

For general release

REPORT TO:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee 30 April 2019
SUBJECT:	Proposed scope of new Digital Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Neil Williams, Chief Digital Officer
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Simon Hall, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources Cllr Manju Shahul-Hameed, Cabinet Member for Economy & Jobs
PERSON LEADING AT COMMITTEE MEETING:	Dave Briggs, Head of Digital Operations

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON:

Include here a brief statement on how the recommendations address one or more of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities:

[Corporate Plan for Croydon 2018-2022](#)

Digital is an enabler of every outcome outlined in the corporate plan. The Council's Digital Strategy will articulate the long term vision for how this will be approached.

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	Requested by the Chair of Scrutiny Committee to input into the development of a Digital Strategy for Croydon Council.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To provide comment and inform the development of a Digital Strategy for Croydon Council.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council is radically rethinking its approach to digital design, data and technology delivery following the appointment of a Chief Digital Officer in 2018. Significant progress has been made to date, and the approach is to be formalised in a digital strategy, due to be considered by Cabinet in July 2019. This report summarises progress and seeks comments from the Scrutiny Committee to inform the strategy before the drafting process begins.

2. PROPOSED SCOPE OF NEW DIGITAL STRATEGY

Background

- 2.1 The political and executive leadership created the new role of Chief Digital Officer (CDO) last summer. From a field of over 100 applicants, they appointed an experienced digital leader who took up post in October 2018.

2.2 Under the new CDO, several previously disparate responsibilities have been brought together, into a newly formed “Croydon Digital Service” within Resources:

- Corporate ICT services (provision of computers, networks, telephony and print, and a demand-led IT project management service to all council departments)
- MyAccount and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that underpins digital services and all customer service by phone, email & in person
- The Don't Mess With Croydon mobile app for reporting street issues
- The Smart Cities workstream within the Growth Zone programme (but with the expectation that this needs to now look borough-wide) and a remit to convene, facilitate and promote the borough's tech sector businesses
- The corporate website and intranet, including web content management
- Digital inclusion (the provision of Digital Zones across the borough)
- The People Systems Programme (re-procurement and implementation of critical systems in child and adult social care, housing and education)
- Software support (bringing this in-house from Capita, and centralising systems support across the council e.g. for people systems)

2.3 The Council has achieved considerable success with digital in the past, winning awards and being considered an innovative leader in the field. However, as the needs and expectations of the Council's service users increase as a result of the digital services they receive from other organisations and sectors, it has been acknowledged that a new approach is required.

2.4 In terms of resident-facing services, for example, the MyAccount system is increasingly outdated, with a legacy code base that is expensive and difficult to maintain and improve. The main corporate website, croydon.gov.uk, received feedback that indicates it is not easy to use and does not encourage service users to help themselves online, rather than phone or visit the Council.

2.5 Internally, for example, the programme to roll out the Office 365 suite, including SharePoint Online for cloud based document storage and collaboration, has stalled with a negative impact on officers' productivity. Other technology capabilities are also not being made the most of, holding back the Council's ability to innovate in service delivery and ways of working, including mobile and flexible working.

2.6 Furthermore, the culture and operations of what was the ICT team did not inspire the confidence of colleagues and the service suffered from a negative perception across the Council. Issues include the speed of delivery of projects, a lack of creative responses to organisational challenges, and a siloed mentality which saw a lack of collaboration and partnership working both within the department and with other service areas. This has led to the growth of 'shadow IT' – where service areas invest in their own technology capabilities and staff, bypassing the corporate technology service.

2.7 The ambition of the new Croydon Digital Service is to become a truly user-centred, agile, delivery-focused directorate, enabling service areas to innovate and excel in achieving their desired outcomes. This will involve considerable cultural change within the team, the adoption of new working methods and renewed engagement with service areas across the Council.

- 2.8 Given all of the above, the council now needs to set out a clear vision and direction for digital design, data and technology to guide the CDO and newly formed Croydon Digital Service, which will also support relevant work by others both in the council and across the borough over the coming years.
- 2.9 To set that vision and direction, by agreement with the Leader, relevant Lead Members and the council's Executive Leadership Team, the CDO and his team are at the early stages of producing a short, high-level strategy document, to be published 28 June as a report to the July Cabinet.

3. Inputs to the strategy

- 3.1 Officers are gathering a wide range of inputs to the strategy. This includes researching good practice in the area, leveraging our networks across the public sector, including local and central government.
- 3.2 We are also undertaking an innovative online consultation, requesting inputs from local residents, businesses and communities; as well as experts based further afield. Responses to the consultation are published publicly on the site, encouraging people to engage in discussion about the issues and to promote the learning being shared.
The consultation can be found online at <http://strategy.croydon.digital/>.
The consultation has received excellent feedback from various sources and has been praised as an excellent example of a Council working openly with the digital community to shape its future direction.
- 3.3 We are also engaging internally with colleagues through an all-staff survey and one to one interviews with senior leaders.
- 3.4 Members will also be consulted to get their input ahead of drafting the strategy through a number of means, including seeking comments from the Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.5 Further details of consultation audiences and methods can be found in the original report to ELT, which can be found at Appendix A.

4. Relationship to other strategies and policies

- 4.1 The new Digital Strategy will replace the IT Strategy, which expired in 2014. The Council does not currently have an active strategy to cover digital or technology.
- 4.2 The Digital Strategy will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, in that effective, user centred digital design, data and technology services will underpin almost everything the Council does.
- 4.3 The Digital Strategy will support and need to dovetail with every Council strategy and policy given the cross cutting nature of technology services.

5. Proposed scope and structure of the strategy

- 5.1 The intention is for the strategy paper to be high level and brief, setting out the long-term aspiration, the current state of affairs, and the foreseeable next steps in relation to 3 broad themes:
 - a. **Digital council** – how we use digital design, data and technology inside the council to be a more effective, efficient and adaptive organisation. This includes (but is not limited to) staff digital capability and culture, the corporate

and line-of-business systems the council uses, how we safely and ethically manage and interpret data, and automation of business processes.

- b. **Digital services** – how we use digital design, data and technology to interact with our residents, more openly and more conveniently to them. This includes how we meet more of the total demand for council services to online self-service; improve democratic engagement through digital channels; ready our services for future technologies such as voice interaction; and enable re-use.
- c. **Digital borough** – how we use digital design, data and technology in Croydon to enhance growth, individual opportunity and quality of life. This includes connectivity infrastructure (e.g. fibre broadband and 5G); digital skills for all; supporting and growing our tech sector; and innovative use of technology to solve civic problems and enhance public spaces (the Smart Cities agenda).

- 5.2 The strategy paper will include an honest assessment of our current position in respect of all the above. While some significant gains have been achieved in the past, earning the council the Local Government Chronicle's Digital Council of the Year award in 2017, it will be acknowledged in this strategy paper that there remain significant issues to be addressed and that a different approach is needed in future. The SWOT analysis presentation accompanying this paper outlines this in more detail, and we would be very interested in members' views to help inform the strategy.
- 5.3 We do not wish for the strategy to be bogged down in the detail of what specific actions will be taken, preferring it to focus on the why and the how of our approach – defining clear aims and establishing guidelines rather than prescribing the detailed work up front. Therefore the strategy will be accompanied by a live, open roadmap, published publicly on the croydon.digital blog. This will highlight the progress on major initiatives to deliver the strategy and give the Council the flexibility to alter our course in response to events and changing priorities.

6. Our approach to digital

- 6.1 We acknowledge that – in spite of successes such as high numbers of people registering for MyAccount - past digital transformation programmes in Croydon have not delivered the levels of efficiency gains that were expected by service departments, nor the quality of services that users expect and need. Consequently, the Council has already begun to completely transform both its capability and approach in advance of formally documenting the strategy.
- 6.2 The new Chief Digital Officer, Neil Williams, previously played a pivotal role in developing and leading the award-winning GOV.UK website. As a founding member of the Government Digital Service, he contributed to the creation of GDS's internationally renowned best practice guidance (the Government Service Standard, Service Design Manual and Technology Code of Practice) and has assured numerous central government services against these standards.
- 6.3 These are the same standards that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government is now encouraging all local authorities to adopt, by signing up to the Local Digital Declaration (LDD). Croydon signed the LDD in late 2018, committing ourselves to meeting the Service Standard and Technology Code of Practice. We are building our capability and confidence in assessing services against these standards, and have completed one already on an internal CDS service – the croydon.digital blog.
- 6.4 The blog itself helps us meet another principle of the declaration, and a key element of digital culture and working, which is to be open in the way we communicate and

engage with all those who have an interest in the work we are doing. This follows a number of other local authority digital teams who blog about their work, and so far the croydon.digital site has attracted a great deal of attention and praise since its launch in December 2018. Many members of the team have blogged for the first time on the site, and found it a challenging but rewarding process, and we consider this a strong example of the cultural change we are implementing in CDS.

- 6.5 Continuing this theme, the Declaration commits us to engaging and collaborating with the rest of the local government sector to share and reuse ideas, learning and experience, and to work together on delivering shared outcomes. Members of the CDS team are heavily involved in networks such as LocalGovDigital and are in regular discussions about developing common solutions to common problems.

Further to this, the Council has committed to being a founding member of the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI), a partnership led by City Hall and hosted at London Councils that will see London Boroughs working together on city-wide digital programmes, where the benefits of scale will see significant improvements to the lives and wellbeing of residents and sustainable growth for our businesses. The work programme for LOTI is currently being developed and we will happily share it with members when appropriate.

- 6.6 A significant part of the new culture and operations of the Croydon Digital Service, that sets it apart from 'ICT', are the new roles and capabilities being introduced to the team. Learning from successful digital teams from all sectors, we are actively recruiting roles such as

- **Product managers** – owns the 'product vision' for the services, manages and prioritises the backlog of work to be done, and ensure user needs are met by the live service
- **User researchers** – helps us to understand our users and their needs, to ensure we design a service that works well for all users
- **Service Designers** – help us to design end-to-end services, embedding digital elements within a wider process, starting with the initial need arising with a user through to the achievement of a successful outcome
- **Content Designers** – experts in writing online content that is understandable to all users, resulting in a higher take up of digital services.

These roles are proven to be vital to the design, development and uptake of high quality digital services, but have not existed within the Council before.

At present some of these roles are covered by short term contractors as we have an immediate need, but the process is already in place to recruit permanent talent in these positions.

Alongside the new roles, new ways of working are being established to deliver through multidisciplinary teams rather than traditional professionalism-based silos. We are also experimenting with new workplace technology, with collaborative editing of documents, real time group chat and agile project management tools being used to ensure efficient delivery of our work,

- 6.7 The CDS was restructured in late 2018, with a new management team established and recruitment completed to key roles. This included the appointment of a Head of Digital Operations (retitled from Head of ICT) to act as deputy to the CDO and to take responsibility for day to day service operations, technology solutions and delivery of programmes of work.

Various teams and programmes are being brought into the CDS fold from other areas

of the Council, where they would benefit from being part of a wider dedicated digital design, data and technology service. These include the people systems procurement and implementation programme, and the applications support team that previously was part of the Capita contract, and the Business Systems Team which supported applications in adult social care, education and housing.

A Digital Design team has also been established at this time, and a manager recruited to lead on this work. The web team was transferred into this team from Communications in early 2019. This team contains many of the new roles being introduced to the service outlined above, and significant progress is being made to improve our online offering as a result.

6.8 Key programmes of work that are currently underway, or about to start, which will form elements of the strategic roadmap in future include:

- Successful transition to a multi-vendor technology management service from the incumbent Capita single-supplier arrangement
- The complete redesign and development of the croydon.gov.uk website to ensure it meets user needs
- Successful implementation of new systems in adult social care, education, and housing
- Supporting the successful rollout of key digital services led by services areas, such as the e-marketplace in adult social care, and the transformation of libraries
- Further development of plans for the digital borough agenda, including a major 'urban tech' event to be run in summer 2019

Legal, financial and equalities context

Currently the work undertaken has been met from existing revenue and capital budgets. A business case is being developed with colleagues in Finance, alongside the strategy, to support its delivery.

We will ensure that the strategy supports the Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities, including those relating to data protection, security and privacy. Any procurements that are undertaken to support the implementation of the strategy will follow the Council's procurement processes.

We will ensure that the strategy supports equalities at all stages of its development and implementation. Equalities impact assessments will be carried out for all projects where appropriate. Our commitment to meeting user needs in all the work we do ensures that equalities issues will be considered as part of developing digital services, and the digital inclusion and skills work as part of the digital borough work stream will support local people in making the most of the opportunities that digital technology presents to them.

Appendices

Appendix A – Paper to ELT, January 2019

Appendix B – SWOT analysis presentation to Scrutiny & Overview Committee

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