

Arun District Council

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| REPORT TO: | Corporate Support Committee – 10 October 2024 |
| SUBJECT: | Technology & Digital Annual Update |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Paul Symes, Head of Technology & Digital |
| LEAD MEMBER: | Councillor Francis Oppler, Chair of Corporate Support Committee |
| 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: The financial implications arising from these strategies have been managed within current budget constraints. In addition, future strategies will have budgetary impact on other service areas across the council which will need to be quantified as the strategy is implemented. | |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 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

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Support Committee note the report and continue to receive annual updates.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 Technology & Digital are responsible for all corporate technology ensuring it is secure, reliable and available; this includes end-user devices, servers, appliances and networking.
- 3.2 The team develop and support computer software, back-office applications, databases, telephony systems, cloud computing, geospatial layers, digital channels and the web.

- 3.3 Some services manage their own back-office applications and Technology & Digital will act as a business partner providing technical advice and guidance.
- 3.4 They also undertake projects and reviews of business processes and the adoption of new capabilities.
- 3.5 Over the last 12 months the service has been faced with unexpected challenges particularly around system suppliers retiring systems or pulling out of the market and this has put considerable strain on internal resources.
- 3.6 Despite this, during the same period Technology & Digital have continued to make steady progress against the ICT & digital strategies.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 The supplier of our eForms package gave notice that they were pulling out of the market. Since then the in-house development team have been rewriting over 120 interactive forms using open-source technologies. They have also created an automated code generator that cuts down on future development time.
- 4.2 The supplier of our corporate document management system gave notice that the product we use was being retired. We are working with the supplier to develop and enhance another of their products so we can migrate to that. We anticipate this will go live early 2025.
- 4.3 The supplier of our planning, building control and land charge system gave notice that the company will be retiring from the market. We have been working with the supplier and other authorities exploring a number of options. Two options have the potential to avoid significant procurement costs and disruption.
- 4.4 The supplier of our HR & Payroll system has also recently given notice that they are withdrawing from the market. We are working with our colleagues in HR and Payroll in preparation to procure and implement a new system.
- 4.5 The Financial Management Systems (FMS) license expires in June 2025 and the company are unlikely to continue support of this version beyond 2026/27, the finance team are working on a project to procure and upgrade to a newer product.
- 4.6 Cyber threats continue to grow at a rapid rate. We constantly review and improve our cyber defenses and recently added additional unattended automated defense technologies. Later this year we plan to review our disaster recovery capabilities to ensure if the worst happens, we can recover as quickly as possible.
- 4.7 The Cyber Centre of Excellence (CCoE) recently conducted a passive security scan of all 382 UK authorities, and we achieved a very good rating. Within areas of risk, we scored 45 against a UK average of 330 – low being good.
- 4.8 We have been subject to several internal audits carried out by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership, including cyber, patch management, systems development and asset control. Each audit has achieved a 'green' rating showing no significant weakness, gaps or concerns.

- 4.9 Our strategy to move services to the cloud is progressing steadily. This has allowed us to reduce our reliance on internal hardware, lower our energy consumption and deliver greener technology. It is also helping to spread the risk in the event of a cyber-attack.
- 4.10 We continue to make improvements to our website for our customers including those with accessibility needs. Our website was recently audited by the government's digital services team for accessibility compliance and passed. There is still more work to do but we are in a good place.
- 4.11 Our website still remains a popular customer channel receiving over a million unique visitors a year. It 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.
- 4.12 This year we completed a major project to upgrade the Wi-Fi within the Civic Centre. It uses state of the art automated monitoring and healing technology to maintain its own health. It has provided improved coverage and bandwidth to allow staff and members to work anywhere in the building without wires.
- 4.13 Working with Biffa and West Sussex County Council we have made available a downloadable smartphone app that allows customers to receive alerts about waste collections, check recycling information and report issues; it also allows customers to access non-waste services.
- 4.14 We have started a fourth cycle of apprenticeships in the IT Helpdesk. This programme has been very successful resulting in two permanent members of staff being appointed and other apprentices gaining employment outside of Arun District Council; we like to think we are building the technologists of the future.
- 4.15 Through our local school's network we recycle old redundant IT equipment so that it can be re-used by children who may otherwise not have access to technology. In total we have avoided 400 computers ending up in landfill. Even equipment that does not work is used to teach the children electronics and computer maintenance.
- 4.16 The service has identified around £185,000 of savings for 2024/25. This is through things like the deletion of posts, extended hardware refresh life cycles and in-house development. It does not come without risk and is being monitored to ensure it does not impact too much on council services or our customers.
- 4.17 The ICT Strategy still continues to provide the direction required by the service and has been extended for another year. As technical estate is complex with many interrelated components, changing direction is costly so we continue to reuse the assets we have and replace when we have to.

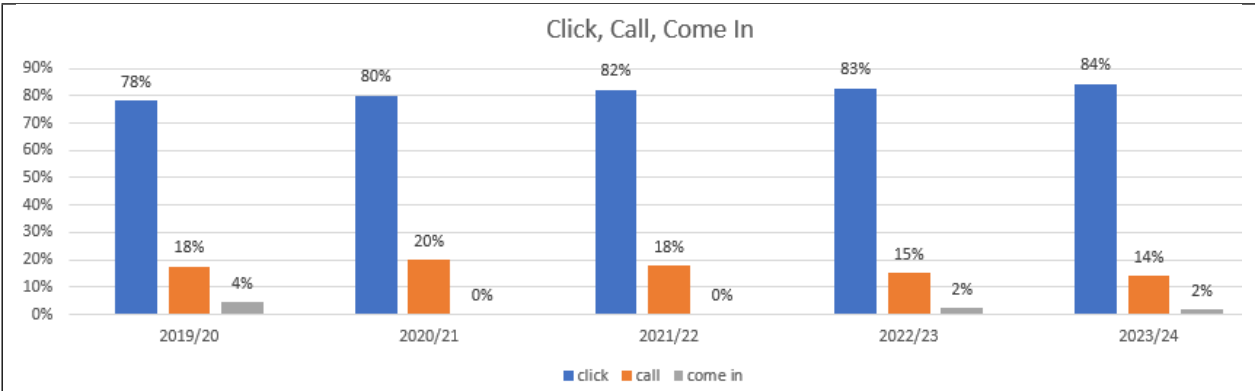
Website (arun.gov.uk) statistics

4.16 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.

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| | <p>Unique website visitors</p> <p>The website receives around a million visitors a year.</p> <p>It was completely redesigned in 2019/20 and since then usage has increased by around 150%.</p> |
| | <p>Page views per visitor</p> <p>We continue to make content quick and easy to find.</p> <p>Low page views are a good thing, visitors are not having to look in lots of places for what they want.</p> |
| | <p>Browsing by device</p> <p>Smartphones are the most popular browsing device.</p> <p>Year on year we have seen the usage of smartphones increase and the other devices decrease.</p> |

Channel Comparison

4.17 Showing equivalent contact centre service lines.



5. CONSULTATION

5.1 None.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

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

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

7.1 Future strategies will have budgetary impact on other service areas across the council which will need to be quantified as the strategy is implemented with these considered as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process and recommended for approvals where appropriate.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 None.

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

9.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

10.1 None.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

11.1 None.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

12.1 None.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

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

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

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

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 None.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 None.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 None.

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[ICT Strategy 2019 - 2023](#)

[Digital Strategy 2020 - 2025](#)