ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 14th May 2018
Report Subject	Digital Customer Overview
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Officer (Strategic Programmes); and Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has agreed a strategic approach to developing Customer Services and enhancing our use of Digital Technology. This report outlines an approach to deliver these strategies that focuses on enabling customers to contact us and use our services, where appropriate, through the use of digital technology.

To achieve this it requires:
- our contact with customers to be capable of being carried out digitally;
- our services for customers and information for the general public to be presented in a clear and accessible manner;
- the information we hold on customers across a range of services to be linked together so that both the customer and customer support staff can access this information.

Specific examples of how this would work are provided in this report including the proposals to launch a Customer Account (a demonstration of this will be provided at the meeting) and a Payment Portal, which will enable customers to buy a range of services from the Council on line and from one point of access. The clear benefits of this approach are that those users who find it easier to access the Council digitally will be able to do so, and that those users who need telephone contact or face to face contact to resolve more complex enquiries, will have more support from customers service staff who might otherwise be handling queries that could be resolved through digital access.

Over time this approach will result in efficiencies that will support delivery of the Council's financial strategy. Examples are provided in Appendix B of best practice from other Local Authorities and where these potentially might result in efficiencies. However the overall approach is about modernising and improving the Council's delivery of customer services by making the best and most appropriate use of digital technology. To achieve this an initial investment of £0.550m has been agreed in 2018/19 to support the improvement of providing digital content for the customer and to ensure our back office IT systems can present information in the way this approach requires. This is on the basis that as a minimum this amount will be paid back through future efficiencies.

	RECOMMENDATIONS
1	To comment on and support this approach to implementing both the Digital Strategy and Customer Strategy through a priority and focus on improving services for 'Digital Customers' as outlined in this report.
2	To comment on and consider how the use of the Customer Account can be maximised.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND INFORMATION
1.01	The Council's previously agreed approaches to improving digital technology and customer services can be brought together by improving services for customers who want to, and are capable of, accessing the Council through the use of digital technology. More detail about this approach is provided in the slides detailed at Appendix A and is termed for this report 'Digital Customer'.
1.02	There are many benefits to this approach including an improved customer experience, better and targeted service for vulnerable customers, reduced telephone and face to face contact where it is not needed, and the delivery of efficiencies through savings associated with Contact Centres, Connects and back office processing.
1.03	The Council has already made good progress in using information and digital technology to enable officers to deliver services. As shown diagrammatically in Appendix A to achieve this the Council now needs to link those back office systems (e.g. revenues and benefits) with front office interactions i.e. the customer (e.g. contact centre, website). That link will be enabled through the development of a customer portal / account (based on the existing (in house) Customer Relationship Management software) where information about the customer can be accessed both by the customer and staff supporting the customer. A key to then encouraging customers to access information and services digitally will be improving the content of information available on our website so customers can solve queries and carry out financial transactions to purchase services e.g. Council tax payment, Housing rents.
1.04	An initial improvement in services will be seen with the launch of the Customer Portal or Customer Account. This service is currently being tested by groups of users with the aim that it is available to every resident in June / July of this year. A demonstration of the Customer Account will be provided in the meeting.
1.05	As part of Appendix A the tables on slides 13-17 and 19-21 (Annexe 1) provide an outline action plan for developing key parts of this approach including: Contact Centre; Flintshire Connects; Flintshire Website; Customer Portal; Flintshire App; the integration of back office IT systems to achieve this approach. Each of these actions are broken down into three stages of delivery. Firstly in principle decisions that are covered in this report and enable delivery to start. Secondly delivery of this model including key service improvements such as: the Customer Account; Customer Payments; a move to one telephone contact centre; linking of the main

	back office IT systems e.g. Streetscene and Housing; which will take place during 2018 and 2019. Finally it details the more complex and sensitive changes that are required in services such as social care and children's services where due to the nature of the services the scope of what can be achieved needs more careful planning with an aim to implement this work from 2019 onwards. This action plan will be developed further over the next three months to be specific with in stage timings and who is leading each action.
1.07	To enable delivery of this Digital Customer approach and completion of this action plan specific resource has been allocated. This is detailed in the Resourcing slide in Appendix A. It includes programme management, support to improve web content, and software licensing, and IT integration costs, over a three year period estimated at £0.550m.
1.08	From best practice elsewhere it is clear that successful delivery of this approach enables efficiencies to be delivered in customer service provision. The table in Appendix B identifies examples of best practice, which authorities have carried out this approach, and which best practice areas we are proposing to implement will potentially deliver efficiencies. This provides assurance that the proposed level of investment can be saved through future efficiencies.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	**Financial Implications** A one off investment of £0.550m has been agreed to deliver this approach. An efficiency tracker will ensure that this level of investment is paid back through future savings.
2.02	**Human Resource Implications** The appointment of a Programme Manager linked to implementation of Community Resilience work and a Digital Officer post to improve web content and business processing both on 3 year fixed term contracts. These posts will be out for advert very shortly.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Engagement with service managers and leads in these work areas.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Key Risks and Mitigation are: 1. Lack of resource to deliver this change – the investment resource will enable the time to be dedicated to this work that is required to make the changes outlined.

	2. The Digital interfaces with the customer do not work for the customer – time will be provided to launching and testing the approaches so customers can feedback and the products can be further adapted and developed e.g. Customer Account / Portal. 3. Proposed Efficiencies are unable to be delivered – the examples of best practice provide assurance of the areas these will come from, an efficiency tracker will be developed and progress against this will be regularly reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix A – Digital Customer Presentation Slides Appendix B – Examples of Best Practice and Potential Areas of Efficiency

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Digital Flintshire Customer Strategy Digital Strategy Action Tracker List of digital projects already delivered **Contact Officers:** Ian Bancroft / Gareth Owen **Telephone:** 01352 704511 **E-mail:** ian.bancroft@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	**Customer Portal / Account** - Customer information that can be provided on line to the customer and customer services staff. **Business Processes** – Changes to process that will ensure once a customer service request is received digitally this can be responded to quickly and simply with a digital response.