EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL,
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND
BRIGTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ORBIS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE:    28th MAY 2020

LEAD OFFICER:              NIGEL MANVELL (DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER
                            BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL), KEVIN FOSTER
                            (CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER EAST SUSSEX COUNTY
                            COUNCIL), LEIGH WHITEHOUSE (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
                            OF RESOURCES SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL)

**SUBJECT:**              **IT & DIGITAL SERVICE SPOTLIGHT**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

This spotlight report provides the Orbis Joint Committee with an overview of the activities and achievements by the IT & Digital Service.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Orbis Joint Committee is asked to note the on-going service and technology developments and the advancement of digital across the Orbis partnership.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Joint Committee is responsible for the effective monitoring of Orbis performance

**DETAILS:**

**Background**

1.1      The IT & Digital service is a fully integrated Orbis partnership function. The Service was designed to combine 3 separate council IT functions into a single, unified IT and Digital department. The aim was threefold:  to drive out cost by delayering and removing role duplication; to provide an enabling service response to the operational and strategic priorities of each council; to combine the pooled professional and technical expertise to enhance the overall service offer.

1.2      Since the appointment of the Orbis Chief Information Officer in 2016, there has been a strategic and systematic programme of IT service development and enhancement of technology and digital capabilities across the Orbis partnership.

1.3    The Orbis business plan operating budget savings targets and council specific IT savings targets have been achieved each year from 2016/17 – 2019/20. These savings have been achieved through a blend of staffing and contractual efficiencies, whilst continuing to meet the operational needs and strategic ambitions of the Orbis partners.

## 2    Service Updates

### *Digital transformation of the Service*

2.1    The operational imperative to replace the legacy IT helpdesk systems was used to drive forward a programme of service improvement and enhanced service satisfaction. The old call logging systems have been replaced with three digital-era solutions that enable online self-service for support and provide rich service satisfaction insights. The developments are as follows:

- Cherwell – the core platform, providing the IT Service Management system and end user portal referred to as MyServiceHub. The implementation of this capability also included the review and improvement of processes that reduced 127 processes and forms, across the three councils, into a consistent, set of 26 and achieved an operating cost reduction of £185k per annum;
- ComAround (referred to as KnowHow!) – an online knowledge library enabling service users to browse for user guides, videos, helpful articles and links. It contains 75,000 pre-written articles from Microsoft as well as guides and videos written by IT experts with the ability to share these articles across the three organisations;
- Happy Signals – the customer experience engine that provides real-time analytical insights into the 'happiness' of the userbase allows us to drive continuous service improvement processes. This will enable the development of XLAs (experience level agreements) instead of traditional SLAs (service level agreements).

2.2    The solutions were selected and developed in order to create an enterprise-class capability that underpins the Orbis vision for integration, consolidation and efficiency savings. These capabilities have the full potential to be used more widely across the Orbis partnership.

### *Project Delivery*

2.3    The IT & Digital service delivers circa 160 projects each year. These include: compliance led and security driven technology changes; infrastructure upgrades; business-led changes that typically involve the replacement or extension of line of business applications for frontline services such as social care and support services such as HR.

### *Commercial Development*

2.4    The IT & Digital service operates a successful and growing commercial portfolio. Providing services to 267 customers comprising schools and social enterprises; with year on year growth over the last 4 years. The strength of the commercial growth is attributed to the clear and reliable service offer and well-established, direct relationships with the customer base.

### *Innovation in the data centre*

2.5    An innovative new core infrastructure strategy is being implemented to maximise the value of combining Microsoft Azure (public cloud services) and the Orbis operated

datacentres. This strategy has begun to put in place the very latest industry technologies, implementing a design that will provide a highly available, cyber secure infrastructure capable of underpinning a 24/7 digital delivery of council services.

### *Enabling an Agile Workforce*

2.6 The IT & Digital service has been implementing a technological step-change as key enabler to workforce agility, equipping staff with the ability to work from any location and deliver services through multi-disciplinary teams. The key enablers include:

- Upgrading existing end user devices to laptop or hybrid (2 in 1) devices running Windows 10;
- The extension of mobile equipment and apps across council services, with a review of BYOD opportunities (primarily at Surrey County Council);
- Enhancements to the IT infrastructure such as network capacity, increased use of Wi-Fi, implementation of Gov WIFI and rollout of Always on VPN;
- Deployment of Microsoft Teams (collaboration and video conference) technology.

### *Digital Collaboration across the local government sector*

2.7 All three councils within the Orbis partnership have signed up to the Local Digital Declaration. Signing up to the collective ambition 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 where organisations share a vision to deliver more user-centred, cost-effective local public services through open, collaborative and reusable work. The Digital Declaration collaborations include:

- East Sussex and several other councils including the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Milton Keynes to look at improving data and evidence on children in care;
- Brighton & Hove City Council, Bracknell Forest Council, Oxford City and the London Borough of Croydon to improve code-sharing between councils, removing blockers to sharing code and helping projects to collaborate;
- Surrey County Council and the London Boroughs of Islington and Camden councils developing a data ethics framework to support data sharing.

### *Strategic Digital Delivery*

2.8 A current area of focus is the design and delivery of digital technology enablers across the Orbis partnership.

2.9 A significant area of digital delivery has been for Surrey County Council in support of the organisation's transformation programme. The resulting work has put in place the technology foundations to support the business-led digital change initiatives. The digital deliverables include:

- An integration platform, enabling join up of data from different sources;
- A data management platform, supporting the single view of resident and asset information, the creation of 150 automated, self-serve datasets for analytics and 23 Automated Dashboards;
- Robotic automation technology, enabling automation of repetitive tasks to free up staff time. During the last year, 35,000 hours of staff time has been automated and freed up for more impactful and value-adding work.

- Chatbot, smart form and webchat technology, enabling an improved access to services for residents when they contact the Council online. This provides both a digital experience to residents and a reduction in calls to the contact centre;
- A single resident account that can be deployed across a range of services;
- On line forms and a redesign of back-office processes for an improved resident journey. An example is with the Highways department. The number of online forms was reduced from 30 to 9, simplifying the process to contact the department concerning trees, manholes, flooding and blocked drains defects.

2.10 At Brighton and & Hove City Council there has been an on-going use of Mendix (a low-code platform) to support process change and enhance back office efficiencies. Alongside this there have been two significant areas of development:

- The establishment of online accounts for residents in Brighton & Hove. (25,000 citizens are currently signed up). These existing accounts, along with all future registrations, have been brought into an identity management platform;
- The development of a Resident Index using two products (Dell Boomi and Clear Core) which are used to connect resident data from disparate source systems to create a "golden record" of resident and property data. Deliverables from this work already include: Address validation against Council Tax Address and the Local Land & Property Gazetteer; Resident name, address and date of birth validation; the transmission of changes within the Council Tax system to the Electoral Register; enablement of the 'My Account Verification', used in the Brighton & Hove online account, to check to see if systems already hold resident data when a new account is created.

2.11 At East Sussex County Council there have been trials of chatbot technology in the back office and resident facing service with automation of HR processes and the Blue Badge processes. Drawing on the learning from the other two Orbis partners, a more extensive technology-based programme could be developed for 20/21 alongside a scaling up of employee and leadership digital skills development through the Barclays Digital Eagle initiative.

### COVID-19 and recent service delivery achievements

2.12 There are no parallels or precedents for the level of demand that has been placed on the IT & Digital service during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The pressure and demand grew in line with heightened levels of remote working and enabling the provision of services to the most vulnerable in our communities.

2.13 The response from individuals and teams from across IT & Digital has been outstanding. The supporting processes have adapted well and are coping with the on-going need for a dynamic response to new and emerging needs. The support response includes the following:

- Deploying circa 800 laptops to essential staff groups;
- Providing 175 mobile phones and setting up 483 staff (at East Sussex) to use a softphone solution called Jabber; a solution that had not been previously used at the council;
- Enabling staff at all three councils to use Citrix to access council systems and information from their home devices;
- Accelerating the implementation of 'Always on VPN' at Brighton & Hove that will enable all Windows 10 device users to connect securely to the council's systems;

- The rapid deployment of Microsoft Teams across East Sussex and Surrey, with deployments in Brighton & Hove to the council's COVID-19 response teams;
- A programme of virtual training to support the Teams deployment was stood up: 1,293     training enquiries were received, 1,063 courses booked, and 688 staff had attended training by 1st May 2020;
- Enabling remote access to approximately 1,500 school staff for teaching and administrative purposes.  Responding to 2,800 support calls in April 2020 from schools seeking assistance with enabling home learning and teacher remote access;
- Producing over 10,000 leaflets, letters and information sheets in East Sussex by the Print Team;
- The development of new digital systems to capture and match diverse data sets that enable frontline services to support our most vulnerable citizens.

## 3.     Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1     The IT & Digital service has been designed, and is now managed, to support and enable the operational and strategic priorities of the Orbis partners. The initial process of integration has been completed and a process of continuous service improvement continues to be delivered.

3.2     The IT & Digital service has achieved the target savings for 2016/17 – 2019/20.

3.3     The IT & Digital service has continued to put in place improvements that have enhanced the service offer and added-value to the councils within the Orbis partnership.

3.4     The IT & Digital service provided exceptional support the councils during the COVID-19 lock down and is well placed to enable the post-COVID-19 recovery and continue to drive forward transformative digital change.

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