



Community Development Group

Tuesday, 18 September 2018

Digital by Design

Report of the Executive Manager - Transformation

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report will be accompanied by a presentation from the Executive Manager - Transformation and the ICT Manager.
- 1.2. Over the last few years the Council has been on a journey of digitising various services and looking for efficiencies both in the way it does business and in the way that residents can access services. This report and the accompanying presentation will update members on work that has been undertaken and the work that is planned for the future on this agenda.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that

- a) Members receive the presentation from the Executive Manager - Transformation and the ICT Manager and provide feedback and comments on the work delivered so far and the plans for the future.

3. Supporting Information

- 3.1. The work done on digitisation pre 2014 was largely called “channel shift”. This involved encouraging customers to move towards online or email access to council services and away from the more costly to deliver face to face contact. There was a lot of stress on enhancing and complementing existing methods of communicating with RBC (which at the time were mainly phones and face to face) with the emphasis on moving to electronic methods to increase customers’ choice of communication channel.
- 3.2. In 2015 a Customer Access Strategy was developed with three main strands:
 - Customers need access to services
 - Customers need access to information
 - Engagement with customers to gain feedback.
- 3.3. Campaigns such as “Don’t stand in line, do it on-line” were developed but of course these required the Council’s website to be up to standard to deliver this and another focus of the strategy was enhancing the website and making it more customer friendly.

3.4. The term “Channel Shift” was replaced with the term “Digital by Default” and officers set up a Digital by Default programme from 2014-17. This developed to cover the following strands:

- E-forms – developing internet based forms where customers could complete their enquiries or requests online.
- Customer contact analysis – really understanding how people were contacting us.
- Web development – getting the website up to date from a technical perspective.
- Back office integration – making the tasks and admin behind the scenes more seamless to avoid “double entry” of data and connecting up services and departments.

4. Achievements to date:

4.1. The following list sets out a flavour of the achievements and changes in customer behaviours to date, in relation to this work:

- Increase in enquiries to the council received via the website – in 2013 there were 2,916 with 4,282 in 2017.
- Increase in emails to Customer Services – there were 3,482 in 2013 and 8,616 in 2017.
- Increase in online transactions – in 2015 there were 216,330 with 365,668 in 2017. An increase of over 149,000 online transactions since, an overall increase of 69% in three years.
- Self-serve kiosks area available at all times at the Contact Centre with support from staff if required – but these are not used a lot now – most people happy wanting to contact us online will do it on line from home or using their mobile phones.
- On-line forms have improved services – eg people can submit their own benefits claim.
- Many more services now available on-line – eg request for parking dispensations, DBS checks for taxi drivers.
- Direct scanning and indexing customers’ of documents to their accounts is now done by Customer Services Advisors at first point of contact – these were previously passed to the admin team to scan and then index (improved efficiency for Revenues and Strategic Housing).
- In 2015 the Council changed to online elections registrations through the gov.uk website.
- The Communications team now respond via Twitter/Facebook etc to many customer enquiries.
- Land Charges are now completed via email reducing amount of visits in person for searches.
- The recent implementation of Hybrid Mail means that documents are sent for printing and put into envelopes remotely. This has resulted in less staff time stuffing envelopes, releasing capacity for the admin team to complete higher value work.

- The implementation of laptop working has enabled home working plus business continuity solutions for Contact Centre staff.

5. Digital by design programme 2018 onwards

- 5.1. Unsurprisingly, the terminology has moved on and this agenda is now referred to as “Digital by Design” – ie maximising technology should be designed into service provision.
- 5.2. We will be implementing a new Meritec solution which will enable customers to have “My Account” features bringing any interaction with RBC into one place. The gathering of information during the implementation of GDPR and for planning the “My Account” work has increased our lists of email addresses for customers which should enable more use of this method of communications. We are in the process of upgrading systems to allow customers to scan documents from home or upload photos of documents if no actual scanner available.
- 5.3. Officers will update on future work streams for the digital by design programme as part of the presentation at the meeting. The following sets out the project scope.
 - Understands Resident’ needs – Identify through analysing statistical data collection on customer contact (face to face, telephone and web) across all service areas. Use resident trends, feedback, and data to influence design of new services.
 - Accessibility for Everyone – All digital services design will be secure, ease of access and navigation, inclusive, legible and readable as possible. Accessibility is key to keeping residents engaged and actively using digital services.
 - Building Digital Services – To build Digital platforms such as ‘My Account’ portals, and ‘Self-Serve’ facilities for residents to gain quicker and easier access to council services, or their own personal information from one place.
 - Robotics and Artificial Intelligence – Increase efficiencies to residents with instant responses to online requests. Continue to automate existing back office processes, integration between back office systems will increase automated responses to complex requests, and explore the possibility of using Artificial Intelligence technology as this area develops.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

Financial implications are built into services budgets and the ICT improvement programme. Investments are balanced by savings in efficiencies.

6.2. Legal Implications

The Council is regulated by Data Protection/ GDPR legislation which prescribes how data must be managed. This is taken into account in the digital by design work.

6.3. Equalities Implications

The Council will always look to ensure that residents can access its services in the best way for them. Digital by design will not take the place of face-to-face or telephone contact for customers if that is their preference.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no direct implications from this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Digital by Design work links to the Corporate Strategy key themes of:

- Maintaining and enhancing our residents' quality of life – by providing the best and easiest access to services for the resident.
- Transforming the Council to enable the delivery of efficient high quality services – by utilising digital technology.

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that

- a) Members receive the presentation from the Executive Manager, Transformation and the ICT Manager and provide feedback and comments on the work delivered so far and the plans for the future.

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Background papers:	<i>Nil</i>