

Subject:	The Local Digital Declaration		
Date of Meeting:	Policy Resources and Growth Committee 23 March 2019		
Report of:	Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing Executive Director Finance and Resources		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for seeking approval from Committee to sign up to the *Local Digital Declaration*. This was produced in July 2018 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It contains five principles and thirteen commitments that support the aim of ensuring that public services are both citizen-focused and digital where appropriate.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Committee approves Brighton and Hove City Council signing up to the Digital Declaration.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 A fund of £7.5m has been set aside by the MHCLG for local authorities to bid for to develop digital ways of working, citizen engagement and skills development. In addition to encouraging collaboration and buy-in to common standards they are asking public sector organizations across the UK to sign up to the Digital Declaration which many have already done. A number of councils including Doncaster, Barnsley, and Birmingham were among the co-publishers of the Declaration document (see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 We have been working as through the Digital First program to build customer focused digital solutions. This has been successful, however we have realised that there are differing levels of digital understanding within services and we

have not insisted on a consistent approach which has led to differing user experiences.

3.3 In addition, the council's inclusion as an Orbis founding member has facilitated the stabilisation of the IT & Digital service after a concerted period of under-delivery, and there are now much more stable foundations in place on which to build. The position will strengthen still further as the implementation of modern social care and housing systems replace those that have been in place well beyond the point where they support modern service delivery.

3.4 If Brighton & Hove signs up to the Declaration, it would affirm the council's ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it. The Declaration commits us to 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.

3.5 If Brighton and Hove council signed up to the digital declaration we would be agreeing to the following 5 principles:

- Going even further than we have with Digital First to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise residents and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos;
- 'Fixing 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;
- Designing safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and residents, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively;
- Demonstrating digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this local Digital Declaration.
- Embedding 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.

3.6 If we sign the digital declaration, there would be a requirement from our leaders, service managers and politicians to:

- Make sure that digital expertise is central to our decision-making 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;
- Build on the work we have developed as part of the People Promise to Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of our digital services and systems.

3.7 Signing the Local Digital Declaration would mean collaboration between services, and our customer transformation, IT&D and digital teams to:

- 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 standards 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 customers and reduce the need to ask customers for the same information multiple times; This is in addition to the structured approach we have taken with GDPR which focuses on what we can do with data as well as GDPR compliance
- 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.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 There is no requirement for the council to sign up to the Local Digital Declaration, however, by signing up, there will be significant benefits for customers and benefits to the support we are able to access to achieve our digital aims

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 There has been no formal consultation, however we have spoken with councils who have signed the declaration and have received benefit from doing so in the form of a consistent framework for digital and support from experts through the declaration. From the work we have undertaken with the customers we know there is a desire for intuitive, effective digital services

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The digital revolution brings about an unprecedented access to information for better decision making and the capabilities to engage and collaborate with stakeholders across traditional internal and external boundaries.
- 6.2 It is expected that most public sector organisations will sign up to the Digital Declaration as a charter for modernising their organisation.
- 6.3 The transparency of this commitment sends a strong message to staff, members, partners and customers.

The aim will be to embed digitally enabled working and practices into 'business as usual'.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 A separate report to today's Committee sets out detailed propositions on how the capital budget approved for IT & Digital will be utilised. As such, work to embed the principles of the Declaration will be contained within this budget envelope.

- 7.2 Any further propositions will require further business cases, and will either have to be funded from within existing service budgets, or will need to show a positive pay back against investment.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 18-02-19

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from the Council signing up to the commitments included in the Local Digital Declaration. Under the Council's scheme of delegations, any specific projects would need to be authorised and legal and financial implications considered at that stage.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 18.2.19

Equalities Implications:

- 7.1 The council already seeks to support residents by providing personal training on a 'drop in' basis at Bart's House (from Revenues & Benefits officers) and in our libraries (staff are trained to show how to access those services that are digitally enabled). We understand that we have 10-15% of residents who are not able to use digital channels, however this work is in addition to our current customer service work.

