

## London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

**Report to:** Public Services Reform Policy & Accountability Committee

**Date:** 02/09/2020

**Subject:** Technology in Local Government

**Report of:** Veronica Barella, Chief Digital Officer

**Responsible Director:** Director of Resources

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### Summary

This report looks at how the council can better use technology and data to provide services to residents. TechUK, the trade body for the UK tech industry, has produced a paper “The council of the future” recommending key areas that should be addressed by local authorities. These are discussed below, and areas of improvement identified.

### Recommendations

1. That this report be noted.
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**Wards Affected:** All

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H&F Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Priorities
Building shared prosperity	We will create a better connected and inclusive place where residents and businesses are supported to grow and can have their say. We will ensure where possible that our suppliers are investing in the economy of our Borough. We work with the third sector to support out residents.
Creating a compassionate council	Where our residents can go online, we will ask them to do so. Where they can't we will make sure we offer our residents alternatives which are suited to their needs.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Our information is consistent, easy to navigate and facilitates access. Resident journeys have been co-produced, are responsive to feedback and are integrated with our partners. We will support residents'

	online access through training programmes and grants to purchase digital devices
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	We use technology to automate and improve our services, making them cost-effective to deliver. Greater savings will allow us to invest more in targeted services for vulnerable residents and the administration's priorities
Taking pride in H&F	Technological innovation drives better outcomes for our community.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	We are committed to driving down our own consumption of power and are taking steps to reduce our use of paper and other wasteful materials. We will work with our suppliers to further reduce the demands for energy from our digital services.

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**Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report**

H&F's Digital strategy – to be reviewed at October 2020 Cabinet (appendix 1)

**DETAILED ANALYSIS**

1. The council is embracing its data and technology as an enabler for transforming its services. As part of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic we have worked closely with our eco-system of partners including the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI), London Chief Digital and Information Officers, the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, the GLA, Imperial College, Microsoft, BT, Agilisys and Hitachi.
2. The Resident Experience Access Programme (REAP) will modernise our public-facing services right through from the more transactional ones, which will be redesigned and automated end-to-end, to building a single front door for Social Care, Children's and Housing. A paper is being taken to cabinet in October 2020 seeking funding approval. The programme will deliver substantial savings as well as significantly improving the experience for our residents.

3. The sections below look at each of the main recommendations from the techUK report summarising what already exists in H&F and where further development work may be required.

### **Digital Leadership**

4. The techUK report recommends that digital leadership is built in at its most senior levels and could include Digital champions, the Chief Digital Officer or the Digital Board.
5. **H&F's Digital Board** has been in place since January 2020 chaired by the CEO, supported by the Chief Digital Officer, and attended by the Strategic Leadership team. Its purpose is to
  - Provide strategic leadership, engage with council members, internal services and other relevant stakeholders to deliver transformation and key priorities
  - Provide regular assessment of the potential opportunities presented by digital technology and recommend ways to maximise the benefit from those opportunities
  - Showcase digital technologies and programmes and improve awareness
  - Help and support the upskilling journey of our people, as we become a digital council by nature
  - Identify and recommend proactive opportunities for collaboration with other councils and partners, and to proactively bid for external funding, e.g. from central government or the NHS
  - Drive solutions that break down silos and transform how we deliver services to residents, businesses and visitors
  - Help raise awareness and trends in other local councils or businesses which may benefit H&F
6. The Digital Board has approved the Digital and Information Strategy (Appendix 1) and the strategy will be considered at Cabinet in October 2020.

### **West London Alliance (WLA) – Digital lead**

7. H&F's CEO is the Digital lead for WLA and is helping to formulate the key areas of digital focus for WLA.

### **London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI)**

8. H&F joined LOTI in April 2020 and has participated in several initiatives, including around Covid response and sharing of data and challenging the DfE on their initial offer with laptops for vulnerable children.

### **Digital cabinet portfolio**

9. The techUK report recommends that Digital sits at the boardroom level as it works across all services, and that a dedicated digital portfolio sits at cabinet level. Digital services come under the remit of the cabinet member for Finance and Commercial Services.

### **Data powered council and place**

10. The report recommends that there should be a commitment to open up data and make decisions based on data.
11. H&F has developed a Council wide data warehouse which powers reporting and analysis across a wide range of services in the Council. This platform has allowed the Business Intelligence (BI) Service to automate reporting, analysis and to use more advanced techniques such as predictive modelling. H&F uses Power BI, a recognised leading platform for data analytics. The BI Service has created numerous performance dashboards including for Children's and Social Care. The platform has been used by departments to create their own dashboards, such as in Finance and People & Talent.
12. It is recognised that within these areas the Council is one of the strongest London LAs with particular regard for our data led response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The BI team has received praise from national bodies such as Public Health England (PHE), local partner organisations such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS, plus a number of London Boroughs who we have advised and supported on various parts of the response such as creating Covid-19 dashboards and the use of automated calling technology to contact shielded residents.

**Next steps:**

- Look at how anonymised data could be shared publicly to support crowd sourcing of innovative ideas for our local issues
- Investigate whether our data solutions could be commercialised
- Further expand the use of data across Council
- Investigate pre-designed toolkits like the LGA's to better respond to events like C19

**Innovative and inclusive**

13. The report recommends that councils should engage with residents in the way they prefer, either digitally or face to face. Additionally digital exclusion can be addressed by working through partners such as schools, libraries and the voluntary sector to give residents more choice in how they engage with us.
14. The Resident Experience and Access Programme will deliver digital services to residents while maintaining a face to face service for those who prefer or need to engage with the council through this route. All task-based services such as those within Council Tax, Parking, and Permits will be redesigned to provide a more consumer-based feel to engaging with H&F so it's easier for residents and businesses to interact with us.
15. The new services will be co-produced with our residents for both the digital and face to face interactions. The REAP and the Single Front Door programme is looking at what the best strategy will be for delivering services, such as building community hubs with different subject matter experts co-located in the best locations in the community based on data analysis of

where there is most need. Provision would be delivered through a mix of virtual and face to face settings.

16. In the area of innovation, Residents' Services is scheduled to implement a chatbot which will sit on our [www.lbhf.gov.uk](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk) website to help answer residents' queries and help reduce demand on the contact centre.

### **Renewing local democracy**

17. To encourage improved participation in local democracy, the report recommends the effective use of social media by elected members. Additionally, it recommends user centric design in how residents interact with local authorities.
18. H&F uses social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook to communicate with its residents. H&F was the first council in the UK to partner with NextDoor as a means of joining up members of the community. By publicising the platform, it has created many virtual community hubs. The Council uses this channel to communicate directly to residents and to pick up issues.
19. Members also use social media to communicate to constituents. There are regular articles by the Leader on the H&F Council website and a direct communication route through email to approximately 20,000 residents who are registered to receive updates.
20. Additionally, we are evolving the digital offer for democratic participation. In response to Covid-19, Council meetings are currently conducted virtually using Teams to enable the important business of the council to continue. All of the meetings are streamed to YouTube and are available subsequently for anyone who wishes to watch them.
21. Virtual consultation meetings are also being held with residents. Virtual meetings are a useful tool to increase the scope of democratic and resident engagement.

### **Art of the possible**

22. The techUK report identifies that the fast pace of technological change can make it difficult for local government to stay on top of the latest innovations. It flags that the real reward is how councils can do things differently and better for their citizens. techUK provides a neutral environment and enables local government to access the breadth and depth of the market.
23. H&F's Chief Digital Officer agrees that it can be difficult for local government to stay on top of technical innovation. This is not necessarily because of the pace of change, but rather because local government is made up of hundreds of different services which need to work together through a single digital strategy to transform how we operate and engage with our residents, local businesses and visitors to our borough. The added budget challenge affecting

all authorities means that investment must deliver the biggest transformative change.

24. There are occasions when local authorities have proved themselves to be ahead of the curve. H&F adopted Microsoft Office 365 in 2018 as its collaborative platform. When the council needed to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic this year, 80-90% of its workforce started delivering services remotely overnight enabled by the Tech-tonic rollout of laptops and the use of O365 Teams.
25. H&F also responded at pace when it needed to support and protect its vulnerable residents. We have implemented a Community Aid Network (CAN) and Shield Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) which allows us to receive requests from residents for food, help with social isolation, and in the future will match volunteer capability with resident need. The system is being further developed to include local Track and Trace to enable us to efficiently follow through interactions with others and minimise the impact on our communities. The system will include heat maps and a form of handoff with other authorities who implement the same solution.
26. The Council has worked with Imperial College London to implement the Yokeru solution which enabled us to contact around 10,000 of our shielded residents through an automated calling system with 13-15% responding and requesting help. This was felt to be a good return. A cold call from a robot (albeit a newer friendly technology on the voice) is always going to have a big drop out but a lot of the shielding residents simply wouldn't have required assistance without its use. The ones that did reply tended to need something and it was a great way of finding that out and then doing something to help them.

#### **Other areas of innovation**

- May 2018 – all Councillors offered iPads and moved to digital working with papers shared through O365 which enables collaborative working and annotation of documents.
- eVoting – H&F is currently investigating tools within O365 and also working with LOTI (London Office of Technology and Innovation) on best tool for eVoting in respect of Council meetings
- Digital services and the Business Intelligence (BI) team is working on a bid with Microsoft and Hitachi to deliver a further development of the CAN/Shield CRM to manage the lifecycle of requests that come in from residents through to delivery by our resident volunteers and volunteer organisations; including feedback from residents on whether the request was fulfilled as needed and to earn what we can improve.

#### **What areas should H&F look at next?**

- **Supporting residents at the edge of care to continue living independently at home** through the use of Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and, simple tablets and network connectivity. This will deliver better outcomes for the residents as well as help to drive down our costs.

We are working with Imperial College London on a prototype focusing on residents with dementia. Easy to use devices are being tested with residents.

Consider crowd-funding devices and network connectivity to improve social inclusion and using the improved buying power of WLA.

Utilise the digital inclusion projects being run by 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations, such as Age UK

- **Use BI data to identify areas of improvement** such as
  - heatmaps of residents at the edge of care to target those locations for local low cost WiFi coverage
  - Identify areas where technology can increase productivity of staff and improve the customer experience
- **Improve commercial engagement through our website** to enable residents, businesses and visitors to easily buy our services and increase our revenue
- **Look at opportunities of smart cities**  
LOTI looking at joining up for a consistent approach on smart cities and related governance
- Investigate other forms of technology, such as LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network) which connects battery powered devices wirelessly by using radio waves. This technology can support smart cities initiatives.
- Look at the impact and opportunities presented by the upcoming digital telephony “switchover”
- **Work with external organisations to ensure that all processes are transparent**  
Some forms of technology can be seen as intrusive and the possibility of negative press could be an issue, when deploying in large numbers (e.g. when utilising passive monitoring technologies, such as those being deployed as part of ongoing Imperial DRI project)
- Develop an ethical strategy for the use of automation. The Council has a role as a data controller and processor under Data Protection and GDPR legislation. As an organisation we need to understand where we are applying automated decision-making and, in line with regulation 22 of GDPR, make sure that we have the right processes in place to enable our service users to request human intervention or challenge our decisions.

### **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Digital and information strategy