NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

October 2 2019

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer – K.Jones

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:
All Wards

Report Title: Digital Declaration

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek authority from the Cabinet to sign the Local Digital Declaration.

Executive Summary

2. The Council refreshed its own digital strategy in 2018

3. The digital agenda is also having an increased focus in Welsh Government - there are proposals to develop a more collaborative approach across the public sector in Wales.

4. Within the Council's own strategy there is a clear commitment to collaborative working – this is essential within the digital arena.

5. To support effective collaborative working, a Local Digital Declaration was published in 2018 and organisations encouraged to sign up to the principles set out within it. Whilst the early work was concentrated in England, there is now encouragement for Welsh organisations to also sign the declaration.

6. The principles set out do not conflict with the Council's own strategy and would provide a clear demonstration of our commitment to work collaboratively in moving this important element of our work forward.

Background

7. The background to the UK Digital Declaration is set out clearly in the document attached at Appendix 1 so there is no need to repeat that content here.

8. More recently (July 19th), the WLGA Executive Board has considered how collaboration in Wales amongst the local government community and more broadly might be encouraged. Whilst the progress made at national and local level is recognised, given the significance of digital transformation to the wider reform of public services, WLGA agree that leadership and co-ordination of digital developments needs to be strengthened. Officers support that conclusion.

9. Lee Waters AM recently led an expert panel to examine the state of digital developments in Wales. The report of the expert panel "System Reboot" also recognised the progress being made but set out a number of challenges to ensure more rapid progress:

- Designing services around the needs of the service user;

- Establishing clear digital leadership across Wales;

- Develop and introduce digital standards;

- Identify skills and capability gaps and develop a plan to close them;

- Create an approach to incentivisation and cost controls; and

- Agree a clear and ambitious timetable to demonstrate pace and scale.

10. The emerging findings of the Panel were taken into account when developing the Council's refreshed digital strategy.

11. Since the report was produced, responsibility for digital leadership has been vested in three members of the Welsh Government Cabinet and work is underway to establish the feasibility of creating a national digital innovation hub to support digital developments which could, amongst other things, scale up learning and new service models. WLGA have also been working with the Society of ICT Managers (SOCITM) to develop a proposal for a chief digital officer function that would support greater collaboration and co-ordination of digital developments across the local government community and are in dialogue with Welsh Government to fund such a development. To support these developments it is also proposed to set up a digital developments advisory group as part of the WLGA set up.

12. These developments when taken together have the potential to significantly strengthen support for identifying, deploying and scaling up digital developments at much greater pace across Wales and to share the attendant risks and costs.

13. In the short term, as an indicator of this Council's commitment to collaborating with others it is proposed that we sign the Digital Declaration and formally indicate our support for the developments referred to in paragraph 11.

Financial Impacts

14. There are no additional financial impacts associated with signing the Local Digital Declaration.

Integrated Impact Assessment

15. An Integrated impact Assessment was completed when developing the Strategy "Smart and Connected". This proposal has no further impacts to incorporate within that Assessment.

Valleys Communities Impacts

16. There are no specific impacts on valleys communities that arise from signing the Declaration.

Workforce Impacts

17. The Declaration reinforces the commitment already set out in the Council's Strategy "Smart and Connected" to upskill its workforce so that people can fully participate in the changes being facilitated by digital developments.

Legal Impacts

18. The Declaration is not a legally binding document but provides a public statement of the Council's commitment to work collaboratively on its digital strategy.

Risk Management Impacts

19. There are no new risks associated with the proposals contained within this report.

Consultation

20. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

21. That the Cabinet agrees to sign the Digital Declaration as a further indicator of its commitment to work collaboratively in developing and implementing its own digital strategy.

22. That the Cabinet authorises the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer to indicate this Council's willingness to participate in and/or support the proposed Local Government Advisory Group and associated developments.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

23. To reinforce with stakeholders the Council's commitment to collaborative working and to ensure the Council is playing an active role in shaping the use of digital innovations in the transformation of public services in Wales.

Implementation of Decision

24. 'The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

Appendices

25. Appendix 1 – The Local Digital Declaration

List of Background Papers:

26. None

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The Local Digital Declaration

A common aspiration for the future of local public services

July 2018

Introduction

This declaration affirms our collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it. It commits us working on a new scale to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

This joint endeavour was initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. We invite all local authorities and the organisations we collaborate with to join us by signing the Declaration and committing to deliver a first action from which we can all benefit.

The opportunity

Never before has it been possible to collaborate so effectively, to deliver services across so many boundaries, to interrogate our data so insightfully, to realise such great efficiencies, and to reshape public services for the benefit of all while retaining local sovereignty. Great work has already been done to transform our services using digital tools and technology. But we have an opportunity to do more.

Our ambition

We want to co-create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where technology is an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for citizens and officials to use. We know that one size doesn't fit all, but by developing common building blocks local authorities will be able to build services more quickly, flexibly and effectively. Only in this more open and flexible market will we unlock our full potential for innovation.

Our ambition requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, and we've agreed 5 principles to help us do it:

1. We will go even further to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.
2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively. This means insisting on modular building blocks for the IT we rely on, and open standards to give a common structure to the data we create.
3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively.
4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.
5. We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our commitments

MHCLG will establish a delivery team to support all Declaration co-signatories in realising this ambition. It will play a leadership role within central government, advocating for the approach set out in this declaration. It will work with councils as equal partners to create the tools and conditions for reform, delivering common technical patterns and routes to procurement for core services. And, as part of a collective effort alongside local government networks, it will help local authorities find out about priority projects that support this mission and support the continued growth of the local digital community.

In addition, each co-signatory will commit to the following activities:

Our leaders, service managers, board members and politicians will:

- Make sure that digital expertise is central to our decision-making and that all technology decisions are approved by the appropriate person or committee. This will ensure that we are using our collective purchasing power to stimulate a speedy move towards change.
- Have visible, accessible leaders throughout the organisation (publishing blogs, tweeting and actively participating in communities of practice), and support those who champion this Declaration to try new things and work in the open.
- Support our workforce to share ideas and engage in communities of practice by providing the space and time for this to happen.
- Publish our plans and lessons learnt (for example on blogs, Localgov Digital slack; at sector meetups), and talk publicly about things that have could have gone better (like the GOV.UK incident reports blog).
- Try new things, from new digital tools to experiments in collaboration with other organisations.
- Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of our digital services and systems.

Our transformation, information technology and digital teams will:

- Research how to reuse existing user research, service design, common components, and data and technology standards before starting to design or procure something new.
- Build capacity in service-design, so that each service we transform is informally tested by our peers against our national service standard where appropriate.
- Where appropriate every new IT solution procured must operate according to the technology code of practice, putting us in control of our service data, using open standards where they exist and contributing to their creation where they don't.
- Share knowledge about digital projects where there is an opportunity for potential reuse or collaboration with others.

- Work together to establish the trust frameworks we need to safely analyse and share personal data. This will allow us to better serve our shared customers and reduce the need to ask citizens for the same information multiple times.
- Work together to create common solutions that allow us to check people's eligibility for services with central government and others in real time with their consent.
- Take inspiration and ideas from a wide range of sources, and participate individually in communities of practice and interest outside the organisation (for example, LocalGovCamp, OneTeamGov, and related networks and events).

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