TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	2 March 2022
Subject:	Digital Approach Strategy
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Members:	Lead Member for Customer Focus
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Council's Business Transformation Team was introduced in 2020 and, in the short time it has been operating, it has already transformed many of the Council's online services using its digital platform Liberty Create.

Rather than being presented in the format of a traditional three/four year strategy, this document sets out the approach the Business Transformation Team will take over the coming two years, with a particular focus on embracing a user-centred and agile way of working. It also highlights what principles the Council will adopt as part of its online services, as well as setting out a dynamic programme of works for the next two years.

The nature of the digital landscape means it makes more sense to adopt a short-term approach and regularly review it – reflecting the agile way in which the Business Transformation Team is already working.

Ensuring it reflects the Council's corporate direction, our new digital approach sits alongside and complements many of the Council's corporate strategies – such as the Council Plan, ICT Strategy, Workforce Development Strategy and Customer Care Strategy.

At its meeting on 8 February, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the strategy and recommended Executive Committee approve it.

Recommendation:

To APPROVE the proposed digital approach.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Digital technology has the potential to transform our Council services and the lives of our residents.

Resource Implications: Large-scale digital projects are subject to their own business case, supported by a business transformation reserve, and will be monitored through Programme Board.
Legal Implications: None directly associated with this report but legal advice will be sought where appropriate, which will include compliance with relevant legislative requirement such as under the Data Protection Act 2018 and procurement law.
Risk Management Implications: If the Council does not have a Digital Strategy and supporting digital projects, then our customers will not be able to engage and transact with us in the way that they want to. In particular, the growth of the borough will add increased pressures to how our services are contacted by the customer. By enabling those that want to transact with us online to do so, we are freeing up officer time to spend dealing with those customers that haven't got access to, or aren't able to, digital options.
Performance Management Follow-up: Monitoring of digital projects is carried out through Transform Working Group. There is also internal governance through the Council's Programme Board.
Environmental Implications: Opening up more ways/easier ways for the customer to contact us online, alleviates the need to travel to the offices/area offices.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 Everyone who interacts with the Council's services online, should be left with the same satisfied feeling that they get when dealing with the likes of Amazon or John Lewis.

1.2 Since the Council's Business Transformation Team was introduced in 2020, this has been its mission – it wants to reshape local government's reputation for online services by putting the customer at the centre of its service design and making sure the 'added extras' (like helpful automated communication and up-front information) are in fact prioritised as fundamentals.

1.3 The Council's customers want to interact online - 87 per cent of its 19,000+ garden waste club customers renewed online last year, and since going live with its bulky waste service, already 50 per cent of customers are using the new online booking facility – and that's without any supporting marketing campaign to publicise it. Given that transacting online is significantly cheaper than over the phone or face-to-face, these statistics are really promising and supports the approach set out.

1.4 It is important that the Council recognises it has a wider responsibility too: it must not leave anyone behind. However, by investing in digital and online services, the Council is freeing up time to deal with its more elderly, vulnerable and/or complex customers who for one reason or another struggle to transact digitally.

1.5 At its meeting on 8 February, Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the digital approach. A lengthy discussion took place around the impact of the work delivered by the transformation team so far, and assurance was given that case studies highlighting the digital improvements will be available for staff, Members and the public. It was also recognised that the transformation team is doing a fantastic job of raising the Council's reputation in respect of digital transformation.

2.0 DIGITAL APPROACH

2.1 The digital approach (Appendix A) sets out the way in which the Council can meet the changing expectations of our customers using digital technology in a way that drives culture change and creates efficiencies and savings.

2.2 A recent example includes the end-to-end review of the Council's bulky waste service, which has resulted in 158% increase in income, and 84% increase in the number of bookings, alongside a more environmentally friendly way of disposing of the items collected.

2.3 It is worth noting that the complexities in achieving digital change can be significant, however thanks to the investment of the Business Transformation Team, and bringing together the unique skills and experience to deliver such change - as well as collaborative tools such as our process mapping software Engage - the Council is now able to take a planned but very agile approach. This also means it is able to deliver change at a rapid pace and in ways that other Councils without the investment in such a team simply cannot do.

2.4 Our digital approach commits the Council to five digital principles, which are to:

1. Put the customer first – digital by preference but access for all.
2. Make digital services as simple as possible.
3. Embrace change and show openness to new ideas.
4. Have a 'one Council' approach so that we are all pulling in the same direction.
5. Use evidence and insights to drive our decision-making.

3.0 PRIORITIES

3.1 The digital approach sets out the Business Transformation Team's priorities for the next two years. To ensure the team's priorities are managed appropriately, it works to a live programme of projects, which gets reviewed on a weekly basis. The priorities are listed on page 4 of the digital approach.

It is recognised that there is a lot of demand on the team and supporting the delivery of these priorities, the team is currently recruiting for four temporary posts:

- Web and digital designer.
- UX (user experience) business analyst.
- Junior developer.
- Project support officer.

4.0 GOVERNANCE

4.1 The Business Transformation Team is a critical element of ensuring the Council delivers its Council Plan priorities, particularly around customer focus.

4.2 Given the competing demands on the Business Transformation Team, it is important to have a transparent and robust process in place for evaluating and prioritising projects as well as monitoring progress. The council's Corporate Leadership team sets the team's priorities, working closely with the Business Transformation Team and Lead Members. This corporate ownership, alongside regular and effective communication, ensures the purpose of the team and its priorities are understood throughout the Council.

4.3 Supporting this, an IT and digital technical board will be established in summer 2022, where any new digital projects will be evaluated to ensure they meet the principles of our digital approach. All relevant projects will also go through the council's project management framework and overseen by the Council's Programme Board, with regular reporting to Transform Working Group.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 None.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 ICT strategy, Customer Care Strategy, Workforce Development Strategy.

8.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

8.1 None directly.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

9.1 The creation of the Business Transformation Team has had a really positive impact on the delivery of our digital services, creating the capacity to move forward with a range of improvement projects.

10.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

10.1 None directly.

11.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

11.1 The strategy recognises the importance of being digital first but access for all.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

12.1 None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: Digital Strategy.