

Meeting Name:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	27 November 2024
Report title:	Digital, Customer Services and Innovation
Ward(s) or groups affected:	N/A
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	N/A
From:	Dionne Lowndes Chief Digital and Technology Officer Dionne.Lowndes@southwark.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the actions being taken in response to the questions asked in order to scrutinise how the council liaises with residents, and work towards right contact first time (residents indicating that they find it difficult to contact the correct officer to deal with the matter they are seeking to contact the council about) along with the digital systems that supports this process.
2. To note the actions being taken in response to the questions asked in order to explore the council's approach to digital innovation / research and development. Where the council is with AI, whether we have a framework for identifying where new technologies will benefit the council and its residents, and how the technology can be deployed, and being able to identify where something is not adding value.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In Spring 2024 Cabinet approved the Technology and Digital Services 2024-26 Digital Strategy.
4. This report has been developed in response to a request to scrutinise how the council liaises with residents, and work towards right contact first time (residents indicating that they find it difficult to contact the correct officer to deal with the matter they are seeking to contact the council about) along with the digital systems that supports this process.
5. The report addresses questions raised in the request to explore the council's approach to digital innovation / research and development. Where the council is with AI, whether we have a framework for identifying where new technologies will benefit the council and its residents, and how the technology can be deployed, and being able to identify where something is not adding value.

6. The report also seeks to update the committee on how the council handles resident enquiries and complaints.
7. Our Digital Strategy identified five key delivery pillars covering the following areas:
 - Smart Neighbourhoods
 - People Powered Digital Experience
 - Digital Inclusion – Closing the Gap
 - A Well Run Council
 - Data Enabled
8. Digital Strategy

Scrutinising the development and delivery of the Digital Strategy

9. The Digital Strategy was approved by cabinet in Spring 2024. It was developed through consultation through the following channels:
 - Internal staff engagement
 - Cabinet
 - CMT
 - Leadership Network
 - Consultations with other local authorities and forums
 - Consultations with leading tech industry organisations
 - Community consultation – Comuzi (local Southwark engagement consultancy), consultations platform
 - Alignment to council objectives and outcomes – Future Southwark and Southwark 2030.
10. It was socialised among members, council officers, residents and others as detailed below:
 - Consultation with communities via Comuzi, Consultations Portal
 - Cabinet
 - CMT
 - Leadership Network
 - Intra/Internet
 - Strategic Policy Board
 - Trade Unions
 - Internal Team Meetings & DiTo Champions
11. We have a number of processes and governance structures in place to ensure successful delivery of the strategy, including:
 - Project Management function introduced and supported by Monday.com (PM Tool) project intake process, delivery and alignment of the platform to the Digital Delivery pillars
 - Regularly reviewed to ensure the projects TDS are working on align to the strategy, Southwark 2030, and that each pillar has projects within it to ensure its delivery

- TDS Strategic Board
 - Corporate Change Board – Reporting and attendance
12. In order to assist delivery we have a number of strategic partnerships with third party organisations including:
- Technology Companies (Microsoft, Hitachi, NEC)
 - Recruitment agencies
 - LOTI
 - Links with other authorities
 - LGA
 - Central Government (GDS)
13. To monitor our progress against the digital strategy we have the following SMART targets in place:
- TDS are working alongside Future Southwark and Finance to track cashable and non-cashable savings against projects which TDS deliver.
 - Digital Inclusion – Connectivity rollout of over 40,000 properties
 - MDP – Fabric upgrade, 4577 dashboards 129 Active workspaces
 - RPA - £500k worth of efficiencies before the end of financial year
14. Technology is progressing at a fast pace and therefore our digital strategies need to be regularly reviewed and refreshed to ensure they are still relevant. We will begin work on our 2026-2028 strategy in Q1 2025 to give us sufficient time to engage with all stakeholders.

The council's attitude to digital innovation (Including AI)

15. Digital innovation.
16. The Chief Digital and Technology officer - Dionne Lowndes is responsible for directing digital innovation, ensuring that our technology transformation initiatives are aligned with the company's strategic goals. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.
17. This runs alongside the transformation work which is underway with Future Southwark and Southwark 2030.
18. In order to assess and deliver innovative ways of working TDS have developed a process with associated governance to connect business requirements with technological solutions:
- A Technology Business Partnering function has been established to work with each area of the organisation. This role helps to connect innovation and technology solutions, that fit within our Enterprise Architecture and meet our Application Standards, to business requirements.
 - Identified solutions are then onboarded into the organisation through the TDS PMO and then supported by the TDS Applications Team.
 - TDS are also part of wider project teams across Future Southwark and Southwark 2030 to provide Technology support and advice.

- We have established a DiTo Network of staff from across the organisation who we share information about technology and innovation to highlight the ‘art of the possible’.
19. To support innovation we have created the Digital Innovation fund with £500,000 available for departments to bid for up to £50k of funding to deliver innovative digital projects such as the Magic Notes pilot underway in Social Care and Early Help Mash online referral.
 20. To supplement the digital programme have supported services to bid for and win money for the following innovation projects:
 - i) IoT – GLA – Up to £25k for damp and mould detection sensors in housing
 - ii) LOTI Digital Exclusion Mapping - £75k to map digital exclusion across 5 Boroughs and to create a digital inclusion toolkit to support residents.
 - iii) GLA Dark fibre network – around £1m SIP funding for dark fibre infrastructure across the Borough to improve connectivity for residents.
 - iv) DLUHC – Supporting families – connecting family early help systems with different services - £171,979
 21. Examples of Digital Delivery Projects

Smart Neighbourhoods

- IoT Pilot - sensors installed to monitor for damp and mould in housing to proactively find damp and mould cases before serious problems occur in the property, Sensors to monitor water hygiene to prevent Legionella, sensors to monitor noise levels to assist management of disturbance cases and fire door sensors to ensure fire doors are closed and working appropriately.

People Powered Digital Experience

- New modern and accessible website including new technologies to support form development, self-service applications and the MySouthwark portal.
- Development of new Registrars website to enhance resident experience and support local businesses.

Digital Inclusion – Closing the Gap

- The TDS strategy is aligned with the Greater London Authority (GLA)'s Digital Access Mission, which aims for every Southwark resident to have access to a fast and stable internet connection by 2025.
- Plan to provide digital hubs and support in libraries and voluntary organisations. These hubs will offer residents access to digital services and assistance, ensuring that those who need help are not left behind as more people move online.
- Services are currently delivered through a variety of channels. In addition to our 24hr contact centre, online services and self - service offerings,

Customer Services offer supported services to vulnerable residents through our Telecare and SMART services, residents can also contact us in person.

- In November 2024 TDS launched the Springboard platform. Springboard has over 1000 free courses available to residents to upskill and expand their digital and life skills and will be part of our digital inclusion offering going forward, supplementing the Digital Unite and Learn My Way platforms.
- In 2025 - Recycling Southwark Council devices for community groups in line with laptop replacement programme.

A Well-Run Council

- Plentific – Dynamic marketplace solution for housing repairs. By allowing contractors to bid against each other for externally contracted works we will drive up quality, speed and value for money for residents. This will go live in January 2025.
- Digitally enabling front line workers to allow them more time to engage directly with residents rather than having to return to the office to complete their administrative work.
- Magic Notes – Pilot of Generative AI software to allow social workers to transcribe assessments into existing templates. This reduces the physical barrier of using a laptop in the assessment and alleviates the administrative burden on Social Workers to spend more time with the resident.
- Invision360 – Exploring a pilot of utilising this generative AI tool to assist in the development of EHCP's in SEND.

Data Enabled

- Microsoft Power Platform being utilised to develop solutions such as:
 - The Housing Applications Register which will deliver a improved customer experience for creating a housing application as well as an optimised back office process to support the housing solutions team.
 - Solution to consolidate performance data across the Council's Tenant Management Organisations to provide more timely insight and Management Information.
 - Care Commissioning Contracts Management System
- Creation of 'A Single View of the Resident'
 - The Modern Data Platform (MDP) holds information covering datasets from multiple back office systems including:
 - 8x8 telephone contact centre system,
 - iCasework complaints system,
 - Universal Credit,
 - Mosaic Adults and Children's system,

- Synergy Adults and Children's Case system,
 - Adult Learning,
 - Capita Youth Justice
 - 16 17 Not in Employment or Education or Training,
 - School Census
 - SAP financials,
 - ONS deprivation,
 - Gazetteer,
 - Meter Point,
 - Connect Repairs,
 - NEC Housing system
 - NEC Revs and Bens system
- We are currently applying to work with the DofE and 12 other councils. The initiative aims to support up to 12 local authorities in developing an implementation plan for a single digital view of children and families. This involves effective multi-agency information sharing and joined-up working to safeguard children.
 - Single Digital View: This concept brings together information from various multi-agency case management systems into a unified view. It includes developing a data lake, implementing a match and merge management function, and visualising the information through.
 - The resident account feature of "My Southwark" provides a limited single view of the customer by bringing together residents personal information and linking with Housing through an integration with NEC, Council Tax and the Blue Badge scheme. This helps the resident access disparate systems without the need for alternative logins.
- We're in year 3 of the data strategy. So far we have built a data platform that ingests multiple datasets visualising this data through a number of dashboards.
 - With this platform now in place and firmly established we are working with various departments to provide them with meaningful data in a way that offers them insight to improve and develop the services they deliver.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Systems for resident responses

22. CRM System

23. As a part of the delivery of the Digital Strategy we have started the development of the CRM system using Microsoft Dynamics technology to handle all case management across the authority.

24. To date we have embedded the following services into this system:

- Abandoned and Nuisance Vehicles
- Highway Maintenance
- Environmental Enforcement
- Public Health and Residential
- Trading Standards
- Cleaning

- Envirocrime
 - Grounds Maintenance
 - Highway Lighting and Street Furniture
 - Street Trading and Enforcement
 - Noise and Air Quality
 - SASBU
 - Trees
 - Entertainment Licensing
 - Food Health and Safety
 - Environmental Health
 - Parking Client
 - Parking Enforcement
 - Parks
 - School Admissions
 - Student Benefit
 - Education Enquiries
 - Early Years
 - General
 - Housing Management
 - Community Housing
 - Southwark Property
 - Traffic and Transport Planning Service
 - Adult Services Assessment
 - Adult Services Support
 - Adult Services High Priority
 - Adult Services
 - Adult Services Home Care
 - Children Services
 - Children Services Asylum
 - Children Services Disabilities and HIV
 - Social Services - Other
 - Revenues and Benefits
 - Blue Badge and Freedom Pass
 - Registrars
 - Electoral Services
- These workflow items equate to 730 service requests that citizens can raise enquiries for.
 - Back-office systems are used in conjunction to CRM to complete the service request.
 - There is a CRM location and chatbot available online for Leaks from Above and Damp and Mould.

25. The Contact Centre manage the upkeep of the system and new workflows are created by the TDS applications team. Only internal Southwark staff (access through Security Groups)

26. The data held in the CRM system is accessed via the MySouthwark portal, the website and via the Customer Service operatives over the telephone, 730

knowledge articles have been created for operatives for each of the departments and services in Southwark.

Conclusion

27. In conclusion, the initiatives and strategies outlined in this report demonstrates an approach to enhancing digital and customer services within the council. The focus on digital innovation, customer engagement, and service delivery is evident through the various projects and frameworks discussed.
28. The commitment to digital inclusion and leveraging advanced technologies like AI and IoT further underscores the council's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents.
29. As we move forward, continuous evaluation and adaptation of these strategies will be crucial to ensure they remain effective and aligned with the evolving needs of the community.
30. The collaborative efforts across departments and with external partners will play a pivotal role in the implementation of these initiatives, ultimately leading to a more responsive, inclusive, and digitally empowered council.

Policy framework implications

31. N/a.

Climate change implications

32. As part of our commitment to environmental sustainability, our digital strategy is designed to align with the principles of responsible and eco-conscious technology management.
33. Our digital initiatives prioritise energy efficiency, emphasising the adoption of green IT practices such as Cloud utilisation, and reduction of printing.
34. We recognise the role of remote work and digital collaboration in reducing the need for physical travel, thereby contributing to lower carbon emissions.
35. Our technology and digital strategy also emphasises responsible product lifecycle management, considering the environmental impact of our technology choices from procurement to end-of-life. We are committed to minimising electronic waste through recycling programmes within the local area.

Resource implications

36. None. Appropriate skills and capacity is managed accordingly within the operational budget.

Consultation

37. None.

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Technology and Digital Services Strategy 2024 – 26 (attached as appendix 1 to the report)		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Technology and Digital Services Strategy 2024 – 26

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Dionne Lowndes, Chief Digital and Technology Officer	
Report Author	Dionne Lowndes	
Version	Final	
Dated	19 November 2024	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director, Finance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team	19 November 2024	