ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 26 NOVEMBER 2019

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC DIGITAL ACTIVITY

ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of work ongoing across council services to support delivery of digital activity.   The strategic digital board meets monthly to ensure that the cross cutting themes of infrastructure, services and skills work together effectively to support businesses, citizens and visitors. This work aims to deliver the council's objective to be a digital business and the Scottish Government's aim to make Scotland a world-class digital nation by 2020. This report covers the period from 31st March 2019 to the 31 October 2019.

1.   NATIONAL DIGITAL PROGRAMMES

Scotland Superfast DSSB

1.1   The Scotland Superfast DSSB programme is now in the final stages before the R100 (reaching 100%) programme starts. This is currently going through the final stages of procurement with dates to be released. At present, circa 14,439 that were included in the DSSB programme are now able to obtain Superfast Broadband. This equates to 84% of those included in the scope. Approx. 2% of Premises have updated to FTTP (Fibre to the Premise), the majority have FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet). The R100 programme looks to address the remaining hard to reach premises.

2.   REGIONAL DIGITAL PROGRAMMES

Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN)

2.1   The Council has received a Conditional Offer Letter from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport, with funding set at between £5.7m to £6.7m between the three councils. The difference relates to 22 sites that need to pass further state aid requirements. If all of the sites included in the proposal pass, the total funding available to Angus is £1.375m (£0.5m provided via the Tay Cities Deal and £0.875m from DCMS). This stage is called "Gateway A" in the process. There are two further gateways to be negotiated before the project can start:

- Gateway B – "Authority to Procure", Approx. Mid Nov
- Gateway C – "Ready to Contract", Approx. Dec

Progress is being made on completing mini-competition paperwork to be issued via Aberdeen City Fibre framework. It is expected that the physical works will start March/April 2020, with the project having to be completed by March 2021 which is a condition set by DCMS in the funding offer.

Tay Cities Deal

2.2   The Tay Cities Deal sets out an ambition for the region to support economic development by developing world class digital infrastructure that is needed by both businesses and communities in urban and rural areas. To achieve this it will build on existing commercial broadband, focussed largely on urban areas, and Government intervention through the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme providing broadband into the rural areas.

2.3   As part of the Tay Cities Region offer, Angus was awarded £1m, of which £0.5m has been committed to the LFFN bid, to support a rural connectivity programme that would enhance the ability for premises to connect. It has been identified that there is an opportunity to utilise radio broadband infrastructure to access hard to reach areas.

2.4   The aim of the council is to enable the delivery of Superfast Broadband (30Mbps) as a minimum to all premises within Angus. It is estimated that 8%-9% of rural premises in Angus (approx. 4000 to 5000) do not have access to an internet bandwidth of at least 10Mbps. Some of these premises will overlap with the approx. 2,700 premises that were not able to receive an uplift in internet speed as part of the DSSB programme.

2.5   Proposals are being developed to create an "Open Access" digital infrastructure covering the majority of Angus that will be able to be used by all Internet Service Providers, existing and new. The Council will not be acting as an Internet Service Provider but will be creating the infrastructure that ISP's can use to reduce the cost of connecting premises. This means that the ISP does not need to create their own infrastructure, a costly process, and can use the council infrastructure to backhaul the connection to a central point for access to the internet. The Council will charge commercial rates for ISP's to access this infrastructure.

2.6   As the infrastructure will be owned by the council, the proposed infrastructure will be made available to other organisations to develop:

- Internet of Things (IoT)
- 5G telephony
- DCMS 5G Testbeds & Trials (if application is successful)
- Further innovation of new technologies

5G Testbeds & Trials

2.7   The council, as part of a consortium of local authorities and a number of 3rd party organisations such as Strathclyde University, The James Hutton Institute, SRUC and Censis, is submitting an application to the DCMS "5G Testbeds & Trials" competition, where funding of £2m to £5m is available. The bid is approximately £4.6m.

The vision statement for this project is to:

 "…create and prove the model for the delivery of gigabit-capable services, fixed and mobile, to rural areas of Scotland, combining 5G technology with innovative business models and funding structures. Importantly it then also seeks to apply the technology provided to specific use cases from aquaculture to transport."

North Sea Region Interreg Like!

2.8   The Like! Interreg project is now in the final stages and we are looking at how we can sustain the main activities which have the potential to bring benefits to the organisation and our citizens. Our transnational collaboration made a positive impact on our employees and resulted in many new ideas and projects. The projects which have been delivered, and shared across the collaborative team, to co-create smarter and efficient services include: the Digital Genius scheme, developing digital skills within our workforce, Digi-Ken volunteering programme which aims to support volunteers who can assist citizens with digital skills. We have also developed new digital channels for sharing information for Angus Health and Social Care Partnership which includes a website, Facebook page and dashboards, using freely available "open source" software. This allow us to use information more efficiently and communicate better with our citizens by using appropriate channels. Providing new forms of citizen engagement was also one of our priorities and we continue to work on developing new ideas which resulted in the use of Social Pinpoint. We are currently exploring options for CONSUL to assist with the Participatory Budgeting process to better include our citizens in our decision making.

3. DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Connectivity and Network

3.1   Inverarity Primary School is currently in the process of being connected to the council's main network with the aid of AngusWISP. Tests have proven that the link is stable and suitable to run council services such as Wi-Fi and the telephony system. The IT and Digital Enablement service are currently in the final stages of implementing the necessary security requirements. If this solution works as expected, there is an option to replicate it for other schools.

3.2   The circa £750,000 investment to provide dedicated internet connection to each secondary school and their cluster primary schools via fibre and radio links is complete. In addition, internal wireless access points in schools have been upgraded and increased, where required, to ensure each building has sufficient coverage and capacity to allow the use of web-enabled devices and associated services. This directly supports the aims of the Children and Learning Digital Strategy to ensure our learning centres are connected and equipped to help create Angus citizens of the future who are suitably skilled in the use of digital tools. This piece of work has been recognised nationally, and was awarded silver at the REAL IT Awards in the "Modern Technology Infrastructure" category.

Govroam

3.3   Angus Council has now signed up to Govroam which is a WiFi sharing infrastructure for public services. In practice, this facility means that any member of staff from a participating organisation, can access our WiFi. Govroam is enabled in all Angus Council corporate WiFi enabled buildings, schools and campuses will follow. NHS are a participating organisation and Dundee City and Perth & Kinross councils are looking into becoming members. This will allow us to collaborate more effectively with our neighbouring councils and the Health and Social Care partnership by allowing staff to access the resources they need, from the most appropriate site.

4.   DIGITAL SERVICES

Online Services and Channel Shift

4.1   As a council we are working towards a vision for our digital services that they become so good that people prefer to use them over the alternative channels. New or changed services will be digital by design, co-designed with a range of customer groups and will provide customers with convenient, easy to use, access to services.

4.2   A recent example of this co-design of services is the work that the Digital Team carried out with colleagues from the Children and Families service to deliver a solution for looked after children to share their views and feelings with their case workers digitally. Children who use this service came in to Angus House with staff to test the system with the Digital Team and their feedback was used to improve the service to make it as accessible and useful to the children and our staff as possible.

4.3   The council continues to deliver on a number of projects including:

- Webchat; Web chat has been available on angus.gov for approx. one year. Having trialled the service and monitored its usage, the system is currently being reviewed to consider how we take web chat forward for 2020, to encourage more usage and assist further in channel shift by supporting our customers to self serve.
- "Report It"; our customers can now report more than 40 issues to us online. There are a number of further "Report It" functions in development, and those which are live are being reviewed with services to identify any issues and/or further development to

ensure an efficient a service is delivered from the customer reporting an issue, through to the correct service dealing with it to resolution.

- Revenues and Benefits; within this service, huge progress has been made to streamline the application process for a number of services. Currently we have gone live with a new process for Change of Address and Change of Circumstance that allows us to automate some of the back office processing. This has enabled us to increase our performance statistics with a reduced resource. Early uptake is high and builds on the channel shift already achieved in this area with 96% of our customers choosing to use the online offering.
- Paperless council tax billing; the paperless billing process has been improved and is on course for launch in November and will be promoted in line with section 6 of this information report.
- Content review: the Digital Team is currently piloting a content review system for angus.gov to automatically send out reminders to digital content owners at regular intervals. This is part of our drive to ensure digital content remains up to date and relevant. For our customers, this will mean that information on our website is as up to date and accurate as possible.
- Early years placement: Parents or guardians of children aged 2, 3 or 4, can request a funded place in schools, private & voluntary playgroups and nurseries. This process works out how old the child is at the date the parent wishes them to start in the setting and then a list of suitable providers is displayed. The parent is then shown the attendance options that the setting can provide. Once the form is completed an email is sent to the parent confirming submission and to the setting to say that an application has been received. Each of the schools/playgroups/nurseries have access to DASH, the council's customer service portal, and can see the applications. This service was hugely successful with uptake driven by online promotion and social media awareness. At the first offering, this online service attracted 935 applications which demonstrates this particular customer group's willingness to use our online offerings over other channels.
- FOIs and complaints: the project on Complaints and FOIs is now moving at pace with the digital team having rolled out the build on the Firmstep Customer Service Portal. Key staff have been involved in workshops and initial training awareness sessions to familiarise themselves with the system prior to testing and then rollout. This links to the deadline for Sharepoint/Office 365 changes which mean that the previous complaints tool has reached end of life.

4.4   The Web team have been developing options to make the landing page of our Website angus.gov.uk more attractive and engaging, whilst maintaining a high level of accessibility. This will be reviewed through the Strategic Digital Board and could be made available in November.

Accessibility

4.4   We commissioned an accessibility audit of angus.gov to ensure we meet our legal requirements, while also improving the online experience for all users. The audit was undertaken by the Shaw Trust and, in response to their findings, steps have been taken to improve accessibility on the site. We are awaiting the results of the Shaw Trust re-review of the site and hope to have full accreditation by the end of 2019. The Digital Team will continue to manage content to ensure it meets best practice in this area.

Windows 10 and Office 365

4.5   The IT and Digital Enablement service have started implementing Microsoft Office 365 applications and services, currently Yammer is live and Outlook e-mail and SharePoint documents for our staff will shortly be rolled out. Users running Office 365 will always have access to the latest versions of Microsoft Office applications, and new features and applications are regularly delivered by Microsoft. They offer high availability to the services and, being cloud hosted, they are available 24/7 and are accessible from outside the council network. This increases our resilience in the event of service outages within our own infrastructure and will

allow us to continue to deliver our services to our customers. Office 365 provides protection against security threats including spam and malware, and Microsoft are continually monitoring and updating the capabilities as these threats get more advanced. This is an important component in protecting the council legally and in a reputational sense given our responsibility for user data and the importance of our infrastructure being continually available. Capitalising on Office 365 capability will allow us to focus IT staff on designing and developing new digital services instead of the traditional tasks of supporting servers and applications in our data centre.

4.6 We have updated council client devices to Windows 10 in advance of delivering Office 365. Part of this project has been to upgrade capable laptops with newer hardware for better performance, and to replace older hardware which is not recommended for running Windows 10. This project also involved setting up the necessary infrastructure to deliver regular Windows patches and updates to these clients, which will reduce the possibility of malicious cyber-attacks doing damage to devices and data. It has enabled us to deliver value for money by upgrading machines that would previously have been replaced, allowing us to sweat the assets that we already have.

STEM opportunities and career progression within IT and Digital Enablement

4.7 The IT and Digital Enablement Service continues to demonstrate a commitment to offering science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities in the workplace. We have 3x Modern Apprentices, 2x Graduate Apprentices and a Graduate Intern in place and have committed to resourcing this going forward. These staff members are exposed to work across the service and are given support to complete their education while gaining valuable workplace experience.

4.8 Where appropriate, career grade progression is being implemented across IT and Digital Enablement to allow staff to enter at a lower grade and progress as their knowledge, skills and abilities grow. This will result in a more flexible workforce, better equipped to deal with the rapidly changing technical environment that we work in.

5. DIGITAL SKILLS

5.1 As technology and services transform the council is mindful of the need to ensure that everyone is supported with access to the right skills. This will include training for employees and the council will work with partners to improve digital participation and support those who are not digitally engaged.

5.2 Our Organisation Development team worked with services within the council to support access to e-learning for employees who traditionally do not require frequent access to technology. This has included delivery of on-site training to employees by providing access to hardware to complete mandatory online training and in some instances increased support for one to one IT skills. It is hoped that in future this support will come from Digital Geniuses within the service to assist the employees with their mandatory e-learning.

5.3 Our "Digital Genius" programme now has 20 volunteers signed up from across the council to come together to support their colleagues. They will have regular "meet-ups" to discuss future changes and their impacts, and consider the role that the Geniuses will have in promoting and supporting these changes to happen as smoothly as possible.

5.4 We ran our first Digital Week at the end of September, with different themes for each day and presentations and promotional videos to support those themes. Participation in the workshops was varied, but feedback on the event was positive with people liking the variety of information and skill sharing that they received, and looking forward to similar events in the future.

6. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

6.1 The communications team continues to promote, and encourage others to promote, digital as a corporate priority. In recent months there have been further initiatives to raise awareness and skills for digital progress. These have included:

- Promotion of Digital Week, a co-produced event open to all staff to share learning and new developments.
- Lunchtime learning sessions continue with staff to update them on digital mapping of services and an update on the progress of the national fibre roll-out via DSSB.
- Shared learning events to provide staff with information on digital transformation, connectivity, services and skills.
- Updates to the webpages. Information updates can be found at www.angus.gov.uk/digitalangus
- Featured case studies and fibre cabinet launches with Digital Scotland
- Regular internal communications featuring opportunities for digital learning in addition to digital developments on the intranet carousel and in the internal e-Newsletter Mini Matters
- A Yammer group dedicated to digital developments

6.2 Change funding has also been obtained to procure the internal communications platform Hive for a four month trial period. This tool will enable greater engagement and feedback from staff and will help to deliver on internal communications aims of refreshing council values and increasing internal morale. A report on the outcome of the trial will be shared with the council leadership team.

6.3 Social media channels continue to be of huge importance to the Council's corporate communications strategy and for many citizens it is the communication channel of choice. This presents the Council with challenges regarding residents seeking to use social media as a customer service channel as this is not efficient operationally currently. However, it remains the case that social media has the potential to drive active engagement and two way communication among those who chose to use these channels and can achieve a far greater and more targeted reach of audiences than is possible with traditional media.

6.4 Angus Council's corporate Facebook and Twitter feeds engage directly with Angus citizens. Through the creation of engaging content, council messages are shared to a much wider audience and monthly figures note an average of 350,000 unique visits. This figure has grown from 220,000 unique visits since March 2018.

6.5 As Facebook becomes more crowded and the algorithms more focused on driving advertising revenue, the Council faces increasing challenges to remain visible in resident's feeds. The communications team has been testing various techniques to ensure high engagement figures. One successful method is to 'promote' a post. This requires a payment to Facebook to place that post into feeds of accounts not currently linked to Angus Council and higher up in the feeds of those already following Angus Council. This can increase the reach of posts with figures rising from an average viewing of 5,000 to around 20,000.This incurs a charge but the amounts are modest. For example, a cost for a half-page advert in the local newspapers is a few thousand pounds; the cost to promote a post on social media, directly to Angus residents and visitors, can cost under £100. Responding directly to posts, whether to answer a customer query or to correct misinformation, also increases the reach of a Facebook page. By responding to comments, Facebook's algorithms acknowledges the importance of a post and will therefore share a post with more people within our 'Likes' or to those who 'follow' our page.

6.6 In September we opened a corporate Instagram account. We now have over 400 followers and work is continuing throughout the year to review trends and interest in this platform.
Instagram's platform is predominantly used to promote lifestyle. As an image based platform, images are shared via hashtags. Our corporate Instagram account shared photos that celebrates Angus as a #GreatPlace, #GreatPeople and/or #GreatService.
Communities on Instagram are younger than our Facebook and Twitter demographics, which means we are reaching a higher percentage of people under 30. While not exclusive to this

demographic, it is an important part of our communication platforms that share the good news of our county while also showcasing it as a great place to work, live and visit.

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