SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL 4 – DIGITAL SERVICES

MINUTES
Thursday 16th February 2017

PRESENT: Councillors: Joanna Camadoo (Chair), Gary Malcolm (Vice-Chair), Natasha Ahmed – Shaikh, Mohammed Aslam, Paul Conlan, Joanna Dabrowska, Rajinder Mann, Ciaran McCartan, Mohinder Midha, Lynne Murray, Swaran Padda and Ian Proud

Ealing Officers Present:

Harjeet Bains - Scrutiny Review Officer
Ray Simpson - Democratic Services Officer
Keith Townsend - Executive Director Environment & Customer Services
Alison Reynolds - Director Customer Services
Kieran Read - Director of Strategy and Engagement

Also Present:

Alex Sewell – Principal Policy Officer -Strategy Policy Group - London Councils

1. **Apologies for Absence**
   (Agenda Item 1)
    Cllr Mohinder Midha to substitute for Cllr Munir Ahmed
   Cllr Mohammed Aslam to substitute for Cllr Tariq Mahmood
   Cllr Ciaran McCartan to substitute for Cllr Chris Summers
   Cllr Rajinder Mann
    Cllr Kamaljit Nagpal
   Mike Ibbitson (Director of Business Services Group)
   Lucy Taylor (Director of Regeneration and Planning)
   Andrew Collinge (Assistant Director of Intelligence and Analysis, Greater London
      Authority)
   Cllr Peter Fleming (Leader of Sevenoaks District Council, Deputy Chairman of Local
      Government Association and Past Chairman of its Improvement and Innovation
      Board)

2. **Urgent Matters**
   (Agenda Item 2)

   There were none.

3. **Declarations of Interest**
   (Agenda Item 3)

   There were none.

4. **Matters to be Considered in Private**
   (Agenda Item 4)

   There were none.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting
(Agenda Item 5)

The Panel considered the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel which had taken place on 15 December 2016.

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel held on 15 December 2016 be agreed as a true and correct record.

6. Digital Digital Strategy
(Agenda Item 6)

The Chair welcomed officers to the meeting in respect of this item and also welcomed Alex Sewell from London Councils to the meeting who was to give a presentation at the end of this item.

Keith Townsend (Executive Director of Environment and Customer Services) opened the presentation by outlining the digital strategy and vision for Ealing which it is hoped will make Ealing a more connected place and produce smarter public services for residents, visitors and businesses. The overall strategy focused on three key areas – **digital customers, digital council and digital place** and outlined a positive set of principles that would inform where it was expected that Ealing should be and the strategic objectives setting out priority action areas.   .

The presentation concentrated on each of the three areas in sections starting with -

1. Digital Customer - objectives being to create an exemplary customer services offer by creating accessible, better connected and easy to use services, exploiting and delivering digital solutions to ensure that things are right the first time round and that residents choose to use them and to influence and adapt to customer demand and ultimately achieve the right resolution.

The strategy he stated is now a well known and integral part of local government and part of the emerging approach. The business case at Ealing is already well underway and it is expected to submit the strategy to Cabinet for adoption in April 2017 with the business case for the implementation programme expected by the summer of 2017. It should be noted he said that this is very much a transformation programme which will require a cultural shift in the way the Council works. Significant investment will be needed to enable improvement and efficiency. Along with the business case the emerging approach will also include adopting the Local Government Digital Standard, developing a digital design model to deliver customer experience, developing digital channels and customer insight, reviewing customer journeys & redesigning them, implementing ICT architecture to deliver customer experience, developing a single view of the customer and making better use of customer insight.

He ended presenting this section by asking Councillors to say if they felt that the right priorities had been targeted, had anything been missed out and if officers had correctly pitched the ambition and pace.

Councillor Dabrowska asked if the recommendations arising from the strategy could be shared with other agencies in developing cross agency working. Alison Reynolds in response warned of the dangers of sharing information and that it would have to be made clear to members of the public and their permission sought.

Councillor Malcolm asked if the proposed £3 million was capital or revenue and how the report going forward would be structured. Alison Reynolds responding reported that the amount would be capital and that there would be a number of elements to consider as part of the business case – which will include reducing systems and how money could be saved.

Keith Townsend stressed that it was really a case of streamlining services but still able to be effective.

Councillor Murray expressed caution that not all areas should be automated and that the option to still talk to someone should be available. Alison Reynolds said that the ability to still talk to someone will be available and that it was really about tightening up certain areas using digital technology. Councillor Murray asked that this be made clear in the overall document. Councillor Ian Proud welcomed more technology being used to simplify areas such as the planning portals.

2. Digital Council – objectives are to enable staff through culture, information and technology to be able to provide a world class service to all Ealing residents and businesses. Residents will be put at the heart of better connected Council services and decision making and data will be shared internally with partners to improve experience and outcomes. Digital tools and platforms will be developed to ensure that more services are operated digitally which will improve the confidence and skills of the workforce.

In presenting Keith Townsend said that this would need to be service driven in order to deliver changes and financial improvements. This was a real opportunity to integrate systems and lose others. In terms of the emerging approach Mike Ibbitson (Head of Business Improvements) was in discussions with customers. Residents nowadays expected more online surveys and back office systems were being developed to ensure that this happened. Voice recognition was a key area which should be exploited through technology.

Questions from members included - Councillor Murray as to what kind of security systems were in place – in response Kieran Read said that they were looking to ensure that customers and residents had the confidence in systems to know that their personal information was being kept safe and confidential. The professional companies that were being looked at in terms of security will carry out mock testing and hacking before any systems go live.

Councillor Mann asked about the likely cost of the new systems wanting to ensure that the process would be cost effective. Keith Townsend in response made clear that existing systems were to be used in conjunction with cloud based systems without hardwiring, thereby avoiding possible wires being cut.

Councillor Proud said it would be really beneficial for short presentations to be given at Ward Forum meetings on the intended Digital Strategy. In addition, we should be linking and working with Charitable organisations in order ease the pressure on

Council services. Councillor Proud also advocated the voice recognition service where he had worked for companies where this worked well. However, he stated that the voice system did not work effectively when the person had a cold and minor ailments etc.

In response Kieran Read reported that the Council were in the process of linking with other organisations and broadening a range of possible channels. An Ealing Council Facebook page is already under construction he reported.

Councillor Natasha Ahmed-Shaikh asked about the safety of the systems, avoiding potential hacking and ensuring that adequate back-up systems were in place as a precaution. Councillor Ahmed-Shaikh also asked for the recently developed 'APP' on clean streets to be made available either via a link or email and that 'Youtube' also be used more when looking to release any more 'Apps'.

Keith Townsend responding said that officers were addressing the security aspects very carefully and that at the moment there was only a 'soft' launch taking place. There is an intention to have much bigger launches when any Apps have been finalised. He welcomed the suggestion for 'Youtube' given that it was now regarded as the single biggest teaching App site.

The Chair welcomed that more resilient systems such as 'iCloud' were to be used in the overall strategy.

Councillor McCartan asked about the process for App development and the involvement of the West London Alliance in the intended strategy. In response Keith Townsend reported that App development was still very much work in progress and that discussions could take place with The West London Alliance.

Councillor Dabrowska asked about making the service one of income generation by selling services once they had been developed similar to the LB Brent. Alison Reynolds said the intention was to work with other authorities and share best practice before rolling out any services.

The Chair stressed that Ealing needed to learn from LB Camden's approach and focus largely on the customer service side. In ending this section Keith Townsend again asked for members to tell them if as officers they had the right priorities, had they missed anything and officers correctly pitched the ambition and pace.

3. Digital Place – In terms of this area the objectives are to use the Council' powers and influence to provide fast and effective digital infrastructure for residents, businesses and visitors. The intention is also to exploit the digital technology to ,make the borough a better place by seeking to eliminate digital exclusion by providing skills and access to digital services. The underlying principles should be to ensure that everyone can share in the benefits of digital opportunities, that partners developers and broadband providers are influenced to deliver the infrastructure, bringing forward financial rewards for residents, supporting business and giving them the digital capabilities they need to thrive and helping people to connect to each other and helping to improve neighbourhoods.

Keith Townsend said that there was an intention to move towards more digital inclusion in order to provide the best possible opportunities in his role as an enabler.

Officers' intention was to use their planning roles to influence gaps in the market using the numerous different technologies. More excluded groups needed to be accessed. The intention is to still use existing IT providers but for them to work better and smarter in providing better services for Ealing residents.

Councillor Dabrowska asked for it to be made clear in the strategy that there will be more support made available for business. Councillor Ahmed-Shaikh asked for there to be a bigger youth focus and influence in terms of developing the strategy. Kieran Read agreed that there could be more prominence in terms of youth skills development which could be drawn out from the young persons pathway development process.

Councillor Murray pointed out that many businesses in the Park Royal area were without internet access and that the key to making this scheme more attractive was to make Ealing more connected. Councillor Gary Malcolm asked for skills & training aspects to be made clear in the strategy. Keith Townsend said that they were still trying to establish in which area this aspect should be included.

Councillor Ian Proud felt that a more targeted approach to improve marketing was required to help buy into services made available and that this should be made clear in the strategy.

Councillor Paul Conlan asked about the plans in mind for implementation of the service, the emphasis to be more on customer services, to ensure that there is an elimination of unecessary data and thoughts on the overall programme and what areas will be delivered quickly. In response Alison Reynolds said that there will be high value contact customer cost tracking and the intention is not to duplicate information - there will be customer mapping. She emphasised that one common process is very much the approach and way forward and ended by saying that the fly tipping process was now much improved through the use of technology.

Keith Townsend in ending the presentation reminded members that there was much technology available albeit fragmented but that the trick was to ensure that a clear plan was in place to bring everything together. He again asked for members to tell them if they had the right priorities, had they missed anything and officers correctly pitched the ambition and pace.

 The Chair thanked Keith Townsend, Kieran Read and Alison Reynolds and other officers involved in the development of the strategy and for their contributions at the meeting and drew the item to a close.

The Panel then received another presentation from a keynote speaker and invited guest Alex Sewell (Principal Policy & Project Officer – Strategic Policy Group - London Councils)

He reported that London Councils were monitoring the work being undertaken by the London Boroughs and other stakeholders in relation to Digital Technology. Many Boroughs now have Digital Strategies and all generally focus on three interlinked areas of digital innovation :

Service Delivery and Customer Interaction
Policy and Service Design

Digital Skills and Infrastructure

London Councils undertook a survey in 2016 and found that the most significant challenges in furthering this agenda were a lack of resources and limitations in regards to data sharing. A summary of the findings is highlighted below.

- **Appetite and awareness** - 72% of boroughs that responded reported that political appetite for using data and digital to transform services was strong. However, awareness of the possibilities was not as prominent – this reduced to 37% of boroughs reporting awareness as strong.
- **Leadership** – The agenda is overwhelmingly being led by senior officers rather than politicians (94%).
- **Priority areas** - A large proportion of respondents said that they are prioritising all policy areas for transformation using digital and data. Customer services also featured prominently.
- **Challenges** – resourcing is identified as the biggest challenge for realising the opportunities from digital technology and data sharing limitations for increasing the use of data analytics.

Digital Technology is transforming services in a number of areas London-wide and there is good cross boundary working in areas such as school place planning, health and social care and housing provision.

The Chair thanked Alex Sewell for attending and for his informative presentation.

7. Useful Information on Digitalisation
(Agenda Item 7)

The Panel received a report form Councillor Peter Fleming (Deputy Chairman, Local Government Association and past Chairman of its Improvement and Innovation Board). The report submitted for information was designed to assist and establish whether there are any aspects that can be replicated by Ealing in developing its strategy. The Panel noted the key areas which included 'Delivering better local online transactional services', 'Transforming local services through digital', 'Developing local digital leadership skills and capacity' and implementing programme leadership and support for local digital.

Councillor Fleming was not present at the meeting but the Panel thanked him for the very useful and helpful information.

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

8. Updated Work Programme
(Agenda Item 9)

The Panel agreed the items for the next meeting which included the Draft Final Report of Scrutiny Review Panel 4 Digital Services for 2016/17.

The Panel decided not to undertake any more site visits.

Resolved: That

  (i) The Updated Work Programme be approved.
  (ii) No further visits to be undertaken.

9. Date of Next Meeting
(Agenda Item 10)
.
It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would take place on 27th April 2017.

Councillor Joanna Camadoo, Chair.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.