

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2020

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the VIRTUAL MEETING THROUGH MICROSOFT TEAMS, DONCASTER on MONDAY, 2ND NOVEMBER, 2020 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Jane Kidd

Councillors John Healy, Neil Gethin, Mark Houlbrook, Richard A Jones, Cynthia Ransome (substituting for Councillor Andrea Robinson) and Majid Khan

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor David Nevett

Julie Grant, Assistant Director for Customers, Digital and ICT

APOLOGY:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Robinson

		<u>ACTION</u>
12	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
13	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations made at the meeting.	
14	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
15	<u>DIGITAL RECOVERY AND RENEWAL STRATEGY</u>	
	The Assistant Director for Customers, Digital and ICT presented the Committee with a report outlining the Council's digital response, recovery and renewal activities that had continued to be progressed through the Covid-19 pandemic. Members acknowledged that the world environment was continually	

changing particularly since March 2020, and the Local Authority's investment in technology enabled the Council, St Leger Homes and Doncaster Children's Services Trust to continue to deliver their services whilst the majority of officers were working from home.

The Committee welcomed the information provided in the report and addressed the following areas in detail:

Cloud Hosted – in response to concern expressed relating to the security of and access to information stored by the Council, it was explained that cloud hosted meant that the Local Authority's data was stored differently. Rather than data being stored on Council premises, it could be stored elsewhere. It was stressed that this would not always be used and would not compromise the security of information stored. Cloud hosted would remain GDPR compliant. Access to certain data would only be allowed to those who had the approval, as was currently the case. It was also stated that the Council takes its information security arrangements very seriously undertaking independent health checks and the required accreditation annually. The Committee acknowledged that the Local Authority would continue to seek the most secure and best value for money when looking at data storage solutions.

IT Security: in response to Members' concerns it was stressed that IT would not be delivered by the Authority unless security was in place, and that it was the key foundation of any implementation. The following areas were specifically raised:

- security concerns relating to the use of the social media tool, "WhatsApp" - it was explained that it was not used to process or transfer any Council data. It was a tool that could be used in an emergency to quickly contact someone, when staff were out on site.
- Mobiles - Staff have the option to use either their own Mobile phone or ones issued by the Local Authority but it was noted whichever preference, the devices were encrypted. If personal mobiles were used, there were additional security measures including several layers of encryption and requirements by the officer that must be adhered, to including signing a security policy. It was also noted that the use of personal devices was minimal and if a security breach was reported, access to Council information could be removed immediately.
- Council laptops – these were all encrypted. All staff and Councillors were requested to undergo regular training with regard to security and that was monitored. Everyone was also made aware of the Acceptable Use Policy with regard to what they could use a Council device for.
- Home connectivity – the Council had always supported

homeworking with staff providing their own connectivity. It was acknowledged that home working had to be increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic and bearing this in mind, the organisation was planning to review working from home policy. It was stressed that staff had been reminded of confidentiality requirements when working from home.

- Replacement of people with technology – removal of the personal element of service provision would never be an option and the Local Authority had made it clear in their policies and strategies that digital channels were an additional tool, rather than replacing traditional channels that there was still a demand for. Members accepted that there had been service modernisation with regard to technology but traditional channels would not be replaced.
- Purchasing new IT equipment – a large number of laptops had to be purchased in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to increase the ability for staff to work from home. Whilst some of this was an additional cost, the Authority had programmed the refresh and replacement of personal computers with laptops. Personal computers would not be replaced unless they were required for business purposes.

Horizon 3 Delivery of Council information through different mechanisms – a Member suggested that devices including the Amazon Alexa, other similar systems and televisions could be used to quickly access local authority frequently sought information, particularly for people who were blind. This could include waste bin collection dates and school term times. It was suggested that in addition to the use of a traditional computer or tablet, access to information on such devices would increase support to the Borough's diverse population. However, the Member also expressed caution that whilst some devices provided an excellent service, privacy was a concern as the Alexa and other similar systems, records user data.

It was noted that the use of TV channels had been investigated by many authorities some years ago and did not take off, however, this did not mean it could not be looked at again due to the current environment and for those who do not have other technology. The use of Alexa was already live for bin collection dates with its use being explored further. If this initiative came to fruition for more confidential services, then a full privacy impact assessment would be undertaken. It was accepted that everyone had different preferences to access local authority information therefore the Council continued to provide both traditional and new technology channels.

Government Funding for Gigabit Fibre broadband – it was explained that the Local Authority held ongoing conversations with Government relating to additional funding for this infrastructure and it was noted that the Authority was 98% towards rolling out superfast broadband across

the Borough. It was explained that there could be additional monies available from Central Government for full fibre but the position was not currently clear and would be monitored.

In response to a suggestion that an ALMO could be investigated across South Yorkshire to provide broadband, it was explained that there had been an initiative similar to this in the past but had not worked due to low demand. However, the cost of broadband was acknowledged as a barrier for some residents, a fact that was supported from consultation undertaken a few years ago.

Use of AV1's (small robot distance learning Avatar) – it was questioned whether the possibility of using this type of new technology to support digital inclusion and learning could be considered. It was suggested that initiatives of this nature could provide additional support to children with a long term illness or disability, to take part in school classes via an app on their phone or tablet. It was accepted that this was a very interesting idea and one that would require exploration with the Education Directorate.

Connectivity for residents – Members recognised that during lockdown, the work to provide the most vulnerable children in the borough with a laptop had been achieved. It was explained that education providers worked with other digital providers alongside the Local authority to investigate the different types of software available to deliver education services to children that were not currently in school.

A Member expressed concern that whilst new technology provided excellent benefits, he was worried that some people would lose face to face contact with support services and become more isolated and vulnerable. It was recognised that connectivity for the borough's residents could still be difficult even when technology was available in a household if there were a number of people wishing to use the same piece of equipment.

Roll out of the Digital Recovery and Renewal Strategy – Members were reminded that the Strategy had been developed over the summer months hoping that the Country would be moving into the Covid-19 recovery stage. A Delivery Programme Board had been established to assess what aspects could be undertaken quickly and those that would take a little longer. Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 second spike response, some of the proposals have had to be paused therefore some of the timescales could not be met and that rescheduling was planned.

RESOLVED: that the discussion be noted and requested that a training/information session on the Authority's progress with digitalisation be provided for all Members.

<u>FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS</u>	
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairs provided an update on work being undertaken. The Senior Governance Officer reminded Members that the work plan was flexible and should respond to changes in reprioritisation of work.</p> <p>RESOLVED that: The Work Plan and Council's Forward Plan of Key decision, be noted.</p>	