

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Corporate Support Committee – 12 October 2023
SUBJECT:	Technology & Digital Annual Update
LEAD OFFICER:	Paul Symes, Head of Technology & Digital
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Francis Oppler, Chair of Corporate Support
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: The work of Technology & Digital supports the following themes in the Arun Vision: A better future 2022 -2026. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ improving the wellbeing of Arun▪ supporting our environment to support us▪ fulfilling Arun’s economic potential	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ICT Service Strategy 2019 - 2023▪ Digital Strategy 2020 - 2025	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: N/A – this is an update report looking backwards over the last 12 months.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to provide committee members with an update on the activities and progress of Technology & Digital over the last 12 months.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Support Committee to note the report and continue to receive annual updates.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Technology & Digital are responsible for all corporate technology ensuring it is secure, reliable and available; this includes servers, appliances and networking.

The team develop and support computer software, back-office applications, databases, telephony systems, cloud computing, geospatial layers, digital channels and the web.

Some services manage their own back-office applications and Technology & Digital will act as a business partner providing technical advice and guidance.

They also undertake projects and reviews of business processes and the adoption of new capabilities.

Working with external partners they get involved in wider strategic initiatives and programmes related to digital that benefit the residents, businesses and visitors of the district.

Over the last 12 months the service has been faced with unexpected challenges along with some post pandemic catchup work.

During the same period they have continued to make steady progress against the ICT & digital strategies.

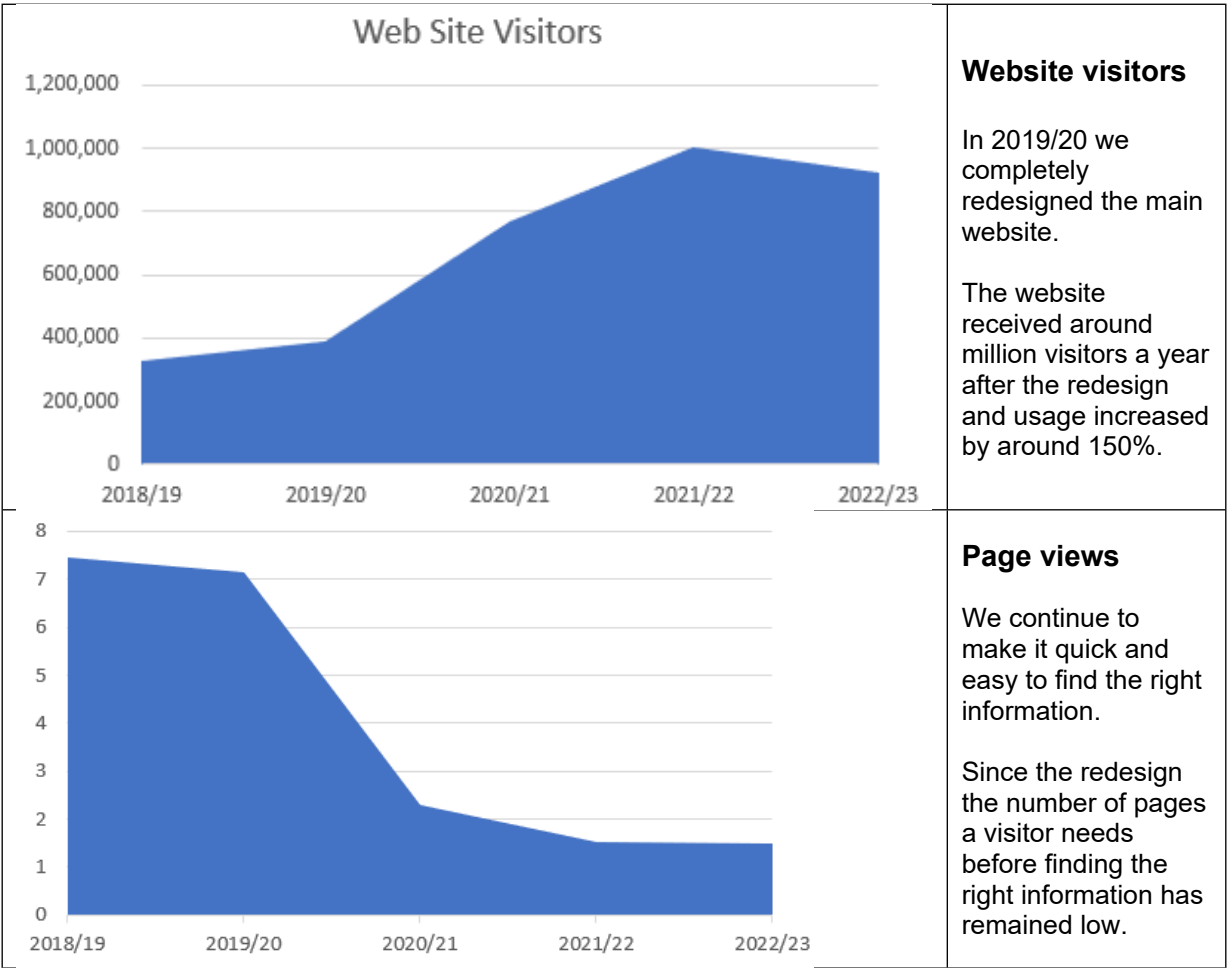
4. DETAIL

- Our online forms supplier gave notice that they are pulling out of the market. This means redeveloping over 120 interactive forms. Redevelopment work has started using open-source technologies and should be completed around Q2 of 2024. This will create savings in the longer term but will use almost all our development capacity until completion.
- We had expected to retire a major departmental system this year, however due to project delays outside of IT we have undertaken additional server work to ensure it remains secure and available. Due to our cloud strategy this has been possible at a much lower cost (80% lower).
- Another major supplier of a key back-office system is planning to retire their system and we are looking at other options. We estimate this could avoid implementation and licence costs over a 5-year period of £600K.
- During the pandemic there was a rapid deployment of new capabilities to enable a flexible workforce to continue delivering vital council services. This meant delaying some parts of the rolling maintenance and upgrade programme. Over the last twelve months' the team has spent time catching up with these.
- Cyber threats and risks are growing at a rapid rate, the damage and disruption they can cause to any organisation is significant. It is estimated that there have been over 2 million cyber-attacks on councils over the last year. We are spending more and more time on cyber security and continually looking at new ways to improve our defences.

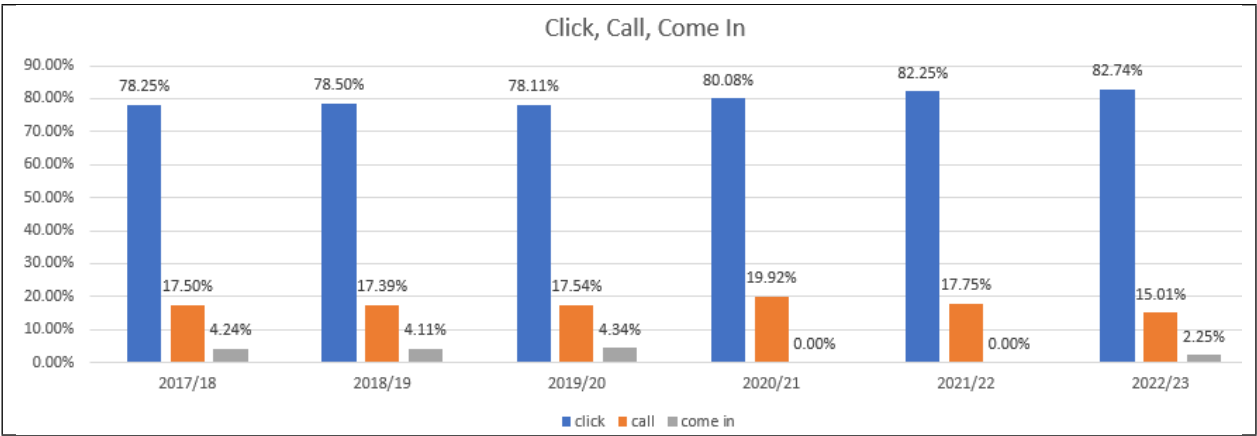
- Our strategy to move services to the cloud is progressing steadily. This has allowed us to start reducing our reliance on internal hardware, lower our energy consumption and deliver greener technology. As an example, replacing the Storage Area Network (SAN) will save around £5K of electric a year and we estimate a total saving so far of around £10K pa.
- A major project to replace our corporate telephony systems and contact centre solution has been completed on time, to budget and with no disruption to service. This has seen our telephony move to the cloud, centralise communication for officers, improved call flow functionality and provide more phone lines for customers. We hope to add additional contact channels later in the year such as WhatsApp messaging.
- We have also changed mobile phone provider and using a new government purchasing framework reduced costs by around 50%.
- We have made improvements to our website for customers with accessibility needs, providing services that they may find difficult to access in other ways. Feedback from an independent test of the site said 'it was one of the most accessible sites they had come across'.
- Our website also has some good carbon credentials, it uses sustainable energy sources and we have optimised data being transferred to cut down on power consumption in the data centre and on the end-user's device.
- As connectivity becomes increasingly important to residents and businesses, we have been engaged with major telecom companies to future proof the district by supporting the roll out of ultra-fast fibre internet. A new digital exchange has been built in Bognor Regis and work on another in Littlehampton should start soon.
- Another key connectivity technology is mobile internet and, in some cases, this can be the best option for hard-to-reach areas. We have been working in partnership with WSCC to identify poor signal zones or 'not spots' and have completed a digital connectivity infrastructure pilot project to make it easier and more attractive for mobile operators to engage with us.
- The telecoms industry plans to retire the old analogue telephone network by 2025 and in some areas, you cannot now buy an analogue connection. We are working with telecom companies to install modern digital landlines to council owned multi occupancy building, for example flats.
- Working with Biffa our refuse contractor we have introduced in cab technologies and a new integrated digital channel for reporting issues. This provides real time information and improved feedback for example if a customer reports a bin not being collected and the truck is running late it will let them know.
- New members now have the choice of a laptop or iPad. After the May elections the team distributed the device of choice to elected members and provided training.
- Through our local schools we recycle old redundant IT equipment so that it can be re-used by children who may otherwise not have access to technology. So far, we have provided over 350 computers that may have ended up as landfill.

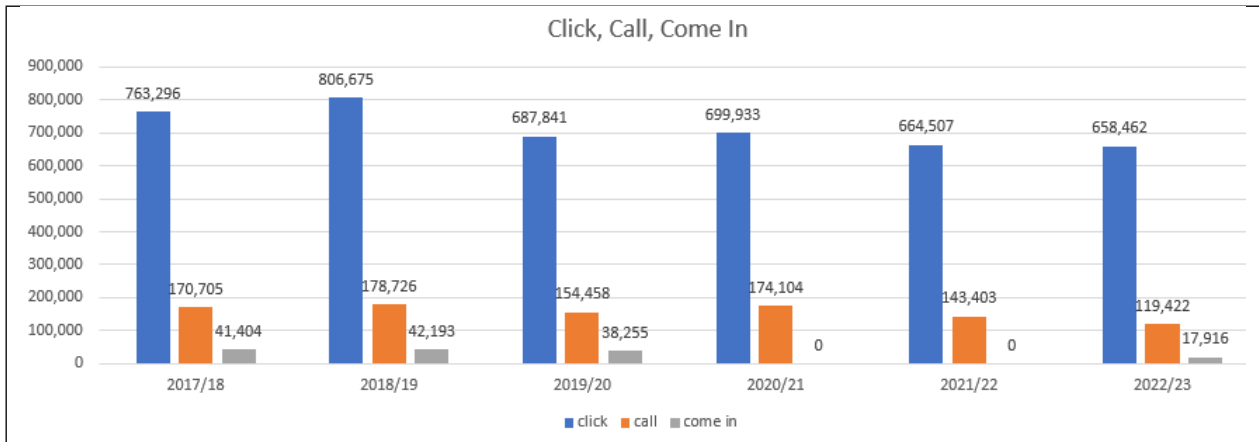
Website (arun.gov.uk) statistics

The site receives around a million visitors a year and we have managed to keep the page view count low (which is a good thing) by making information easier to find.



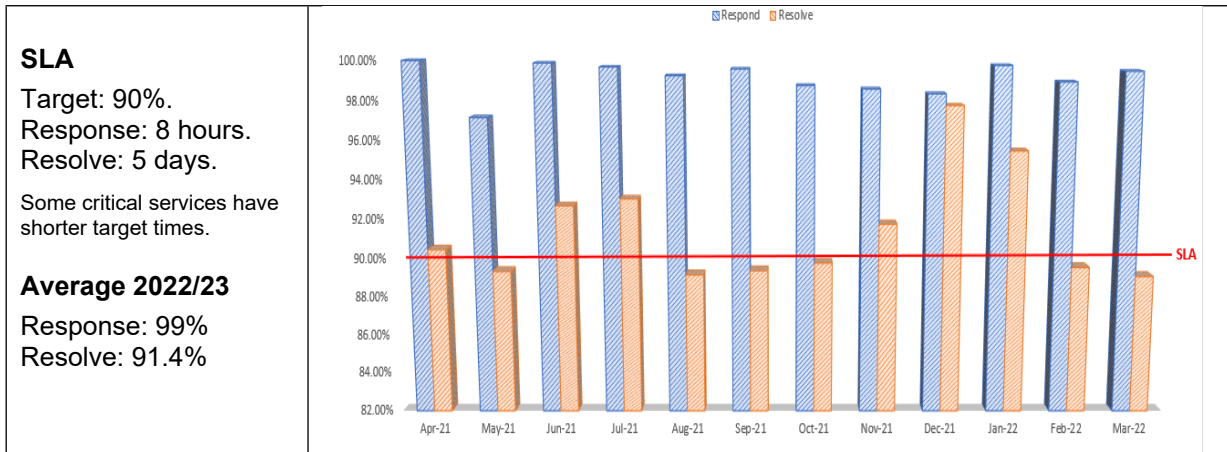
Channel Comparison





ICT support - Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The ICT support desk manages all requests for support, undertakes fixes or escalates to specialist teams. We measure how long it takes to respond and resolve each request.



5. CONSULTATION

None.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None – this is an update report looking backwards over the last 12 months.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

No financial impact.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

None.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

Committee is asked to note the report and there are no legal or Governance implications arising from the recommendation.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

None.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

None.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

None.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

Opening up services to all, removing barriers and including accessibility by design in our digital offerings.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

Cloud computing can be up to 93% more energy efficient and 98% more carbon efficient than on-premises option.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

None.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

None.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Paul Symes

Job Title: Head of Technology & Digital

Contact Number: 01903 737585

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[ICT Strategy 2019 - 2023](#)

[Digital Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)