MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMY, RESIDENTS, COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BY ZOOM ON MONDAY, 1 MARCH 2021

PRESENT: County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)
County Councillors D Selby, G Jones, K W Curry, D O Evans, J Pugh, J Charlton, K Lewis and S L Williams

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: County Councillors R Powell (Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture), G Breeze (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Engagement and Regulatory Services), A Davies (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transport), P Davies (Portfolio Holder for Education and Property), I McIntosh (Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Housing)

Officers: Diane Reynolds (Head of Digital Services), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services), K Watts (Customer Services Manager) and Paul Skippon.

1.	APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors J Wilkinson, P Pritchard and L Skilton.

2.	DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest by Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting

3.	DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS

The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4.	DIGITAL STRATEGY 2021 - 2025

Documents Considered:
- Digital Strategy 2021 - 2025

Issues Discussed:
- The Digital Strategy was launched in December 2019. The implementation of the strategy has progressed despite the pandemic.
- The main focus is around customer centred digital solutions. Some of the key themes have been getting access to information including grants, working with partners and whilst prioritising digital first, not closing any other forms of communication with customers.
- There are five main themes to the strategy (Digital Workforce; Digital Infrastructure and systems; Customer Centred Digital Solutions; Information excellence; Digital Places).
- Customer Centred Digital Solutions update – Covid-19 responses, including Track, Trace and Protect, Welfare Calls to Vulnerable Customers, Welsh Government Food Parcels, Order and Collect (Library Books), Lateral Flow testing.

- Work completed from December 2019 to date – "Report it" – Highways; Council tax and business rates; Waste – Household, Trade, Garden Waste; Citizen Panel; Fly-Tipping; Flying start applications.
- An accessibility survey was undertaken for deaf and hard of hearing customers in October 2020 which has informed the approach to the new omni channel system and ways of communicating across multiple channels.

- Questions:

In relation to reporting issues there was nothing on the website about who to contact during the recent major flooding events e.g. flooding on a road which needed to be closed. Referring to missed refuse collections there is the ability to report a missed collection but no information for the public on the Council website as to why a collection has been missed.	The issue of flooding will need to be discussed with the relevant Service. In relation to missed collections there is the ability for staff at depots to access the website and provide information as to why a collection was missed. Customer Services to review whether this facility is being used - **ACTION**
Accessibility - text messaging is important for someone who is deaf and would be a major step forward. Video calls are also important for people with a hearing loss and this is welcomed as are subtitles. The Service has moved on a great deal with this, and should be congratulated as it has made a massive difference.	No comment.

- Digital Workforce element not progressed as quickly as anticipated. 200 online training courses have been started and research has been undertaken regarding the barriers to digital for older people to inform the next stages of implementation.

What is the modelling for the future of the workforce of the Council based on the digital strategy. How will the workforce of the Council have to change as the strategy develops.	What the Service is trying to initially design is a framework setting out what are the skills and tools staff need to do their work at a base level. Then looking at various roles and jobs what skills and tools are required for those roles / jobs. There will be three tiers of Bronze, Silver and Gold with digital leaders being at a Gold level. However not everyone will need to be at a Gold level and others may be able to undertake their role effectively at a Bronze level. Workshops will be undertaken with staff, Members and customers to see what training

	needs are as well.
Will the Council be a smaller employer in future, will there be a retention or retraining of staff, as there may be less customer facing roles.	With the Council looking at new ways of working it is uncertain how the Council will look in future. The Service's role is to ensure that the tools are available for staff to support the organisation. Agile working and accessing systems and processes in an agile way is what the Service is trying to support, and also supporting customers in using the tools that they want to interact with the Council. Staff need to be able to change their ways of working and support customers as well.
In relation to barriers to using technology by the older generation, some of the issue is around broadband access. Many Councillors have been working with Rhys Simmonds. Will that be covered in the presentation.	That will be covered under Digital Places. The research paper mentioned earlier looked at the broader aspects of barriers in accessing digital services. One of the findings of the research was that when a person is introduced to digital technology it makes a difference if they have up to date equipment to use, otherwise they may not maintain the use of that equipment. Connection to the digital network is also a barrier.

- Information Excellence – providing information to Services and residents. The information available on the Powys Wellbeing Information Bank has been increased from 36 to 72 dashboards by March 2021. A trial project is being undertaken on data sharing with other local authorities.
- Digital infrastructure and systems – work was undertaken to ensure that the Council could operate in an agile way during the pandemic. All schools by March 2021 have the latest digital infrastructure in place, ready for when learners return to schools and create a more digital environment.

How can the Council work in conjunction with partners and other bodies to improve services on digital platforms as there is complexity around sharing data How do we overcome those challenges and how do we manage risk.	Taking Mass Vaccinations as an example ICT supports both the Council and Powys Health Board. The Health Board was initially missing large numbers of vaccinations calls each day. The Council suggested a way to support this by linking Health Board and Council telephony systems which significantly reduced the numbers of daily missed calls. Messaging can also be provided to signpost callers to other services. This was achieved through a memorandum of understanding between authorities

	and reflects effective joint working.

- Digital Places – this is about connectivity, making towns smart, a joint Health and Council digital academy, supporting communities to get digital skills, developing ways to digitally encourage tourism and collaborate with businesses.
- Support and advice has been provided to communities on community broadband. It is proposed to provide access for the public to borrow equipment through libraries so that they can be digitally connected.
- Digital connectivity is also be considered as part of the Mid Wales Growth Deal.
- The improvements to the Emergency Services Network has been delayed to 2025 which is a national delay, but work is ongoing to make sure that when the changes are implemented that Powys will be one of the first areas updated.

Regarding the Emergency Services Network, all the authorities involved are disappointed by the delay. Can Members through the Council and officers make representations regarding this matter as this is a life and death matter especially in parts of Powys which are mobile and internet blackspots.	Officers to circulate information to Members after the meeting about the network to increase Members' understanding. **ACTION**

- The LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) technology can bring some connectivity to rural areas. It is not designed for voice or broadband access, but BT are keen to work with the Council to see what can be achieved innovatively in a rural area.
- LoRaWAN is a proprietary low power wide area network consisting of gateways with a potential radius of between 5 to 10 miles (probably 3 to 4 miles line of sight in Powys due to the geography), and a variety of sensors that send data back to gateways and onto dashboards for analysis. It enables devices or sensors to be used in areas not previously possible due to a lack of connectivity; no power; unsustainable running costs; or the complexity, size or cost of deployment.
- Sensors could include Smart House Environment (water leak sensors, smoke sensors) Movement (seat or bed occupancy sensors, motion sensors, door and window sensors) Appliances (taps, fridges, button and switch sensors).
- The Council is receiving funding from Welsh Government for 60 gateways and these could be installed for example at schools which then connect to the Council's systems.

Are any there any LoRaWAN systems installed currently in Powys.	Not at the moment. The Council is awaiting the delivery of sixty gateways together with a variety of sensors from Welsh Government.
In relation to sensors which could be placed in vulnerable people's homes, there could be concern about privacy issues. Would	The system is secure so any data sent by the sensor would not be available to anyone other than the person using the dashboard.

individuals have to agree to the equipment being installed. In addition, cameras are not included as these could assist making sure that a person was safe and well at home.	This system does not work as cctv as its not powerful enough. It is powered by batteries which makes it portable and it is low power. The small batteries in sensors can last up to five years.
Are the My Powys and LoRaWAN systems compatible to work with systems like Alexa	LoRaWAN is a very simple system and is not currently compatible with Alexa.
The problem with that is that someone would need to go and visit the individual to make sure that they were safe and well.	Investigation work is being undertaken with BT on linking in some small voice elements as well. LoRaWAN is not designed for voice or video but BT have successfully implemented that in some areas. The benefit of LoRaWAN is that where you cannot get a traditional broadband connection, it broadens the scope across extremely rural areas as long as you can get lines of sight. Gateways can be installed in many more places. The aim is to bring this system into Powys and investigate what it can be used for. The farming industry is already ahead on using this technology and monitoring system. In terms of linking Alexa with the GOSS system, one element has been trialled. Alexa will also be part of the Omni channel journey.
This is an ambitious strategy and there is much opportunity to change how the Council works. This could improve outcomes for people and keep people living at home for longer. How is the strategy being funded, through the Council's transformation programme, and what might be the overall cost of implementing it.	The council has been funded by Welsh Government for three years and match funded by the transformation programme. The Services has met all of the objectives under the Welsh Government terms for the funding. Part of this is that all the learning that the Council has from undertaking this digital journey is shared with counterparts in Wales (health, social care and other Councils). The Council has also tasked the Service to make some savings as well. The Council is saving in terms of technology as when integrated systems are installed it means the Council can switch off some of the older systems. The Service is on track to deliver £200,000 savings this year.
What is the level of Welsh	£300,000 per year so just over

Government funding.	£900k for the 3 years.
In relation to assisted services rather than self service, what is the difference in the cost to the Council.	This cost can be calculated and circulated to the Committee. **ACTION**

Outcomes:
- **Noted.**

5.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that future meetings were scheduled as follows:

12-04-21	10.00 - 12.00	Q4 Budget - efficiency savings (TBC)
03-06-21	10.00 - 12.00	Performance Q4 + Risk
12-07-21	10.00 - 12.00	Performance Q1 + Risk (TBC) Freedom Leisure (provisional) Q1 budget - efficiency savings (TBC)
06-09-21	10.00 - 12.00	Freedom Leisure (provisional)
18-10-21	14.00 - 16.00	Performance Q2 + Risk Q2 budget - efficiency savings (TBC)
29-11-21	10.00 - 12.00	

Issues raised:
Housing Report which has been delayed.
HOWPS – this will be considered by the Working Group.
County Farms. There will need to be a discussion at Co-ordinating Committee regarding the outstanding items which the Committee is yet to consider.

County Councillor M J Dorrance (Chair)