unison welcomed the potential to allow repetitive tasks to be eliminated and allow for the retraining and reskilling of staff. Members noted that the new Abavus system will offer ease of use and provide directionality to where it is needed, and that several staff from Customer First and IT Services with the relevant knowledge base have been deployed to work on the new Strategy in order to maximise its potential.
- 1.6 The Scrutiny Committee were pleased to note the enthusiasm of Officers involved in the development and delivery of the Strategy and asked that their thanks to the relevant staff be placed on record.
- 1.7 Following consideration of the report and in noting its contents, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that the Customer and Digital Strategy and Strategic Action Plan as appended to the report be endorsed.
- 1.8 Cabinet are asked to consider the report and the above recommendation.

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Appendices:

Appendix A Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 28th May 2019 –
Agenda Item 9