Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 September 2017

Progress Report on the Digital First Programme

Recommendation

The Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the content of this report.

1.0   Background

1.1   This report has been written at the request of members; it focuses on the current state of play and the next steps for digitisation.

1.2   Digital First supports the delivery of the transformation plan outlined in the One Organisational Plan.   The programme focuses on how we provide digital information, advice and services which support the organisational ambition that 80% of customers are able to self-help, self-manage and be in control of issues which are important to them.

2.0   Digital First Vision

2.1   Digital First is about big transformation and big change- change for our staff and change for our customers. It is underpinned by an ever increasing need for us to make best use of our precious resources whilst delivering the best possible outcomes for our customers. Empowering customers to have 24/7 access to our information and services not only allows them to find what they want when they want but also contributes to the delivery of the best outcome for them.

2.2   The Customer Service Strategy sets the direction of travel for how we will be delivering services to customers ensuring they are in control of their own journey. Digital First supports the delivery of this strategy, and is a key enabler in the delivery of our One Organisational Plan. Digital First is based on the following principles which reflect how we will deliver solutions:

   o   Easily accessible - customers want 24/7 access to the information and services that are important to them

   o   Simple to use - we want the digital experience to be so good that this becomes the preferred way for customers to engage with us

o   Streamlined - the customer experience must be the same regardless of the way it is accessed

o   Convenient - customers must be able to access what they want, when they want and from any device

o   Cost effective - we must deliver solutions that are cost effective where we understand the benefits of developing them

o   Reliable - our offer must be robust and reliable

2.3   Digital skills - our offer must be delivered by a workforce who are digitally skilled. We must also remain focused on the digital skills of our customers and how we must support the development of these.

2.4   We know that customers want to be able to access services in a way that is easy for them and at a time that suits. They want faster, quicker and better public services; Digital First is how we deliver this.

3.0   Achievements to Date

3.1   Website

3.1.1   Our website has retained its status as a SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) four star website. This is the highest score possible and based on the ease of use and customer experience on our website.

3.1.2   The homepage has been redesigned to provide quicker and easier access to customer top tasks, promoting digital channels and self-service. It is responsively designed which means it shrinks and fits any device, e.g. smartphone, table, laptop, it is being viewed on, ensuring key information and services remain easy to find and use. The new homepage design also now gives customers the look and feel of an app.

3.1.3   We analyse the use of our website and the customer experience continuously. Over the last 12 months the most visited web pages were:

Driver Offender Training - 42,484	Princes Drive Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) - 54,552
Jobs – 132,388	Burton Farm HWRC - 44,634
Libraries – 131,969	Judkins Yard HWRC - 43,548
Roadworks - 51,700	
School Admissions - 45,513	
School Holiday Dates - 135,465	

3.1.4   During the period August 2016 - July 2016, the www.warwickshire.gov.uk website saw the following use:

   o 2,856,786 Sessions/Visits

   o 1,264,482 Users /Visitors

   o 6,243,931 Page Views

3.1.5   Customers also have the opportunity to sign-up to receive email alerts on subjects which interest them. We currently have 23,564 subscribers who receive email alerts on a regular basis; this enables us to be pro-active in pushing information out to them.

3.2   On-line Services

3.2.1   We currently have 38 on-line services available to customers. These are shown in appendix 1. We also have 4,275 customers who have registered for a customer 'self' account which allows them to manage a number of these on-line services through a secure customer portal. This means customers are able to receive notifications of progress on a number of the issues they have raised with us, e.g., potholes.

3.2.2   Customer can leave their feedback on our online services. This tells us what is not working for customers and allows us to be very responsive in listening to and responding to their feedback.

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3.2.3 We also have a number of other online resources to help customers find or receive information they are looking for, this includes:

- o Warwickshire Directory of Services - contains information on over 2,132 community groups and is used by over 100,000 people each year

- o GovDelivery e-mail notifications and newsletters

- o School closures SMS service

- o Childcare finder

- o Ceremony venue finder

- o Roadworks map and email notifications

- o Library catalogue, e-books/magazines, on-line reference material

- o Adult social care online self-support

3.3 Live Chat

3.3.1 Live chat is live on the WCC home page and Blue Badge pages. It provides us with the opportunity to support customers online to help them complete their digital journey and therefore reduces the level of abandonment of a digital journey. It is being used to answer general enquiries and support self service delivery for Blue Badges. Content of the live chats are recorded and analysed to support improvements to advice and information available on the Website. To date we have had over 450 live chats recorded (January 2017- August 2017). Enquiries have been very varied from parking enquiries, highways, registrars, libraries, schools, recycling, cycle routes, abandoned vehicles and country parks.

4.0 Channel Shift – Changing How Customers Use Our Services

4.1 To achieve our ambition of 80% of customers self-helping and self-managing we have been developing full end-to-end digital services. This means that a customer can transact with us and receive the outcome all through an online process and with no need to contact us in other ways. The development of the digital offer means we are then able to change the routes that customer use to access these, through a managed process, and will see us remove some of the traditional routes e.g. paper application forms.

Alongside this we will be looking to improve the availability of digital assistance and places where people can go to be supported to get online, the work currently delivered by our library service and the offer soon to be live through our proof of concept Community Hubs will help us understand how this needs to be developed.

5.0   On-line Examples of Achievements

5.1   Blue Badge Application Process

5.1.1   Until the introduction of our online Blue badge application process applications were made either through a paper application or through the gov.uk online process (not a full digital process). The development of the Blue Badge on-line application process has resulted in a number of improvements including:

- Customers are able to apply 24/7 and upload the required documents on-line

- Customers get updates via their self-account at each stage of the process so they know how their application is progressing

- There is no re-keying or manual entry of customer information by our advisors, this reduces the risk of error

- Communication between the customer, Blue Badge Team and the Occupational Therapists (where further assessment is required to determine eligibility) is much improved

- Customers can pay online for the Blue Badge and they are only asked to pay if the application is successful

- The time to process a Blue Badge in the Customer Service Centre is a quarter of the time taken for a paper application, therefore, creating efficiencies

- As a result of the end to end service review fewer applications are being referred to Occupational therapists and the volume of Blue Badge appeals has significantly reduced

5.1.2   We now have 20-25% of customers using this offer. This has been achieved through a soft launch as we needed to understand how the process worked for customers before we took the next steps to widely promote it whilst at the same time removing the paper application process. We are now in the right place to start promoting the offer and beginning to channel shift more customers.

5.1.3   As mentioned above the paper application process meant that we experienced a high volume of applications that were appealed. The digitisation of the process allowed us to work closely with both our customer service advisers but also our occupational therapists to ensure we were asking the right questions which in turn meant decisions on eligibility could be determined quicker. As a result of this the digital process is supported by a complex decision making matrix which directs the customer through the application process. The success of doing this has seen appeals reduce from a high of 40% of all applications to 10%.

5.1.4   As a result of the improvements to the Blue Badge applications process other local authorities have been to look at our process as an example of best practice (North Somerset and Coventry). Government Digital Services are also keen to come and look what we have done to inform the improvements of their own services.

5.1.5   Alongside the digitisation of this process we also worked with the Government Digital Services on a national Blue Badge verification pilot which means that a customer's identity is verified through a new central government process 'Verify' therefore demonstrating the ability to have a pool of services where the customer's identity is already verified. Through this we became the first ever local authority to be approved to integrate (on-board) with central government systems. The pilot has now finished but our work with Government Digital Services continues.

5.2   Potholes

5.2.1   Through the digitisation work we have also developed digital services that integrate with back office and contractor systems allowing us to provide a seamless service to the customer.

5.2.2   The new digital pothole solution integrates with the highways back office system Exor, and went live in November 2016. The benefits have been:

o   Real time updates for customers regarding the status of pothole reports.

o   No re-keying of information by staff

o   Public visibility of pothole reports and status, reducing duplicate reports

o   Ability to upload and to select exact location from a map provides more detailed information for the Highways team to make a decision regarding the course of action

o   Easy to use on a mobile device including use of GPS to accurately record location

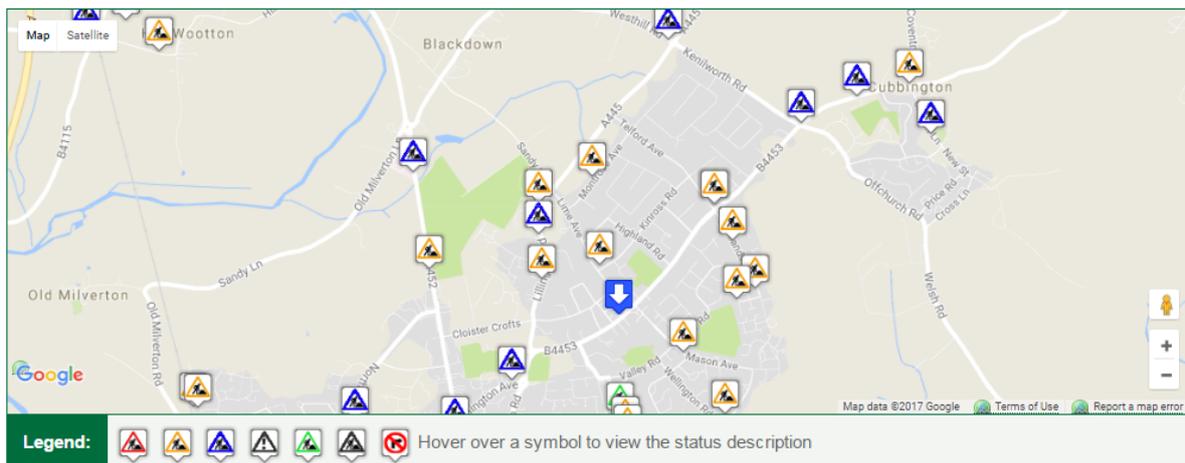o   Single reporting system across all channels reducing support and development overheads

Below is a screenshot of how the reporting process now looks showing customers potholes already reported and their status, this can be seen live at https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/potholes

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5.2.3   The development of the system has again seen a change in the way customers are reporting potholes to us, we now have 60% of all reports made on-line with the remaining 40% by telephone.

5.2.4   The potholes solution has been recognised as part of the Customer Service Excellence assessment as an area of Compliance Plus, which means it is recognised as being an exemplar for the customer experience.

6.0   Future Developments

6.1   Information and Advice Portal

6.1.1   By April 2018 there will be an improved advice and information offer to customers, delivered via the website and directory. We will have a new and improved Warwickshire Directory which will support:

- o Community Hubs, allowing customers to access to information about local community services

- o The on-going work to help customers help themselves and manage their own services

- o An improved information and advice offer to all customers and visitors to the website.

6.2   New website and intranet platform

6.2.1   Tying in with the website development the new single system will be used to hold, coordinate and manage all online content produced by the organisation.

6.2.2   Phase 1 is the migration and launch of the staff intranet, which takes place this autumn. Phase 2 will focus on the main warwickshire.gov.uk website, supporting the development of new tools for customers e.g. the ability to tag favourite pages to create personalised information. This will go live in Autumn 2018. Phase 3 will involve an audit and migration of all other council-owned websites to the platform, reducing support of legacy systems.

6.2.3   A single platform for all of our content will improve the management and governance of our content, ensuring everything we produce is stored in a single place, and can be found and updated quickly and easily.

6.2.4 It supports the move towards digital-first content, with content held as web pages rather than in PDFs or Word files. True digital content will:

o Encourage a reduction in printed material

o Be easier to create, update and maintain

o Reduce duplication

o Ensure on-line content is always the correct, most up to date version

o Allow simple translation into different languages and into different formats and styles (supporting the NHS Access to Information Standard)

o Provide content in a format that can support and underpin future trends and developments, such as artificial intelligence.

6.3 Live Chat

6.3.1 We are looking at implementing a fully integrated chat solution which will enable us to have live chat operating within a digital application process allowing us to provide assistance to a customer as they complete it.   This is likely to include the use of Bots to automatically answer frequently asked enquiries and deliver services that do not need human intervention. The development of Live Chat in this way will help us support customers to complete any digital journey and therefore support the increase of digital take-up

6.4 Close Traditional Application Routes for Some Services

6.4.1 We will start to withdraw some of our traditional paper-based application processes whilst at the same time promoting the new digital offer alongside where customers can go to be supported to get online. This will be done in a well-planned and communicated way with the impact of the change monitored closely.

6.5 Continuous Development of Digital Services

6.5.1 We will continue to support and improve existing digital processes. This includes making changes to processes we have developed as well as scoping opening up access to back office systems to improve the customer experience whilst also digitising processes such as payments.

6.6   Supporting the Adult Social Care Journey

6.6.1   We are working closely with the Adult Social Care End-to-End Customer
           Journey project on the transformation work it will deliver. This will include a
           number of developments of digital solutions that will not only improve the
           customer journey but will also deliver efficiencies for the authority.

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This report was circulated to the following member prior to publication:

Councillor Kam Kaur.

Appendix 1

Online services currently available include:

Blue badge application / renewal
Home fire safety check
Copy certificate ordering
Birth and death registration appointment
booking
Approved venue licence application
Pothole report
Streetlight fault report
Traffic light fault report
Fix My Street - other highway fault reports
Nuisance off road motorcycle report
Bridges and culvert fault report
Concessionary travel bus pass renewal
Calibration service request
Speed awareness workshop booking
Cycle training course booking
Parking fine payment
Parking permit application and renewal
Country park parking permit purchase
Free school meals
Performing animal licence application and
amendment
Explosives storage licence
Animal feed hygiene regulation registration
Petroleum storage certificate application
Hazardous and chemical waste disposal
Skip licence application
Temporary structures licence application
Library item renewal
Library volunteer application
Library membership application
Library book request/reservation
11+ exam application
Childcare funding for 2 year olds application
Services for schools (WES)
School admissions
Job applications
Planning applications - apply and comment
Report illegal traveller encampments
Rights of way fault reporting