AGENDA

S O U T H

HOLLAND
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Committee - **PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL**

Date & Time - Tuesday, 19 October 2021 at 6.30 pm

Venue - Function Room, South Holland Centre, Market Place, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 1SS

Membership of the Performance Monitoring Panel:

Councillors: B Alcock (Chairman), M D Booth (Vice-Chairman), C J T H Brewis, T A Carter, A C Cronin, H Drury, J L King, J D McLean, N H Pepper, P A Redgate, G P Scalese, A C Tennant, J Tyrrell, S C Walsh and D J Wilkinson

Substitute members on the Performance Monitoring Panel may be appointed only from members who are not on the Cabinet. Substitutions apply for individual meetings only.

Quorum: 5

If you would like to attend this meeting as a member of the public, please contact Democratic Services via email at demservices@sholland.gov.uk

or via telephone on 01775 764838.

Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn their mobile telephones to silent mode

Democratic Services
Council Offices, Priory Road
Spalding, Lincs PE11 2XE

Date: 11 October 2021

A G E N D A

1   Apologies for absence.

2   Declaration of Interests -
    Where a Councillor has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest the Councillor
    must declare the interest to the meeting and leave the room without
    participating in any discussion or making a statement on the item,
    except where a councillor is permitted to remain as a result of a grant of
    dispensation.

3   Attendance by Superintendent Mark Housley -
    Following a request by Performance Monitoring Panel at its meeting on
    27 January 2021, Superintendent Mark Housley will be in attendance to
    answer members questions.

4   Northgate system -
    Members will receive a demonstration by Officers on the capabilities of
    the Council's Housing System, Northgate.

5   ICT and Digital Work Programme 2019-2022 Progress Update -   (Pages
    To provide an update to Performance Monitoring Panel on the progress   3 - 14)
    of the Council's ICT and Digital Programme (report of the Portfolio
    Holder Corporate and Communications enclosed).

SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of   **Cllr Jim Astill, Portfolio Holder Corporate and Communications**

To: **Performance Monitoring Panel Tuesday, 19 October 2021**

Author: **Jenny Stephens, South Holland Programme Manager**

Subject   **ICT and Digital Work Programme 2019-2022 Progress Update**

Purpose: **To provide an update to Performance Monitoring Panel on the progress of the Council's ICT and Digital Programme.**

Recommendation

1) That Performance Monitoring Panel receive this report and comment on the findings.

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1.   **BACKGROUND**

1.1.   A strategic direction of travel was undertaken following work undertaken between 2016-2019, in conjunction with CPBS (now PSPS), which focused on creating a new ICT Infrastructure and ICT Programme of Works for the Council. This programme of works would pave the way for improvements to service delivery, as well as enhanced security and disaster recovery for all the Council's users.

1.2.   The follow up Council ICT and Digital Strategy 2019-2022 had been drafted with the aim to support the delivery of South Holland District Council's Corporate Plan.

1.3.   The strategy's ambition was to build on the work that had already been started in 2017 as a wider part of the Council's ICT Programme, following a Council decision in 2016 to Invest in technology and infrastructure.

1.4.   The draft ICT and Digital Strategy and associated Digital Programme went to Cabinet 12th March 2019 and Council 27th March 2019 for approval based on the following key principles:

- that to deliver the Digital Work Programme, a transfer of £331,613 from the Council's investment and growth reserve be approved.
- the implementation of the strategy started in April 2019 to align with the Council's new Corporate Plan; and
- that the strategy's progress be reported to the Council's Performance Monitoring Panel on a six-monthly basis, or as appropriate.

2.   **Progress Update Analysis - Resource Mobilisation**

2.1.   Once the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy had been approved in March 2019, it was not until end of August 2019 that the first post for the South Holland Digital Delivery Team was

successfully recruited to, with the introduction of 1 FTE Web Content Developer (client facing side). The recruitment for the Digital Project Manager was not successfully recruited to until December 2019, with the addition of a further 1 FTE of resource.

2.2.   South Holland had not previously been able to successfully recruit a web developer post, so the Council asked its ICT supplier PSPS to recruit and manage that resource on its our behalf. Recruitment for the web developer post again proved challenging as the budget for the post meant that in the highly competitive web development market, getting the right resource with the required level of skill was not forthcoming. In January 2020 the post was recruited to, with the acceptance that the post was of a developmental nature.

2.3.   PSPS will not be retaining a specific web developer resource for SHDC. Instead, once the fixed term contract ends, they will retain the resource however under the PSPS umbrella for wider utilisation within their own organisation.

2.4.   With all these factors combined it was nearly 9 months from the Digital Programme of Works being launched in March 2019 before a full complement of resource, as budgeted for in the report that went to Cabinet and Council, became available. This undoubtably caused a delay that was not accounted for in terms of the ability to deliver to envisaged timelines on the programme of works. From a web development point of view, progress would have been further impacted by the accommodation in terms of skill set available to support delivery. There would have been an increased reliance and extra demand on PSPS existing pool of skilled resource which was not planned for.

3.   **Progress Update Analysis – Covid 19 Refocus**

3.1.   This mobilisation of the combined pool of digital resource (SHDC and PSPS) at the start of 2020/2021 was then, to a large extent, redirected away from the proposed digital delivery plan into supporting services across the Council once the Covid Pandemic took hold in March 2020.

3.2.   The South Holland Digital Team were refocused to help support the implementation of a wide range of business grant applications as well as web content updates and improving accessibility to the council's website.

3.3.   PSPS ICT moved quickly to facilitate remote working, whilst also looking at enabling collaborative working through video connectivity. Activity included:

* providing kit and ensuring connectivity to enable home working for officers.
* enabling the council's contact centre to function remotely with staff having correct technology to work from home; and
* supporting the deployment of ZOOM to enable the Council's decision-making process and committee function to continue.

4.   **Progress Update Analysis – Place Based Delivery Covid Response**

4.1.   At the start of 2020/21 financial year, the shared management arrangement between Breckland District Council and South Holland Council moved into a more place-based relationship as officers worked from home following government Covid guidance and legislation.

4.2. For South Holland District Council this meant that the shared senior officers, who were the original advocates of the ICT and Digital Strategy, became based at Breckland District Council due to their residential locality. Their focus naturally was directed towards Breckland District Council's priorities.

4.3. Each Council's Corporate Management Team focused on Covid Response as a priority as did all services across the Council. There were more immediate pressing priorities around ensuring that the wellbeing of residents was maintained and providing support to the local business community.

4.4. Corporately, the strategic and senior managers looked to mirror the Local Resilience Forum cell structure to manage the Council's Covid response across the Council. Cell leads were established, and these were led by service managers, with staff being redeployed across the organisation to support key areas such as local business; vulnerability within the community; housing and homelessness; communications (warn and inform); and public protection, all working with a cross section of public sector and government agencies.

4.5. Once the Council's Covid Response became the new business as usual for senior officers, there was a refocus back onto looking at what opportunities could still be delivered as part of the original ICT and Digital Strategy.

4.6. Focus on bringing forward the integration of Northgate Housing software gathered momentum. Resource was still heavily weighted towards Covid related interdependencies which meant that during 2020 there where a mixture of deliverables. These included for example:

Digital Programme
- Open for Business Portal
- Capital Payment Page
- EHTC Website
- Community Funding Request Form
- Members Intranet
- "Web Accessibility" discovery work. Web accessibility scoring improved from 60% in July 2020 to 85% in August 2021.
- Recorded all 900+ inaccessible documents publicly available on the website
- Corrected all known broken links on the website

Covid Interdependency
- Web activity analytics to support SHDC social media platforms
- Social media channels achieving 500,000 hits/month increase from 100,000 in 2018
- Increase in website engagement rates from 2% in 2018 to 10% in 2021
- Covid related Business Support Grants
- Covid track and trace work website pages
- Website/Comms consultation and support for Covid 19 Discretionary Grants
- Introduction and development of an online booking service for market traders with a free rent pitch period
- Created and launched an online form for custom and self-build registration
- Fly-tipping improvements for anonymous reporting

- Identified and started working through 1000+ webpages that required review and content rewrite in collaboration with PSPS
- Web support provided for annual Canvass 2020

5. Progress Update Analysis – Digital Programme

5.1. It is recognised that the Digital Programme approved in 2019 contained projects which have a major independency linked to the development of a Goss software platform. This is the one area where delivery has been slower, predominantly around the "book it" and "report it" function.

5.2. An explanation for the difference in delivery status, is upon reflection, the original programme was drafted at a high strategic level without detailed business cases and scoping exercise undertaken to underpin for firstly, the development of a Goss Platform, and secondly the "book it" and "report it" function at a more granular level.

5.3. It is suggested that the complexity and resource requirements were not fully appreciated at the onset. The report presented to Cabinet and Council, was not drafted by a digital specialist with a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the ask.

5.4. Delivery timelines were ambitious as there was no existing baseline of resource delivering day to day digital functionality, hence the reliance on the recruited project resourcing and existing PSPS resourcing when there was a need to provide a digital COVID response for example, or to implement service "business as usual" requirements.

5.5. Pre-existing shared service arrangements with Breckland District Council ended at the start of the new financial year 2021/22. This introduced a new programme of work for PSPS which was unplanned. There was a need to identify systems that where originally shared with Breckland District Council to start the process of splitting those systems so South Holland Council users and administrators were utilising only South Holland systems and not shared platforms. This would have had an impact on resourcing availability.

6. Progress Update Analysis – Budget

6.1. Attached to this report, in Appendix A, there is a comprehensive budget breakdown that shows the status as of 6th October 2021.

6.2. In 2019/20 financial year, South Holland Council contributed to the cost of 2 shared posts with Breckland District Council (Shared ICT and Digital Programme Manager and Shared Customer Service Manager) at a value £18,282.

6.3. The budget holder was previously the Shared ICT Manager however with the split from Breckland District Council at the start of 21/22 financial year, the digital function and associated budget was transferred to South Holland's Communications Manager.

6.4. There is currently a forecasted underspend of £23,327 against the originally approved 2019 budget £331,613.

6.5. The £17,937 saving from the SHDC Web Content Developer post leaving the organisation in January 2021 has been utilised to help partially fund a Junior Communications Officer post in the Communications Team. This post is 2-year fixed term, with the function aimed at working with service managers to update their content on individual web pages. For example, the post played a fundamental role in helping and assisting the Economic Development Team in advertising Covid Business Grants to local businesses across the district.

7.   **Current Challenges - Resourcing**

7.1.   As the organisation returns into a new era of Covid "business as usual", there are still challenges that need to be recognised. Resourcing is a key area that will need consideration. The depth and range of technical skill that is likely to be required going forward, with the right level of knowledge and experience, may prove hard to recruit to in a highly competitive market.

7.2.   South Holland lost the technical skill set of a Web Content Developer at the start of 2021 and this skill set has not been able to be replaced by any other existing internal resource. There is still an outstanding list of activities centred on accessibility to the Council's website which needs to be completed that will need to be addressed.

7.3.   The Digital Project Manager has resigned and will exit the organisation in October of this year. The coordination, planning and management of existing projects being delivered or about to be started will fall back to the responsibility of Services Managers to manage themselves. This combined impact of both posts not being in situ will impact in areas such as:
  - The standing up a new platform for Tascomi (Public Protection System) as that now needs to be split from its existing shared status with Breckland District Council combined with the development of a new integrated customer portal as originally planned.
  - "Book and pay" and "report It", especially within Environmental Services as part of their transformation plan. This will also ripple across the organisation as more services have the capability to utilise the functionality as well as ongoing developments related to Goss Platform (assisted service).
  - Accessibility has a legislative requirement in terms of standards, and these are audited by the Cabinet Office. The council has several areas around accessibility still to be improved following a recent Cabinet Office Audit which requires not only web developer input (PSPS) but web content developer input to provide the improvements.

8. **Current Challenges - Meaning of Digital**

8.1.   The concept of what "digital" means has not fully been explored at an operational or strategic level following the ensuing impact of the pandemic, both internally and externally. In the last 18 months, because of the pandemic, there has been a greater focus on engagement through social media, web content and enabling collaborative and remote working. However, those are only a few facets in a digital environment.

8.2.   The 2019 Digital Programme and ICT and Digital Strategy will need to be updated as there has been a greater adoption of digital engagement by customers and business because of the Covid Pandemic by default, as well as a fundamental change in organisational working practices

8.3. The existing 2019 Digital Programme of Work was formulated at a strategic level. However, mechanisms for delivery and impact are at a very operational level. It has proven hard to maintain the momentum operationally. There is not an embedded established resource within the organisation that can provide the required technical provision as part of ongoing business as usual requirement and at a project level.

8.4. Operationally, councils nationally have had to adopt and move to a more collaborative way of working, including the ability to provide technological platforms to facilitate the ability to work from anywhere. The challenge for South Holland District Council is whether the envisaged ICT and Digital Strategy and Digital Programme is robust and innovative enough to keep pace with change that was previously not envisaged.

8.5. There can be no denying the impact of Covid upon the delivery of the Digital Programme, however it is worth nothing that lessons need to be learnt from a programme management point of view. The challenge that the recruited Digital Team had to face was a starting point where no or limited preparatory work had been undertaken in terms of a project concept with relevant technical scope underpinning it. PSPS, as part of the technical resourcing requirement, only had a limited number of scoping documents in advance of the formation of the Digital Programme to understand the level of resourcing required and of what level from themselves.

9. **Conclusion – Impact of Covid**

9.1. It is worth highlighting that between a cross section of services in PSPS and South Holland District Council, the response to central government initiatives, such as Covid-19 grant schemes, has been a fantastic achievement and a credit to all concerned.

9.2. The ambition and expected outcome of the Digital Programme have not been fully delivered, however there is acceptance that the impact for over a year of a pandemic has created unforeseen and enforced challenges.

10. **Conclusion – Programme Delivery**

10.1. The framing and development for the starting point of the programme was not underpinned sufficiently by a robust technical concept. The focus was very much around strategy and high-level assumption re resourcing and delivery timelines.

10.2. The level of technical resourcing required both within the Council as client and PSPS as supplier was not fully understood. When scoping projects, it is important to understand the skill set that will be required and if that means a greater reliance on our ICT suppliers (PSPS) to help shape those requirements. Those discussions need to be had at the earliest opportunity as it is not always guaranteed that skill set will reside within PSPS themselves.

10.3. Having a programme that started in April 2019, however, which was not resourced as per the original budget until January 2020 meant that there was several months of lag and limited progress over 9-10 months.

10.4. Not having an established technical resource and recognised digital service offer which functions on delivering day to day functionality has caused a pull-on project resource. The web content management and web developer skill set are becoming more in demand as

time progresses. Considering the heavy reliance on the "book and pay" and "report it" function to move the council's digital offer forward, there is a risk that delivery will be severely hampered if this resourcing gap is not manged effectively.

10.5. PSPS resourcing is the accountability and responsibility for PSPS as an organisation. A point of consideration centres on the understanding that if the client requires a project to be delivered to a set timescale, and this means that if extra resourcing is needed within PSPS as part of the supplier offer, this requirement should be met. For this to happen there must be a move towards better programme management principles of ensuring that the mandate is fully understood, underpinned by scoped business cases and early dialogue with PSPS to help shape the programme of activity.

10.6. The split of the share arrangement between South Holland District Council and Breckland District Council at the start of 2021/22 financial has also had an impact. A direct consequence was reprioritisation of priorities for PSPS, with assistance being required from South Holland's Digital Project Manager to support with the standing up of new South Holland only platforms.

10.7. Upon reflection, the engagement of a project manager was too late in the process as their skill set could have been utilised earlier to help with the scoping and development of business cases. This would have given the ability and opportunity to assess delivery timelines, resourcing, tangible milestones, and benefits that needed be measured and monitored as a mark of progress. Key element of risk management and a greater appreciation of mitigation of risk would have helped understand the challenges faced in terms of complexity and interdependencies in securing external suppliers when required.

10.8. Envisaged governance arrangements dissolved with the split between Breckland and South Holland as those who officers who would have been previously accountable and responsible, became sole Breckland employees. New arrangements were put back in place once the council moved towards Covid recovery mode with the introduction of an ICT and Digital Board. This was started in the first quarter of 2021/22 financial year.

10.9. Consideration should be given to what is meant by a digital strategy and what constitutes a digital programme of work. Investment in technology is costly by nature, so envisaged benefits need to be realised in terms of improving efficiency, accessibility, engagement, information sharing and collaboration, providing a platform of choice to residents the local business community. The means by which social media and other digital media platforms can assist with this needs greater exploration. In essence, greater understanding of supply, demand and need is required to help shape future strategies.

10.10. In addition, steer is also needed around where and how does marketing fit into any digital strategy. The Council has a few commercial adventures such as Leisure and the South Holland Centre whose ongoing commercial success could be supported through effective marketing. In summary a wider strategy across all the council's services is recommended as a focus area to explore.

10.11. Some of the projects in the digital programme have a specific and dedicated audience who reap the benefits. For example, migration of the EHTC website to new templates only benefited those who wished to engage with EHTC, with a small commercial benefit in terms of efficiency to the EHTC team. Whilst needed and one of the easier fixes, a challenge could be made around prioritisation of resourcing. Bringing forward assisted delivery and a

Goss platform that has a wider catchment in terms of benefits and audience, could have been prioritised above all else and should have been the sole focus, one could argue.

10.12. The ongoing challenge, that is now more important than ever, is to get the foundations right for future programmes of work. The question is where that responsibility lies, and how will it be provided moving forward.

10.13. The Portfolio Holder Corporate and Communications will be undertaking a 'Lessons Learnt' exercise with the new shared Assistant Director Corporate, the Portfolio Holder himself and the shared Assistant Director Finance.

10.14. The current Digital Programme status is reflected in the table below as a summary for Performance Panel. Following on from those already noted as complete

Projects Started and Projects Not Started

Project Name	Status
Replacement of CRM	Started
Review and Rebuild of all Report It Process	Started
Integration of GIS Mapping – Expansion of My Account	Started
Integration of Northgate housing software	Phase 1 completed - ongoing
Cautionary Contact Database	Started
Integration of Tascomi	Not Started
Digitalisation of Revs and Bens Process	Not Started
Online venue booking	Not Started

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

11.1. Performance Monitoring Panel provide the Council's scrutiny function. Comments received will support the discussion and appraisal of the Digital Programme progress to date.

11.2. The Panel's comments will also provide a starting point for the reassessment of how the Council wishes to move forward with its digital agenda and ambition.

12. IMPLICATIONS

12.1. **Corporate Priorities**

- The Council has entered a new strategic partnership with two other authorities. Consideration will be need what the opportunities are at a strategic level with regards to a new ICT and Digital Strategy.

12.2. **Financial**

- The Digital Programme 2019-2022 was a one-off injection of funding from reserves. How funding will be secured on an ongoing basis to underpin future digital corporate priorities still needs to be considered.

- Measurable outcomes and benefits need to be reflected cashable and non-cashable benefits to highlight the rationale for delivery as well as providing a measure for success upon delivery.

12.3. **Staffing**

- The concept for delivery for the Council's ICT and Digital Strategy was based on the utilisation of staffing through fixed term contracts which has now effectively ended.

- A Corporate decision moving forward will be needed as to manage the next phase of how best for future delivery.

13. **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

13.1. Applicable across all wards with regards to residents and communities.

14. **ACRONYMS**

14.1. PSPS – Public Sector Partnership Services

14.2. EHTC - EHC UK was a commercial enterprise launched and run by Breckland District Council and South Holland District providing Environmental Health training and consultancy.

Background papers: - ICT and Digital Strategy and Digital Programme Cabinet 12th March 2019

Lead Contact Officer
Name and Post: Jenny Stephens – South Holland District Council Programme Manager

Telephone Number
Email: jenny, stephens@sholland.gov.uk

Key Decision: N

Exempt Decision: N

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Digital Budget

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Appendix A

DIGITAL STRATEGY

Budget	Cabinet Paper	Actual and Forecast	19/20	20/21	21/22 forecast as at Oct 21	Total for All years
Project Manager 18 months		Web Content Developer - Digital & Customer Access (FTC ends 26/8/21)				
	54,975		23,767	36,916	0	60,683
Web Content Manager 2 years		Digital Project Manager (2yr FTC ends 1/12/21)	14,306	47,658	27,710	89,674
Web Developer 2 years	88,362					
	88,362		38,073	84,574	27,710	150,357
	231,699	Shared Services £18282				
		Staff Travelling Expenses (including Public Transport)	143			
Other		Car Allowance - Mileage	265			
UX / Design resource 2 years (consultancy)	40,414	**Total Employee costs**	**38,482**	**84,574**	**27,710**	**150,766**
One-off costs to deliver (systems & dev.)	59,500					
		Telephones	1,113	436		1,548
		Computer Software Purchase	1,254	19,583	5,000	25,837
		Computer Software Licence Costs	600	600		1,199
	99,914	Computer Hardware Maintenance	3,000	0		3,000
Total cost	**331,613**	CPBS Non Base Contract Costs	17,490	42,794	35,000	95,284
I&G Reserve	**(331,613)**	Professional & Contractor Fees		30,000	3,300	33,300
		Miscellaneous spend	**23,456**	**93,412**	**43,300**	**160,168**
		Total spend	**61,938**	**177,986**	**71,010**	**310,934**
		I&G Reserve drawn down	**(61,938)**	**(173,338)**	**(71,010)**	**(306,286)**
		Reserve Carry fwd	**(269,675)**	**(96,337)**	**(25,327)**	**(25,327)**
		Overspend/(Underspend)				**(25,327)**

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