

## Cabinet

### 5 February 2015

## 8. SCRUTINY REPORT: DIGITAL INCLUSION

### Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr J P Champion, Mrs S L Blagg

### Relevant Officer

Director of Commercial and Change

### Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Change and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care recommend that the Cabinet:**
  - (a) receives the Scrutiny Report on Digital Inclusion, together with the response from the Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Transformation and Change and for Adult Social Care; and**
  - (b) notes the Scrutiny Report's conclusions and adopts the response of the Cabinet Members with Responsibility as the way forward.**

### Background Information

2. The Council's Digital Strategy is being developed to reflect changes in technology and customer expectations, the Council's aim to be a 24/7 organisation, the need to find substantial cost savings enabled by technology, and to support the move to becoming an excellent commissioning authority. The aim is to put 100% of Council Services online. In February 2014 Cabinet approved an indicative allocation of £6.4 million investment to support the Council's Digital Strategy and Customer Access.
3. Members raised concerns about how Council services and information would be accessed by residents in Worcestershire, particularly vulnerable residents and those without access to computers. Members of the Adult Care and Well-Being Overview & Scrutiny Panel also had concerns about how residents would be able to access services, in particular in relation to the development of the e-marketplace, which will allow residents to check availability in care homes, check user feedback and allow online purchasing of care and automated payment to providers.
4. Digital Inclusion was subsequently suggested as a

scrutiny topic for 2014/15 and on 9 April 2014 the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) agreed that a Scrutiny Task Group should be set up, led by the Chairman of Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel, to include members from both Resources and the Adult Care and Well-Being Overview & Scrutiny Panels.

## **Purpose of Report**

5. The scrutiny examined how the Council can make sure that all Worcestershire residents benefit from the opportunities offered by its Digital Strategy and aimed to identify possible risks and how these can be mitigated.

6. The Task Group recognised that there could be widespread anxiety that the digitally excluded could be neglected by the Council in its enthusiasm for going over to online services and aimed to seek assurances that face to face and phone contact will be maintained for those who need it.

## **Scrutiny Conclusions**

7. The Task Group heard concerns that the strategy was unclear – is it to save money or is it to increase the number of people who are digitally included?

8. Members welcomed the fact that the Digital Inclusion Strategy was being developed in partnership with key groups. It will be essential that the Council works together with residents to "co-produce" digital inclusion and communicates effectively with groups about the aims of the strategy and what is being put in place.

9. There must be a clear message that face to face and phone contact would be available for those with complex needs. Sufficient resourcing for these alternative channels must also be kept in place.

10. The OSPB have agreed that members should monitor implementation of the Digital Strategy going forward; and as part of this, review the quality, availability and take up of adult education courses on IT literacy. In addition, the Adult Care and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Panel should be given the opportunity to view and comment on the e-marketplace before it goes live.

11. The OSPB endorsed the scrutiny report on 4 December 2014. The report has been circulated separately.

## **Response of the Cabinet Members**

12. The scrutiny process provides for the relevant Cabinet Members with Responsibility to submit to the Cabinet a response to the scrutiny report's conclusions to be considered alongside the Scrutiny Report.

13. A copy of the response from the Cabinet Member with

## Supporting Information

Responsibility for Transformation and Change and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care is attached as an Appendix.

- Appendix - Response of the Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Transformation and Change and for Adult Social Care

Digital Inclusion Scrutiny Report – previously circulated and is available in the Member Support area, at County Hall Reception and on the Council's website:

[http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4753/digital\\_inclusion](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4753/digital_inclusion)

## Contact Points

### County Council Contact Points

Worcester (01905) 763763, Kidderminster (01562) 822511 or Minicom: Worcester (01905) 766399

### Specific Contact Points

Suzanne O'Leary, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
(01905) 728673

E-mail: [so'leary@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:so'leary@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Resources) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of

- Cabinet – 6 February 2014
- Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board – September 2013 and 4 December 2014
- Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 25 September, 20 November 2013 and 17 January 2014

All of which are available on the Council's website at

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/democratic-services/minutes-and-agendas.aspx>