North Lanarkshire Council
Report

Transformation and Digitisation Committee

☒ approval ☐ noting   **Ref** KH/LJ/JL   **Date** 02/09/20

PoW 083 Customer Service Hub – Technology Design and Implementation Update

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Executive Summary

The DigitalNL Transformation Programme provides exciting new opportunities to harness the council's commitment to providing high quality customer services with our ambitions to become a leading digital authority. The new Council website, with increased functionality and opportunities for customers, residents and businesses to self-serve digitally, along with the Customer Service Hub, both provide a significantly more modern, customer facing approach.

This report highlights the design and build work being undertaken by our digital business partner Agilisys to deliver the technical infrastructure to support and sustain our digital ambitions.

Recommendations

The Transformation and Digitisation Committee is requested to:

1. Note the design and build work programmes that are underway by Agilisys and council services to develop the Content Management System and Customer Relationship Management system which are integral to the launch of a new council website that encompasses increased functionality and improved end-user experiences;
2. Agree that the website launch is rescheduled to mid-October 2020 to allow sufficient time and capacity for robust user testing and communications; and,
3. Note that the scheduling of the service sprints in both Housing Repairs and Homecare Services has been brought forward to enable their earlier integration within the DigitalNL Transformation Programme and the potential for greater alignment with the council's Covid-19 recovery planning arrangements.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority   All priorities

Ambition statement   (18) Ensure our digital transformation is responsive to all people's needs and enable access to the services they need

1. Background

1.1 Members are aware that Agilisys came on-board in November 2019 as the council's systems integration business partner, responsible for advising and supporting the council in the development and delivery of the main infrastructure workstreams linked to our digital transformation ambitions.

1.2 Included within these is the creation of a new council website with increased functionality and introducing opportunities for residents, businesses and service users to engage with the council and resolve an increasing number of enquiries, requests for service, payments and applications via self-serve options.

1.3 Agilisys are responsible for designing and building the website's Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) using Microsoft Dynamics as the digital platform.

1.4 This report provides members with a progress update on designing the website technology including timeline and key milestones.

2. Report

Customer Service Hub

2.1 Development of the new website is central to achieving improvements in customer service, accessibility and the planned efficiencies envisaged through the introduction of the Customer Service Hub. The Policy and Strategy Committee, at its meeting in June this year, considered a full report setting out the vision and initial operating model for the Customer Service Hub.

2.2 The Customer Service Hub will ultimately be responsible for customer enquiries, requests for service and applications across all service areas. The scheduling for migration of relevant service areas is determined through a programme of 'Release Sprints,' although scope exists to amend this schedule by accelerating or deferring sprints in line with Covid-19 recovery planning and any other emerging priority areas.

2.3 As referenced in the DigitalNL presentation included on this agenda, service sprints are underway across a number of areas to identify where efficiencies and wider benefits may be realised through changes to existing processes. These may include for example: introduction of automated processing; migrating and consolidating customer enquiries within the Customer Service Hub; and/or use of technology to support end-to-end processing, dynamic scheduling, workflow management and reporting. Service sprints are now complete in the Employee Service Centre, Waste Solutions, Fleet Resources and Built Environment. Of these, Waste Solutions has the largest customer enquiry element and this will be the first service area to be delivered via the Customer Service Hub.

2.4 In tandem, communication via the council website and social media will proactively push enquiries towards self-serve solutions thereby satisfying a significant, and increasing, volume of enquiries via digital channels.

Website Design and Technical Functionality

2.4	In order to deliver Waste Solutions' customer enquiries via self-serve options through the council's website, Agilisys are now building this functionality on the CRM system. Dialogue with the Head of Waste Solutions and Regulatory Services and his senior management team has taken place to identify and prioritise the type of enquiries that are received in high volumes and must be available for delivery via the website. These include for example individuals requesting a bin pull-out service for medical reasons or a request for a new or replacement bin. Detailed user stories have been developed to inform the exact specification and functionality of the CRM build and ensure that all elements of the enquiry can be processed, handed-off to back office and workflow management, resolved, recorded and ultimately closed. These user stories cover both the customer's perspective and the requirements of the Customer Service Hub staff who are dealing with enquiries. This ensures that all component parts are included in the CRM design and build. The user stories are also prioritised to ensure that the council does not deploy a disproportionate level of available resources in designing the Waste services' functionality of the website at the expense of further service areas which are due to migrate at a later stage.

2.5	In addition to increased self-serve functionality on the website, Agilisys have also developed the Content Management System (CMS) software to create, manage and modify all website content. This will ensure that website navigation is more straightforward and visitors to the website will benefit from content being published in a standardised style that is simple to follow and easily understood. Moving forward, the council will have increased capacity to create and modify its own website pages without the requirement for external specialised technical expertise. Further details, including information on the migration of existing website content to the new CMS, and training that has already been provided to web publishers in the relevant services is included in the separate Communications report on this agenda.

2.6	The timeline for launch of the website has slipped slightly from August, as originally envisaged and reported in the Policy and Strategy report referenced at 2.1 above, to mid-October. This allows sufficient time for robust acceptance testing, including user testing as described in the separate Communications report. The migration to the Customer Service Hub and launch of the new website are both significant milestones in the council's digital transformation and as such, the emphasis is on ensuring that the delivery of these meets residents and service users' requirements from the outset, while also ensuring due diligence of all HR processes including employee engagement and communication and dialogue with trade unions where staff are impacted by the developments.

2.7	Waste Solutions is the largest service area from the initial programme of Release Sprints to migrate to the Customer Service Hub and it is anticipated that subsequent transfers will benefit from lessons learned and experience gained. The Year Two programme of Release Sprints has recently commenced and includes Environmental Assets (as per the original Release Schedule), along with Housing Repairs and Homecare services. These have both been accelerated to reflect efficiency and service delivery opportunities through their earlier integration within the DigitalNL Transformation Programme.

Telecommunications

2.8	It is envisaged that the existing Netcall capability and licences deployed by the council in the Customer Contact Centre will be utilised within the Customer Service Hub. Due regard and close attention to the anticipated volume of enquiries will be undertaken during future service sprints to ensure that the Customer Service Hub retains sufficient capacity within the existing Netcall channels to meet demand. As

customers increasingly switch to self-serve options via the website and digital channels the requirement for telephony services via Netcall will reduce, however, it is recognised that provision and capacity will require to be closely monitored.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

There are no requirements to compete a Fairer Scotland Duty assessment as part of the technological development work.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

Similarly, while there are no requirements to complete an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the technical activity, members should be assured that these are undertaken as part of each service sprint to ensure that there will be no adverse impacts on individuals with one or more protected characteristics, and also, to identify any opportunities to improve equality of access and/or opportunity through the revised service delivery proposals and digital developments.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

Digital technology development costs are contained within the overall indicative five year investment (£28.8m) and regular monitoring, control and reporting on revenue and capital is carried out in line with Financial Governance arrangements. Year Two costs are linked to the website design and build phase, including the digital platform and CRM.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There are no HR, policy or legislative impacts arising from the website design and build activity. There are, however, potential HR and policy impacts in relation to service sprint recommendations and these are addressed through established due diligence procedures and reported via the Workforce Steering Group and relevant service committee.

4.3 Environmental Impact

There are no immediate environmental impacts, however, increasing the volume of enquiries that can be handled via self-serve digital channels will ultimately contribute to reducing North Lanarkshire's carbon footprint by reducing the requirement for residents, service users and members of the public to visit offices in person.

4.4 Risk Impact

Separate Risk Registers are in place for the design and build and website content workstreams. In addition, the wider Risk Register for the overall development of the Customer Service Hub has recently been finalised for consideration by the DigitalNL Projects Board at its meeting on 24 August 2020. In addition to separate meetings of the DigitalNL Projects Board, where the focus is entirely on potential risks associated with the DigitalNL Transformation Programme, the Progress Status Reports also

include the requirement to highlight any issues where the residual rating remains high after due controls and mitigations have been put in place.

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5.   Measures of success

5.1   Success overall will be determined through the successful application of digital technology to provide a new council website with increased functionality and opportunities for direct engagement and interaction with customers, residents and businesses, along with delivery of a modern, customer facing Customer Service Hub. Specific performance measures to monitor uptake of the new online services and self-serve opportunities will be developed. Similarly individual performance measures, including projected benefits realisation outputs, are included in the final recommendations from individual service sprints. Early deliverables will include:

5.1.1   User testing and feedback from both pilot participants and council employees confirming that the website's functionality, content, visual presentation and navigation are all of a high standard and efficiently and effectively meet all stakeholders' expectations and requirements;

5.1.2   New website going 'live' this autumn with increased functionality in Waste Services and improved, consistent format across all pages;

5.1.3   2020/21 and Future Years' Service Release Plans approved and service sprint redesign activity implemented as per schedule;

5.1.4   Service sprints underway in Housing Repairs and Homecare Services to identify early deliverables and improved outcomes for service users through their integration within the Digital Transformation Programme and Customer Service Hub;

5.1.3   Communications Strategy in place to support the roll-out of the new website and Customer Service Hub and ensure awareness amongst North Lanarkshire's residents, communities, businesses and voluntary sector; and,

5.1.6   Communication and Engagement Plan and bespoke training programmes developed and delivered to ensure that all employees are fully aware of the new operating models and in particular, to enable those employees who have a direct responsibility for service delivery via the website or Customer Service Hub, to become confident and skilled in their new roles and are equipped to provide high quality customer services.

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6.   Supporting documents

6.1   There are no additional papers to this report.

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