Gedling
Borough Council

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Digital Strategy 2016-2019

Date: 29th September 2016

Author: Digital Services Manager

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to brief Cabinet and seek approval for a Digital Strategy for Gedling 2016-2019.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Background

1.1   Whilst Council services are supported by existing core I.T. arrangements, as technology continues to transform the way services are delivered and is increasingly integrated into many aspects of our lives; there is the potential to be even more efficient, productive and cost effective by expanding the use of digital technologies.

1.2   Building on our solid foundations we can progress towards a fully digitally enabled Council that keeps up with the pace of change, generates long term savings and continually improves services. The continued exploitation of technology can assist in providing services in user friendly and inclusive ways, easier access for the community and support collaborative working.

1.3   A Digital Strategy 2016-19 has been developed and appears at Appendix 1. It sets out the overarching strategic direction for the Council to provide focus, quicken the pace and enable a more joined up approach. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with senior managers across the Council whose input has both shaped

the proposals and will assist with the implementation of the arrangements. An Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 2) and a summary, reference guide (Appendix 3) accompanies the full Strategy document.

Proposal

2.1 For a number of years, the Council has made use of available technologies which have assisted in service improvements, enhanced customer journeys, and reduced operating costs. Building on what has been put in place, it proposed that the scope of the Council's digital thinking is widened and the pace of change accelerated.

2.2 The strategy sets out a multi strand approach comprising of four core themes which are Customer, Council, Community and Collaboration.

   2.2.1 Many customers expect and want to deal with the Council digitally. The **Customer** component of the strategy will primarily focus on the website and the potential of social media. A radical restructuring of the website is proposed which will change the design, navigation and content to support easier and efficient access to services. Instances where customers need to report, apply or pay will be supported by easy to use facilities which are the norm when using the internet. Social media and keep me posted will be fully exploited to promote what facilities are available from Council's website and will also be used to get important messages into the Community. It's not the intention that the only way of dealing with the Council will be by digital means. Where people expect to, want to and can, we will encourage and support their use of our digital channels but, our traditional channels for example telephone and face to face will always be available contact options.

   2.2.2 Access to digital tools and the skills required to deliver services effectively and efficiently sits at the centre of the **Council** component of the strategy which will embed a strong digital culture throughout the organisation. Our investments in technology must be used to their full potential and opportunities to exploit digital capabilities will be embedded in the service planning process. A paperless approach will become the norm.

   2.2.3 Supporting residents and business to benefit from digital technologies features within the **Community** strand of the strategy. Whilst externally collated Insight data suggest that the likelihood of overall digital exclusion in the Borough is low, continued support is required to provide access to the Internet and help with using digital facilities. The Council has contributed to the national broadband infrastructure programme and provides both Wi-Fi and self-service workstation access points to the internet. Moving forward, finding additional ways of supporting residents and businesses to benefit from digital technologies is the fundamental element of this theme.

   2.2.4 The **Collaboration** strand is about working with partners to engage with the

community using digital tools to tackle complex issues in a seamless way. That means fully exploiting the potential of social media products to fully involve and stimulate inclusive participation in issues affecting residents and businesses within the Borough. Appropriate sharing of insight data between partners to assist in the determination of problem solving and improvements will be part of this theme.

2.3   Whilst being mindful of the risk of cyber-crime and recognising that the protection of both customer and council data is paramount, we must not see this as a barrier to putting in place our digital plans.

2.4   At the centre of what the Council does is serving people, improving lives. Embedded within the Council Plan, is a range of activities in support of people, performance and place which are digitally themed and contribute and align with the overall proposed digital agenda.

Alternative Options

3   Although the Council is making progress in support of the digital agenda, overarching strategic direction will provide focus, quicken the pace and enable a more joined up approach. The alternative option is not to have a strategy and continue with a piecemeal approach but this option is not recommended for a change programme of this magnitude.

Financial Implications

4.1   Implementation of the Strategy will require funding. Opportunities may arise to reutilise existing budgets. Where this is not possible and additional funding is needed, budget bids will be submitted in accordance with the normal processes.

Appendices

5   Appendix 1 – Digital Strategy 2016-19.

Appendix 2 - Digital Strategy 2016-2019 Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 3 - Summary Reference Guide.

Background Papers

6.   None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

(a)   Approve the Digital Strategy 2016-19 set out at Appendix 1 and authorise Officers to progress arrangements to implement the proposals set out.

Reasons for Recommendations

7.1   To ensure that the Council has an overarching strategic direction to its digital agenda which will provide focus, quicken the pace and enable a more joined up approach.

7.2   To use the most appropriate technologies to assist in making continual improvements to the services provided by the Council.

7.3   Unlocking the full potential of digital technologies will assist in the Councils primary of serving people; improving lives.