CABINET

Newcastle City Council

22 February 2016
Digital by Choice: review and future ambitions

Name of Cabinet Member	**Councillor Joyce McCarty**
Director presenting this report	**Tony Durcan** Assistant Director
Report author	**Tony Durcan**

Confidential / not for publication: No	**Non Key Decision**

Report summary

Since January 2015, Council and YHN officers have been developing a new vision for the City Council's digital services "Digital by Choice". That vision has as an ambition that the Council will have excellent digital services which are so easy to use that they are naturally the way people choose to engage with us.

This report outlines progress on the implementation of the Digital by Choice programme, including proposals for the next phase. It also seeks Cabinet approval to procure specialist advice in key activity areas.

Summary of decisions being asked for

Cabinet are asked to note progress, and comment on future proposals.

Cabinet are also asked to agree to undertaking a procurement exercise to see if specialist support can be obtained to progress digital ambitions in specific service areas (see sections 1.5 and 11.1).

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1.   What is this report about?

1.1   Cabinet are aware that as part of the Council's on-going transformation agenda, the Chief Executive has asked the Assistant Director : Customers, Culture and Skills to develop a customer and user focussed vision and action plan to inform and drive the development of the Council's digital offer. This is being progressed under the 'Digital by Choice' brand, by a cross cutting team of Council and YHN staff working in a variety of thematic groups – Team Digital. This report reviews a progress with the Programme.

1.2   From the outset this work has been a partnership between the City Council and YHN, and increasingly we are working together to find common digital solutions.

1.3   In 2015/16 the Digital by Choice programme has been focussed on improving the Council's key digital transactions; raising awareness of the benefits of being digitally active; managing the move to cashless (the withdrawal of the Council's cashiering services); providing an effective digital inclusion and support network; encouraging customers to move positively to digital activity; supporting digital skills development (internally and externally); supporting digital provision for councillors; and defining the Council's future digital systems, enablers and   infrastructure.

1.4   As well as implementing the 2015/16 plan, programme leads have been working with colleagues to identify deeper and more transformational opportunities which can support individual directorates and services, and help them in the delivery of their service changes and their budget savings. This, together with continuing work from 2015/16) will form a three year digital plan, 2016/17-2018/19. Wherever possible this will reflect key issues in the Council's existing three year budget proposals, looking at more fundamental digital transformational change rather than perhaps simply 'digitising' existing transactions and practices. The key projects are outlined in appendix 1.

1.5   As we move into these more challenging areas we are likely to need specialist advice and support. In November officers organised an open day presentation for potential digital consultancy suppliers to outline our Digital by Choice work to date, and explain the challenges faced by the Council and the next phase of the Programme. What this clarified is that the Council does not need to procure a single supplier or partner to help us strategically in the next stage of digital transformation, but we are likely to need to procure specific areas of expertise and challenge once we are clear about the priority service areas for digital support.

2.   What decisions are being asked for?

2.1   Cabinet is asked to:
- note and comment on progress with the Digital by Choice programme, and also comment on future proposals;

- agree that the Deputy Leader be delegated to authorise a procurement for any necessary specialist advice and support for priority transformation areas, subject to the Director of Resources' confirmation of funding arrangements.

3.   Progress with the Digital by Choice Programme

3.1   The focus of our 2015/16 activity has been 'improved coordination and accelerated improvement'. The following activities have been completed, or are progressing:
- the Digital by Choice vision has been finalised following consultation, and provides an ongoing policy framework for the Programme;
- the cashiering service was removed from all centres on 27 November. There has been little negative reaction to this so far, although the December- January period is usually quieter in terms of related customer activity. The main issue has been the transition to payment vouchers for the Council's appointeeships and other vulnerable customers;
- we have made improvements to our online offer for key face to face transactions, including Revenues and Benefits and Parking;
- a programme of digital awareness and skills training (externally funded) has been delivered to a large number of front facing staff in the Customers, Culture and Skills Division, and Office365 PowerUser training has been delivered to staff relocating as part of the Civic Centre refurbishment to facilitate new ways of working;
- the People's Network (free public use pcs and internet access) has been refreshed across all Libraries/Customer Service Centres;
- Go Digital Newcastle free Wi-Fi has been installed in 70 public buildings (and YHN communal areas), and the free outdoor provision is on track for full completion in March 2016**.** Wifi provision within the Civic Centre has also been improved by ICT Newcastle;
- the Council is working with colleagues across the NECA area to get a better understanding of the region's digital assets (including fibre; data centres; and innovation expertise) and how we could stimulate demand for Ultrafast broadband provision;
- the Council has also agreed its approach to strengthening its digital platform, and is building on its existing Customer Relations Management system (formally known as Lagan) to develop Council wide streamlined digital processes . Known internally as 'Digital First', there is now a project team in place and a work programme is being developed using agile project management principles. The team, led by YHN and Council colleagues, is currently delivering its first project;
- work is continuing with elected members to roll out digital devices – enabling and also supporting elected members to adopt a more efficient and streamlined way of working, with a unified approach to accessing council papers and related information. To date 75% of members have taken receipt of their devices and a member digital champion arrangement is being developed to provide support to individual members;
- work is also continuing within Wellbeing, Care and Learning (WCL)

on mobile working with social care staff;

- we held a "Connecting the City" open data weekend event at The Core in June. We shared data from online directories about services and events delivered by the council and partners. A number of teams from Newcastle University and Newcastle's tech community explored the data and designed and developed working prototypes to improve the customer experience and deliver innovative solutions;
- as a result of discussions in the Newcastle 2020 group, and also among the Core Cities, the Digital by Choice team has been working with partners to try and agree citywide priorities for publishing open data, and also for sharing data. We have increasing evidence of data being used to improve business intelligence, for example within WCL Family Insights project;
- we have continued our efforts to reduce the number of ICT applications in use across the Council (from 170 - 130);
- we are continuing to deploy Microsoft's Office 365 cloud solution to improve collaboration and productivity across the council and with partners. In 2015 we:
  - redeveloped the intranet using SharePoint Online in April 2015;
  - introduced OneDrive and SharePoint sites for staff to store, share and manage documents more effectively;
  - used Skype for Business to enable staff to video conference and share desktops instead of travelling to meetings;
  - provided Office 365 for the North East Combined Authority (NECA);
  - facilitated video conferencing between senior officers in local councils and with partners (including the North East ICT Partnership);
- we have continued to work with Virgin Media Business on deployment of the new Wide Area Network (WAN) across corporate sites and schools. Good progress has been made with over half of our sites now live;
- since winning the O2 Local Government Digital Fund in 2014, we have been working with O2 and another company, KMS, to develop MyTrav – an app to help children and young people with Special Educational Needs to travel independently. This project won "Project of the Year – Public Sector" at the Dynamite 15 awards in October;
- there have also been a range of relatively minor digital changes and improvements which all contribute to the overall drive to streamline operations and deliver efficiencies.

4. The Digital by Choice Programme – emerging 2016/17-18/19 plans

4.1 For the new three year plan we are looking to complete existing commitments, develop some second phase projects, and pull together a package of new activities.

4.2 Officers across the Council are working to identify opportunities for Digital by Choice to help deliver planned and future budget savings. Based on an analysis of the 2016/17 budget these are likely to fall in the areas of front

line customer, libraries and related services (the emerging Community Hubs – see section 4.5); support for transformation around social care; 'smarter cities' developments in neighbourhood and local services; supporting commercialisation; ongoing streamlining and efficiencies in internal processes.

4.3   These themes of activity are underpinned by a number of 'foundation' or cross cutting projects. These include:
- digital skills and inclusion;
- web development and exploiting social media;
- data and analytics;
- digital to support devolution;
- ongoing applications consolidation activity.

A summary of each theme is outlined below, and the list of associated key projects are identified in the appendix.

4.4   **Front Line customer, libraries and related services**
- We will be reviewing our progress in digitising the top 7 (YHN) and top 25 (NCC) transactions, and planning how we deal with the outstanding ones, if continuing business levels require this. As part of this we will continue our push to encourage direct debit and digital payments from those residents who currently pay us by cheque or by cash at a PayPoint outlet.

4.5   **Community Hubs**
- Another project in the Digital Newcastle programme is the development in partnership with YHN and others, of Community Hubs. Originally arising from 2015/16 budget proposals, subsequent decisions about the future of face to face service provision; outcomes from the YHN review; and a range of council budget proposals for 2016/17 require us to consider again what we want from the concept, and how we drive it forward.
- Community Hubs have the potential to be the key entry point to a coordinated, targeted and consistent information, advice and referral system cross the city. They could be the first point of help for people as the established 'welfare state' offer ceases to provide a universal safety net, and becomes a tightly targeted service. For example, they could provide the space for employment focused services especially when JCP have less need to provide front facing services as their benefits service moves to a remote offer.
- Developing Community Hubs is not about trying to protect a reduced version of our existing face to face services (Customer services, YHN services, Library and Information services for example). We already have a commitment to reducing the face to face offer, providing more self service and a more extensive and quality digital offer. Moving forward we have to ensure that we provide targeted provision to those who most need it, in partnership with other agencies. Our universal offers will have to based around self service and digital offers. Digital by Choice is key to delivering our community hubs offer and a new face to face offer.

4.6 **Social Care transformation**
- We will support the emerging requirements relating to NHS/Social Care 'Interoperability'.
- We will consider how digital can ensure more effective prioritisation of resource, especially in relation to prevention and early intervention.
- We will review the potential for existing telecare technology to be used in other ways for those clients who continue to receive the service.

4.7 **Smarter Cities**
- We will drive forward ways of using technology such as sensors or artificial intelligence to reduce customer contact, reduce demand for services and/or reduce the need for physical resource intervention where there is a financial business case to do this. We will also explore the potential benefits of smart systems and heat supply.
- We will continue to use our position, where possible, to improve the Digital infrastructure within the City, such as YHN's ambition to deliver broadband access for tenants

4.8 **Supporting Commercialisation**
- We will support business areas in becoming 'Newcastle Trading Company ready' by providing challenge and expertise at business case development to ensure that digital sits at the heart of future service design.
- We will ensure ICT resource is prioritised on key projects which support our trading activity and deliver financial return.

4.9 **Streamlining internal processes**
- We will continue to develop the Digital First platform to deliver improved and easier accessibility service users, and also to build more efficient and robust internal and external processes and services.
- 'Cashless' phase 2 is an important piece of work. As well as investigating options for supporting appointeeships and other vulnerable residents, officers are reviewing a number of internal processes to ensure that the Council only has to deal with unavoidable levels of cash handling.

4.10 › **Foundations**
- Council and YHN officers will put increased drive behind our skills and inclusion work- internally and across local communities. We aim to work with partners to build an external network of Digital Ambassadors, building on the success of the YHN scheme. Providing an appropriate digital inclusion network for those residents who need it will be an essential element of the Digital by Choice programme.
- At the same time we will develop an internal network of Digital Friends, and will also provide more digital training and skills development so that colleagues are better able to harness the improvements in our digital capacity and systems.

- we will support the roll out of the Members' Digital Champion network to promote the use of digital technology to fellow members, colleagues and residents.
- We will continue to work with partners (especially the two Universities and the Core Cities, but also organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses) to maximise the opportunities of sharing data, making more data freely available, and exploiting the potential that the better sharing and analysis of data offers to public service reform.
- We will increase communications about the Programme, and continue to consult and communicate with residents, staff, members and stakeholders to ensure that there is a wide awareness of service changes, and digital offers and opportunities.

5. What impact will this proposal have?

5.1 An immediate impact of this proposal will be to encourage and support more people to become online or to use the Council's People's Network to engage online. Clearly this will support our Digital by Choice ambitions. But it will also introduce non digitally active residents to a whole range of online activity, not just in terms of the Council's transactions, but also in terms of email, online shopping, and other digital activities that many people now take for granted.

5.2 All residents will have the opportunity to engage equally with digital communications and services, with mediated support from frontline staff for those who need it, in proportion to that need. It is worth reflecting that for a first time digital user, there is the opportunity to save £1064 annually through online shopping and energy/utility discounts. (BT report: Valuing Digital Inclusion – calculating the social value to individuals of going online). Research also shows that people in work who acquire digital skills achieve a rise in earnings of between 3% and 10%, and that having digital skills helps improve the likelihood of someone who is unemployed finding a new job. (The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK, commissioned by the Tinder Foundation and GO ON UK, and published in November 2015)

5.3 Digital by Choice will continue to drive service improvement, and provide residents, partners and stakeholders with more choice about how they interact with the Council. Transactions will be possible at more convenient times; there will be improved access to information; and digital routes will avoid the waiting times sometimes experienced through more routine face to face and telephone contact services.

5.4 The whole programme will give residents the choice to participate equally in the digital world. Staff will be key in facilitating this shift, which will mean that even those without personal access will be able to participate fully in digital activity if they wish to.

6. How will success be measured?

6.1 Our digital vision sets out three key outcomes:

- improve digital opportunities for residents to help them access an improved customer experience (for NCC/YHN services and beyond);
- minimise internal costs of service;
- maximise income.

6.2   The wide ranging nature of the Digital programme means that successful achievement of these outcomes is measured in a number of different ways. When reviewing data we are mindful that in many cases, a change will be only partly driven by a digital solution, and while we maintain a 'digital by choice' agenda, transition to digital ways of working takes time.

6.3   In relation to improving the customer experience, we regularly review higher level indicators such as visits to Customer Service Centres and calls to Contact Centre, in particular looking at the impact of specific interventions, such as the removal of cashiering, or identifying emerging trends in customer behaviour. We receive weekly Google Analytics data which identifies how customers are transacting through the website so that improvements in the customer journey can be made. In addition to this we collect staff and customer feedback through responses to the staff survey, complaints and face to face interactions with customers.

6.4   We also undertake more targeted reviews of success, on a project by project basis, to evidence how digital is helping to minimise costs, or enable existing budget savings and mitigate the impact of those savings on residents.

6.5   We will continue to measure the success of our cross cutting 'foundation' activity, such as skills development interventions and infrastructure (e.g. public Wi-Fi).

7.   What is the timetable for implementation?

7.1   Implementation of the programme is ongoing. The finalisation of the 2016/17 – 18/19 plan will clarify timescales for individual elements of the programme.

8.   What are the legal implications?

8.1   The Assistant Director Legal Services has been consulted in respect of this report and has nothing to add at this stage. His staff have advised in respect of the work being undertaken as part of the Digital by Choice programme and will continue to be involved as appropriate.

9.   What are the resource implications?

9.1   The Director of Resources' representative has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

9.2   Any financial savings captured as a result of Digital by Choice will help towards existing budget proposals along with enabling digital change to assist Directorates in identifying further savings.

9.3   The costs of any procurements would be met through transformation resources subject the production of suitable business cases.

10.   What are the procurement implications?

10.1   As noted in paragraphs 1.5 and 2.1 officers believe that there will be the need to procure certain elements of specialist advice and support as the detail of the 2016/17-18/19 become clearer. Any such procurement requirements will be carried out in full consultation with the Commissioning and Procurement unit, and subject to approval by the Deputy Leader.

11.   What are the key risks and how are they being addressed?

11.1
- that customers continue to choose/prefer face to face contact – mitigated by developing an excellent digital offer, positively promoting benefits, and where appropriate targeting provision
- it may prove difficult to recognise the opportunity to achieve digitally enabled savings in certain areas –mitigation could be through engaging specialist support to help with this.
- that the Council misses an opportunity to radically transform services by simply digitising existing ways of working – mitigated by identifying additional challenge and expertise capacity as required

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