Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 September 2016

Report Title: Management response: Overview and Scrutiny Review of Digital Inclusion

Report By: Simon Hubbard Director of Operational Services

Purpose of Report

To provide a management response to recommendations made by the overview and scrutiny review team.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Cabinet thank the scrutiny review team for their report
2. That Cabinet approve the recommendations of the scrutiny review team

Reasons for Recommendations

To acknowledge and respond to the recommendations arising from the work undertaken by the scrutiny review team.

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Introduction

1. As part of the 2015/16 overview and scrutiny annual work programme a review on Digital Inclusion was undertaken.

2. The review focused on a key aspect of the council's organisational transformation programme, in particular the development of the My Hastings online initiative and the Digital by Design project.

3. Members were keen to understand how the council and its partners identify and support those who are as yet unable to benefit from services online, including existing training opportunities to improve computer skills and provision of public access computers and free Wi-Fi around the town.

4. The scrutiny report provides a thorough overview of the evidence base underpinning the council's My Hastings online initiative and the Digital by Design project and gives useful insight into local activity underway to address digital exclusion including a helpful analysis of local public Internet access points and training opportunities.

Recommendations

5. The review concluded with the following recommendations based on the recommendations of the Government's Digital Inclusion Checklist:

6. Arrange a Digital Inclusion networking meeting, inviting local organisations and partners to share knowledge, experience and identify local gaps in provision.

7. Continue to improve knowledge of current local provision and activities to tackle digital exclusion and promote widely.

8. Continue to collaborate with partners across public, private and voluntary sectors to help people get on-line.

9. Maintain a watching brief and analysis of digital exclusion in the borough. Continue to work in partnership and draw down funding to deliver local projects that help local people get on-line and become more digitally included.

10. Continue to work in partnership and apply for funding to deliver local projects that help local people get on-line, become digitally skilled and digitally included.

Management Response

11. The recommendations rightly imply that addressing digital exclusion will require sustained partnership efforts and the broader report points to the financial challenges facing local authorities and their partners that, in part, influence and reinforce increasing provision of services online.

12. What is less explicit from the report and the recommendations set out are those potential next steps required to progress those recommendations.

13. In particular, there is a question around internal officer capacity to coordinate joined working on this agenda, and the extent of continued partnership capacity to actively and collectively support this agenda against other competing demands and priorities?

14. It is accepted that the outcome associated with the networking meeting recommendation proposed in paragraph 6 may give further clarity in this regard and the report clearly emphasises the breadth of activity already underway across the borough.

15. The outcome of this recommendation will be crucial in determining how subsequence recommendations are best met.

16. It is also understood that ongoing work with regards to the recommendations and the wider digital agenda is scheduled as a distinct work package ((5) 'Assisted Digital & Digital by Choice') within the council's transformation programme.

17. This enables both Cabinet and scrutiny to retain focus on progress against these recommendations, as the transformation programme is monitored quarterly through the council's performance management process.

18. Furthermore it is also noted that as part of the scrutiny work programme for 2016/17 that an update report against the recommendations set out in this review has already been timetabled.

19. In conclusion, each of the recommendations set out are fully supported by senior management.

20. This response is confident that following the meeting proposed by the recommendation in paragraph 6, subsequent work internally and with partners to progress the recommendations will be effectively managed through work package five of the council's transformation programme.

Wards Affected

None

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

https://hastingsintranet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s13067/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Review%20of%20Digital%20Inclusion.pdf

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