MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Economy and Development Select Committee held on Friday, 13th July, 2018 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillor P.Pavia (Chairman)
County Councillor (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: A.Davies, D. Dovey, M.Feakins, R.Roden and A. Watts

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Peter Davies	Chief Officer, Resources
Hazel Ilett	Scrutiny Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Sian Hayward	Digital and Technology Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors B. Strong

1. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2. **Digital Strategy**

Context:
The purpose of this report is to present for scrutiny the Digital Strategy and action plan 2018/21.

Key Issues:

MCC's first digital strategy, iCounty, was implemented in July 2014 and was based on three pillars of:
   a) Improving internal services, data delivery and infrastructure
   b) Digitally enabled, inclusive and connected communities
   c) Creating products and commercial assets

There have been significant developments in technology in the last 4 years, and the experience, data and evidence we have collected from our customers about the way they wish to engage and transact with us has informed this new strategy.

Our workforce needs to have the digital knowledge and skills to build in end-to-end automated customer services and business processes. We need to reduce demand through self-service facilities and provision of accurate, relevant data and information that people can use with confidence to make decisions.

Member Scrutiny:

In terms of benchmarking we are measured at a level 2, out of 5. This had come as a surprise to officers, hence the adoption of the new model. This is now being used as a benchmark to move forward.

A Member asked how directorates choose which areas to work on. Officers explained the introduction of the chatbot, and the analysis behind website statistics, which identified the first 10 areas for the chatbot. Also areas where people were using information already, and how it could be made better.

Digital assessments looked at automated processes and the potential for change, ensuring tools are in place for people to do their jobs. The team actively go out into the workforce to identify areas for change.

A member questioned ongoing training. In response we heard that officers hoped to make things so simple that training is less of an issue. The Chief Officer added that we will still have the core proprietary systems going forward, the most significant being the HR payment system and the finance system. It would be ensured that these systems are fit for purpose now and in the future.

A member referred to concerns around the amount of electro smog and the unregulated or unmeasured use of wifi in classrooms. He stated that some EU members have removed wifi from kindergartens and are limiting the amount of wifi radiation children are exposed to, and that we should be looking at this area in our future thinking. The Head of Digital assured Members that a comprehensive exercise has been undertaken on improving ICT in schools.

The Chair raised concerns around connectivity, infrastructure and performance, and sought clarity around the service level agreements. We heard that all schools, except 3, had signed up to the SLA, which expires next year. The SLA is monitored by the Head of Digital and the SRS. Officers added there had been no negative feedback.

Recommendation:

That the Committee considers the draft Strategy and action plan ahead of subsequent consideration by Council.

Committee Conclusion:

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation.

3. **Procurement Strategy**

Context:

The purpose of this report is to present for scrutiny the next iteration of the Council's Procurement Strategy and accompanying action plan. The Strategy builds upon workshop sessions undertaken with the Economy and Development Select Committee and the aims, aspirations and priorities for procurement, identified throughout the participative process.

Key Issues:

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The Procurement Strategy is a key means through which the buying-in of goods, services and products, can create wider benefits and 'value added' to the Council's stated objectives. The Council invests c£109m annually in external procurement activity and leveraging this spend optimally can make a key contribution to 'sustainability and resilience'. There are two core aspects of the Council's procurement activity that relate to the main objectives of the Strategy and Action Plan:

- The way in which the Council invests its annual procurement spend in order to create efficiencies, benefits and added value in an internal sense; and,
- The way in which we leverage 'smart spend' in order to create optimal external economic and social benefits through cultivating local supply chains, creating jobs and developing new and existing business growth.

Member Scrutiny:

Following presentation:

The Chair referred to the capacity issue, and the lack of people to deliver the ambitious strategy. In response to a question around harnessing expertise the Chief Officer explained that initial tasks will be working with individuals and departments, getting granular data in place and lifting from that tangible opportunities. He added that on a business case basis, if on an ROI basis there is justification for additional resource, they would look to bring those cases forward.

The Chair added as an aside that he has written to the Cabinet Member, on behalf of the Committee, to request additional resource, but has received no response.

A Member expressed that collaboration with suppliers is vital in terms of long, medium and short term savings. Strategic suppliers should be integrated in to long term plans.

Raising awareness via staff consultation was recognised as key to achieving success.

Targets are to be confirmed and the Chief Officer would likely hold a session with the Committee to establish realistic and achievable targets.

A Member stated that a fundamental part of the strategy is understanding the value for money concept. A key piece on the fundamentals will allow us to remain focused on what we wish to achieve with the strategy.

Members agreed to invite the Cabinet Member to a future meeting for further discussion.

Recommendations:

That the Committee considers the draft Strategy and action plan; ensuring that based upon the knowledge and understanding developed through the
Procurement workshops, the Strategy reflects the required direction of travel, prior to consideration by Council.

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<u>**Committee Conclusion:**</u>

The Committee welcomed the honest appraisal of the capacity of the procurement service. The Committee considered themselves a critical friend and would continue to support the strategy.

4. <u>**Commercial Strategy**</u>

<u>**Context:**</u>

The purpose of this report is to present for scrutiny the Council's first
Commercial Strategy and accompanying action plan. The strategy builds upon aspects of the Procurement, Digital and Asset Strategies and is a key means through which the Council can play a role in the self-determination of its future viability and sustainability.

<u>**Key Issues:**</u>

The Commercial Strategy is an important means through which the Council can self-direct its own economic future and ensure services, functions and wider activity has an outlook broader than 'survive' – and a real aspiration to 'thrive'. Our Corporate Business Plan sets out a clear direction for the
Council up to 2022 and one of its main ambitions is to grow a 'future focussed' Council. The Commercial Strategy makes a key and direct contribution to this aim, as well as working to provide a stronger means through which all services and functions can be sustained and supported in the long-term. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Augment income generation – making money by providing 'charged for' services that generates revenues for reinvestment;
- Develop an approach to commercialising assets – adoption of an asset investment policy that creates an asset opportunity portfolio, maximising capital receipts and exploring wider commercial opportunities.
- Create a commercial culture and ethos – ingraining the kind of business discipline that will enable the Council to deliver social impact

<u>**Member Scrutiny:**</u>

A Member questioned how the strategy would look, mentioning Bristol City, and if it would require significant investment, recognising the need for commercial confidentiality. The Chief Officer explained restrictions in terms of the LDP. In terms of housing, he welcomed house-builders or registered social landlords interested in conversations around innovative or creative ways of delivering housing.

Members discussed the impact of infrastructure improvements, namely bridge tolls being abolished, the Metro, M4 relief road.

Frustrations were expressed around the timeframe of implementing the LDP. The officer explained there are processes to be followed, and the significant risks attached otherwise. He referred to a master-planning exercise which would allow to crystallise

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what we think a sustainable Monmouthshire looks like, and get everything ready for the LDP.

A Member referred to the importance of partnerships and house-building and questioned the lack of reference to commercial partnerships. In terms of resource, these partnerships should be mutually beneficial and recognised the benefit of outside expertise in terms of our strategy. The Member was referred to page 105 of the agenda, which talks of short-term goals, and optimising operational possibilities.

In terms of recruitment, officers did not foresee future issues.

A Member referred to an opportunity to save money by removing assets off our register and questioned how the strategy would enable Town and Community Councils and other groups to take on and manage our assets for us. The Chief Officer reflected that we do have the requisite policies in place for assert transfers, and recognised difficulties in some areas. He added that some points should be more explicit in the strategy.

Recommendations:

That the Committee considers the draft Strategy and action plan ahead of subsequent consideration by Council and based on its wider reflections and links across the strategic framework; advises on the fitness for future purpose of the Strategy ahead of decision.

Committee Conclusion:

The Chair summarised that the Committee had covered a number of areas including commercial investment around housing in particular; the review of the LDP and the impact on the strategy, and recognised a desire to accelerate the LDP process. The Committee would work with the Head of Planning to push that forward.

The Committee discussed embedding commercialisation around the current workforce and how alien that can seem to the Public Sector.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation in the report.

The meeting ended at 3.10 pm

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monmouthshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
sir fynwy

REPORT

SUBJECT:	**The Digital Strategy**
MEETING:	**Economy and Development Select**
DATE:	**13th July 2018**
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All	

1.   PURPOSE:

1.1   The purpose of this report is to present for scrutiny the Digital Strategy and action plan for 2018/21.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1   That the Committee considers the draft Strategy and action plan ahead of subsequent consideration by Council.

3.   KEY ISSUES:

3.1   MCC's first digital strategy, iCounty, was implemented in July 2014 and was based on three pillars of:
   a) Improving internal services, data delivery and infrastructure
   b) Digitally enabled, inclusive and connected communities
   c) Creating products and commercial assets

3.2   There have been significant developments in technology in the last 4 years, and the experience, data and evidence we have collected from our customers about the way they wish to engage and transact with us has informed this new strategy.

3.3   Our workforce needs to have the digital knowledge and skills to build in end-to-end automated customer services and business processes. We need to reduce demand through self-service facilities and provision of accurate, relevant data and information that people can use with confidence to make decisions.

4.   REASONS:

4.1   In order to reap the economic and efficiency benefits from emerging new technologies enabling automation of processes and provide end-to-end customer services we need to re-think our investment in digital technologies, knowledge and skills.

4.2   This strategy is based on a significant amount of data and evidence collated from customer insights in how as well as through knowledge, learning and experience gained through collaborating with partners and other organisations to ensure the strategy is robust and sustainable.

4.3   The strategy is based on 7 key themes that together will improve the digital maturity of the organisation and realise significant business efficiencies and economies through digitisation. The themes are:

i.   **Building a digitally skilled and enabled workforce –**We need service managers who understand the internet, its potential and its users. They need to know what's possible in a digital world and how use it to improve services and the lives of people in our communities. We need a workforce with the digital skills to do their jobs in a digital world and that they can pass on to the community.

ii.   **Digital Customer Services –** Customers expect a similar experience from councils as they do from their banks or online retail services.We must design our digital services to be so simple to use that they wouldn't want to do it any other way. Digital design involves us walking in our customer's shoes to build excellent but simple customer services accessed through any kind of SMART, mobile or computer device

iii.   **Business Digital Capacity and Automation –** Our most successful digital projects are the ones where the business has worked its way through service re-design first, looking in-depth at the service and applying digital solutions to any residual problems. We need to find ways to automate and deliver their business more effectively and economically through digital innovation and design.

iv.   **Technology –** Customers should be able to access our digital services through any type of SMART device. We must design our digital offering to be incredibly simple and using the internet and as the main vehicle. Our workforce will need to have the right tools to do the job too, with devices being able to access data and systems seamlessly.

v.   **Data and evidence –**In order to be a data-led organization we need to gather and use evidence of what works, and cut out the things that don't. We need data that follows the golden rules of being necessary, useful, readable, easy to find and accurate. We need to open up our data for others to use without us having to manually manipulate it first.

vi.   **Digital Platforms and Standards –**We need core inter-connected digital platforms and data registers coupled with common standards so that people can plug in their new, restyled services at speed.

vii.   **Protecting our Digital Assets and Security –** We are well aware that cybercrime is on the increase, and that we need to secure our information at the same time as ensuring the right people can access it.

4.4   The focus of the strategy centres around people, and helping them to discover how digitisation can transform the way they work and free them up to do the rewarding and interesting parts of their jobs within the community rather than the routine tasks that can be automated.

4.5   Delivery of the Digital Strategy is not just about the wires and ICT infrastructure that we have in the SRS and our buildings. It is more about how we capture the benefits of digitisation to connect people, make work and life easier, and reap the economic bonuses that it can bring. Putting people at the heart of iCounty means that business redesign comes first, and we can use technology as an enabler to make things simpler, faster and cheaper.

5.   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1   Delivery of this strategy will require investment in new business applications, enhancement of our ICT infrastructure, project and change management support and development of the digital knowledge and skills of our workforce.

5.2   Each investment will require evidence-led business cases which identify a cashable return on investment and/or a significant benefit to our communities and customers.

6.   CONSULTEES:

Senior Leadership Team
Digital Programme Board
Economy and Development Select Committee
SRS

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

a) The iCounty Strategy 2014/2018
b) The Digital Strategy 2018/2021
c) The Digital and Technology Business Plan 2016/19
d) The SRS strategy

8. FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS:

a. The significant equality impacts identified in the assessment (Appendix 1) are summarised below for members' consideration:

  i.   Digitisation will enable end-to-end customer services and the ability for people to engage and transact with the council in a way that's convenient to them
  ii.   The safe sharing of digital data with police and health colleagues will enable a more joined-up approach to care of vulnerable people in our communities
  iii. Increasing the digital skills of our workforce will enable them to pass this knowledge on into communities and families to help them function in this digital world.

b. The actual impacts from this report's recommendations will be reviewed every 3 years and criteria for monitoring and review will include: Continuous assessment of the Digital And Technology Business Plan to ensure it aligns with and delivers the digital strategy in a sustainable way for future generations.

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