
Decision Maker: **EXECUTIVE, RESOURCES AND CONTRACTS POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: **Monday 18 September 2023**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **COUNCIL MOTION- -DIGITAL INCLUSION**

Contact Officer: Philippa Gibbs, Deputy Democratic Services Manager
Tel: 020 8461 7638 E-mail: Philippa.Gibbs@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Tasnim Shawkat, Director of Corporate Services and Governance

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for decision/report and options

At its meeting on 15 May 2023, following a resolution from Full Council, the Committee resolved to "request that Chief Officers review their directorates and take reasonable steps to review digital inclusion within existing policies and report back to the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee by September 2023 if any deficiencies are identified". This report sets out the feedback received from the directorates.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Committee note the information provided by the service departments.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Not Applicable
-

Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (*delete as appropriate*):
 - (2) For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
 - (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
 - (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Not Applicable
 4. Total current budget for this head: Not Applicable
 5. Source of funding: Not Applicable
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (*current and additional*): Not Applicable
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
-

Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: Not Applicable
-

Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Not Applicable
-

Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: Not Applicable
-

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: Not Applicable
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (*current and projected*): Not Applicable
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

3.1 Following the resolution of the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee on 15 May 2023, Chief Officers were asked to review existing digital inclusion policies within their directorates and report back to the Committee if any deficiencies are identified.

3.2 No deficiencies have been identified and the following feedback has been received from the directorates:

(a) Adult Services

3.2.1 The Council provides a range of statutory services for adults, and support to people with living healthy lives, to prepare for ageing well and to support people with disabilities.

3.2.2 Whilst we are moving towards more digital options for people, we will not exclusively be forcing people down the digital route. We want to explore new ways of meeting the needs of and offering support to our residents, including those who are currently well, to those who are on the edge of needing social care, to people who draw on care and those who care for others.

3.2.3 During COVID the use of digital tools and technology was essential within Care Homes. Tools such as iPads allow family, friends, and carers of residents to maintain contact during the lockdown and in the event of an outbreak when visiting was suspended. Assessment monitoring was used to support assessment planning and smart technology was crucial in enabling social care and health professionals to complete virtual ward rounds in the view of GPs during and post-COVID.

3.2.4 We have an award-winning Care Home Partnership, whose response is recognised nationally for helping to save lives during the pandemic.

3.2.5 To ensure there is no digital exclusion we will always have a safety net in place for individuals who do not have access to digital tools or technology, have limited digital literacy, have inadequate digital infrastructure, need support because of their protected characteristics or choose not to use smart technology for whatever reason.

3.2.6 The safety net will ensure face-to-face access to support, information and advice is available with the staff member accessing resources online in the presence of the resident, where appropriate. This will ensure we 'Make Every Opportunity Count' (MEOC) – meaning no-one is left behind.

3.2.7 Our relationships and partnerships with Integrated Care Systems (ICS), Care Providers, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Carers are key to ensuring our residents access the health and social care support and information they need in the right time and place.

3.2.8 We will continue to explore how residents can 'tell their story once' through access to better information, advice and support and coordination of our case management approaches.

3.2.9 The Council has the highest use of the London Care Record across South East London Integrated Care System, which is fundamental in underpinning our approach.

(b) Children, Education and Families

3.2.10 There is no known impact of digital exclusion on service users.

(c) Corporate Services

3.2.11 There is no known impact of digital exclusion on service users.

(d) Human Resources and Customer Services

3.2.12 Customer Services continue to support digital inclusion, by supporting customers via the call centre to either help them navigate on-line services or carry out the transaction for them. The same happens in Reception, with a bank of customer access PCs and tablets where support is available to either help customers self-serve, transfer the skills to be able to self-serve in the future, or process the transaction on their behalf.

(e) Finance

3.2.13 None of our initiatives have led to digital exclusion of Bromley residents or service users.

3.2.14 Any initiatives are subject to an impact assessment process, which covers data protection and equalities. All digital initiatives encouraging customers to self-serve, including those currently at development stage offer the customers/residents the opportunity to access the service by attending the office or to speak to an advisor on the phone.

3.2.15 Our draft vulnerable customer strategy is attached at Appendix 1. This will steer how we support vulnerable customers and ensure they are able to access all services. This will be updated once the work on voice bots and web bots is completed.

(f) Public Health

3.2.16 No Public Health services or initiatives have led to digital exclusion of residents or patients.

3.2.17 Our sexual health service has an on-line option, but there is always an option for patients to visit their GP or go to the clinic. Our local sexual health provider sees walk in patients and also support service users to go online in clinic to order test kits. In addition, there are primary care provisions via GPs and community pharmacies.

(g) Environment and Public Protection

3.2.18 None of the Department's initiatives result in digital exclusion.

3.2.19 With specific reference to parking and the Ringo app, a non-digital option is offered whereby people seeking to park can use their phones in the conventional way and ring the advertised number. They can, if they so wish, do this from their home and pay for a parking session at a particular car park in advance.

(h) Housing Planning and Regeneration

3.2.20 None of our initiatives have led to digital exclusion. In the case of all policy changes these are accompanied by an EIA. The transformation agenda has also had 2 key streams around digital inclusion and accessibility. Eg: the digital infrastructure strategy, the IT systems for planning and digital access as part of the housing self-delivery schemes.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects the rights of individuals and supports equality of opportunity for all. It offers protection in employment, education, the provision of goods and services, housing, transport and the carrying out of public functions. The Act makes it unlawful for organisations carrying out public functions to discriminate against any of the nine protected characteristics

listed in the Act. They must also have regard to the general duties aimed at eliminating discrimination under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The protected characteristics referred to in the Act include age. The Council has a legal duty under sections 20/21 of the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to address or and remove any disadvantage. Hence the Council will consider suitable alternative service delivery options if reasonable and proportionate. For example many Council services can be accessed digitally via Council Libraries and Resource centres across the borough, and staff are available to help residents/customers to use the digital channels.

- 4.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty imposes a requirement to consider equality and good relations in the day-to-day business and decision making of public authorities. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children/Policy/ Finance/Personnel/Carbon Reduction/Procurement/ Property/Local Economy/Health and Wellbeing/ Customers/Ward Councillors
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Council Minutes – 12 December 2022 Report to Executive Resources and Contracts PDS Committee – 15 May 2023 Executive Resources and Contracts PDS Committee Minutes – 15 May 2023