WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

27 JANUARY 2020

1. ## COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION – DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

   Report of the Chief Fire Officer

   RECOMMENDED

   THAT Members note the good work to date set out within this report and support the ongoing Digital Transformation and collaboration work.

2. ## PURPOSE OF REPORT

   To ensure Members are aware of the progress already made and the commitment to continual Digital Transformation and collaboration aligned to our Digital Declaration.

3. ## BACKGROUND

   Digital Transformation is the integration of digital technology into all areas of a business resulting in fundamental changes to how businesses operate and how they deliver value to stakeholders.

   In our case, it is ensuring that the increased use of technology improves the user experience through better, modern ways of working for our staff, partners and communities. It's also part of a wider cultural change that requires the organisation to continually challenge, adapt and enhance its services and ways of working.

   Understanding the need to adjust existing practices through Digital Transformation involves a change in leadership, different ways of thinking and the encouragement of innovation and new business models.

Digital is now readily accepted as an essential part of business requirements. As is the need to modernise its products, processes and people in this digital age.

Ongoing Digital Transformation is now embedded within the organisation and it is important that we take our staff with us on this journey, developing and enhancing our digital tools as well as their digital skills.

Given the investment required in this area it is important that we work collaboratively to ensure that we are doing the right things and that we are sharing our experiences and benefits with other public sector organisations.

A well-recognised means of achieving this way of working is through Local Digital. Local Digital is a growing community of organisations working together with a shared vision to deliver more user-centred, cost-effective local public services through open, collaborative and reusable work.

We signed up to the Local Digital Declaration in October 2018 (*Appendix A*) as a collective ambition for local public services that collectively commits us to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens (our communities)
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

The ambition of the Digital Declaration requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, built on 5 principles:

1. Redesign our services around the needs of the people using them.
2. Remove any dependence on inflexible and expensive technology.
3. Design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information.
4. Demonstrate digital leadership.
5. Embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from our workforce.

Under this Digital Declaration, each organisation is asked to make a commitment that will further enhance and support this approach in Digital Transformation and collaboration. Our specific commitment is set out at *Appendix B* and meets the ambitions and design principles of the Declaration.

Our commitment helps to drive central initiatives such as shared software developments, inter-operability and best practice that reduce digital overheads for us and other public sector organisations.

The open approach that we have taken in this area has already benefited from high-profile contributions from a multi-national organisation and Central Government Departments.

The data collection, dissemination and collaboration elements of the work appeals to other organisations as well as our own.

Indeed, we have a number of existing collaboration agreements in place with NFCC and other Fire and Rescue Services that are underpinned by this Digital Declaration. On the back of this work, additional Fire and Rescue Services are now expressing an interest in working with us.

Potential users of the platform include other Fire Services, wider Emergency Services, Schools, Local Businesses, Local Authorities and Health. Discussions are now also taking place around collaboration trials with Local Authorities within the West Midlands region.

We have representatives on national digital boards to better understand and influence the wider needs. In doing so, we are looking to shape the possibility of national Fire solutions that have the potential to cross over into other blue light services.

We have introduced new ways of working for Digital activity across our 3PT Portfolio. Regular reports now plot progress against the agreed plan and provide rationale for any deviation.

This is key as demand regularly outstrips capacity and prioritisation of work is now a more open, transparent and inclusive process.

There has been continual service improvement in the Digital and Data Teams with the area currently undergoing a restructure to ensure efficiency. As part of this work we are providing our staff with digital skillsets that have previously been provided through consultants.

As we continue to attempt to strike the right balance between usability and security we have built our systems across a mixture of in-house, Office 365, Back Office and specialist products to enhance the service to our communities.

These front-end services are enabled by a digital infrastructure that is fast, secure and supports mobile working and a management of information approach that reflects legislation such as GDPR.

As we continue to enhance our Digital Transformation, we are constantly looking to maximise our return on investment to date and extract value from the latest technologies that continue to develop at an ever increasing pace of change.

We have made good progress in our Digital Transformation and collaboration, but we still have some older legacy systems that need to be addressed.

The focus for Digital Transformation in the next financial year is around modernising our emergency response systems, operational staff applications and an improved data centric approach.

Our emergency response systems are in need of modernisation and can bring better ways of working and more efficient processes to our front-line staff.

Our operational workforce has shared frustrations around some of our legacy applications. To address this, we will be working towards an environment where staff can manage their workloads from a single, modern platform.

To enable enhanced evidence-based decision making an improved data centric approach is needed. We will be enhancing our gathering and sharing of meaningful information, only capturing data that is needed and used.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

   In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

   There are no direct legal implications.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

   There are no direct financial implications.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

   There are no environmental implications

BACKGROUND PAPERS

https://localdigital.gov.uk/declaration/
https://localdigital.gov.uk/commitments/

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Phil Loach
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix A - Local Digital Declaration

Introduction

This declaration affirms our collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it. It commits us working on a new scale to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens
- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

This joint endeavour was initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK. We invite all local authorities and the organisations we collaborate with to join us by signing the Declaration and committing to deliver a first action from which we can all benefit.

The opportunity

Never before has it been possible to collaborate so effectively, to deliver services across so many boundaries, to interrogate our data so insightfully, to realise such great efficiencies, and to reshape public services for the benefit of all while retaining local sovereignty.

Great work has already been done to transform our services using digital tools and technology. But we have an opportunity to do more.

Our ambition

We want to co-create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where technology is an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for citizens and officials to use. We know that one size doesn't fit all, but by developing common building blocks local authorities will be able to build services more quickly, flexibly and effectively. Only in this more open and flexible market will we unlock our full potential for innovation.

Our ambition requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, and we've agreed 5 principles to help us do it:

1. We will go even further to redesign our services around the needs of the people using them. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.
2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively. This means insisting on modular building blocks for the IT we rely on, and open standards to give a common structure to the data we create.
3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities, and to target our resources more effectively.
4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.
5. We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Our commitments

MHCLG will establish a delivery team to support all Declaration co-signatories in realising this ambition. It will play a leadership role within central government, advocating for the approach set out in this declaration. It will work with councils as equal partners to create the tools and conditions for reform, delivering common technical patterns and routes to procurement for core services. And, as part of a collective effort alongside local government networks, it will help local authorities find out about priority projects that support this mission and support the continued growth of the local digital community.

In addition, each co-signatory will commit to the following activities:

Our leaders, service managers, board members and politicians will:

- Make sure that digital expertise is central to our decision-making and that all technology decisions are approved by the appropriate

person or committee. This will ensure that we are using our collective purchasing power to stimulate a speedy move towards change.

- Have visible, accessible leaders throughout the organisation (publishing blogs, tweeting and actively participating in communities of practice), and support those who champion this Declaration to try new things and work in the open.
- Support our workforce to share ideas and engage in communities of practice by providing the space and time for this to happen.
- Publish our plans and lessons learnt (for example on blogs, Localgov Digital slack; at sector meetups), and talk publicly about things that have could have gone better (like the GOV.UK incident reports blog).
- Try new things, from new digital tools to experiments in collaboration with other organisations.
- Champion the continuous improvement of cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of our digital services and systems.

Our transformation, information technology and digital teams will:

- Research how to reuse existing user research, service design, common components, and data and technology standards before starting to design or procure something new.
- Build capacity in service-design, so that each service we transform is informally tested by our peers against our national service standard where appropriate.
- Where appropriate every new IT solution procured must operate according to the technology code of practice, putting us in control of our service data, using open standards where they exist and contributing to their creation where they don't.
- Share knowledge about digital projects where there is an opportunity for potential reuse or collaboration with others.
- Work together to establish the trust frameworks we need to safely analyse and share personal data. This will allow us to better serve our shared customers and reduce the need to ask citizens for the same information multiple times.
- Work together to create common solutions that allow us to check people's eligibility for services with central government and others in real time with their consent.
- Take inspiration and ideas from a wide range of sources, and participate individually in communities of practice and interest outside the organisation (for

example, LocalGovCamp, OneTeamGov, and related networks and events).

Appendix B – West Midlands Fire Service Committment

Signed by: Philip Hales on 7th October, 2018
Project commitments:

Commitment 1:

Title: We're seeking to solve prevalent Public Sector issues concerning data collection, dissemination and collaboration that are often attributed to proprietary "system-centric" approaches (vendor lock-in, inflated-costs, complex integrations, prohibitive licenses, barriers to change etc.)

Partners: Our open source approach welcomes input from any organisation, no matter the sector or department (we've had high-profile contributions from a multi-national and Central Government Departments). Potential users of the platform include other Fire Services, wider Emergency Services, Schools, Local Businesses, Local Authorities & Health.

Mission: To develop a modular, open source software platform, built using modern software engineering practices and open standards, that will allow non-traditional developers to create, maintain and share their own data-collection forms and workflows.

Impact: Any end-user can manage their workloads from a single, modern app. This creates an excellent user experience and improves organisational efficiency. Subject matter experts can tune and refine their own processes and data-content to drive continual improvement. Digital overheads are reduced due to a holistic approach to system design, container-based deployment and centralised user-management. Organisations can contribute, shape and improve their core software as they see fit, or use modern API techniques to proxy legacy systems. This approach also helps drive central initiatives such as shared software developments, inter-operability and best practice.