

Name of Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	<b>19/06/2019</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	<b>Digital Inclusion Update</b>
Purpose of Report:	To brief members and seek views of the Committee on ongoing work to address issues of digital inclusion
Report Owner:	Managing Director
Responsible Officer:	Managing Director
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	There are no matters in this report which relate to an individual ward
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for executive decision
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On 05 December 2019 the committee received a report which set out the council's Digital Strategy and approach to Digital Inclusion, ensuring that all citizens have access to the financial, social and employment benefits of digital services.</li> <li>This report draws attention to how the council has subsequently worked with partner organisations to provide those citizens with the digital skills and access they need.</li> <li>The report sets out options currently being considered by the Get The Vale Online Partnership for inclusion on a revised Digital inclusion plan 2019-21.</li> </ul>	

## 1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That this report and progress made on addressing issues of digital inclusion are noted

## 2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 To give members of the committee an overview of the work being undertaken to support citizens who are not able to use digital and online services due to lack of access or skills.
- 2.2 To enable members of the Committee to consider and provide feedback on this work.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The council's Digital Strategy sets out an ambition to enable citizens to get the services and information they need online digitally by default. This means embracing technology to re-design our services and the way they are provided to citizens.

Agenda Item:

- 3.2** The strategy recognises that not all citizens have the skills or access to digital services and commits the council to "equipping residents with the digital skills and technologies they need to enhance their lives".
- 3.3** 80% of households in the Vale of Glamorgan have access to superfast broadband providing fast and efficient access to digital services
- 3.4** The council works collaboratively through the Get The Vale Online (GTVO) partnership to address issues of digital inclusion. GTVO is chaired by Digital Communities Wales and is comprised of Newydd Housing Association, Job Centre Plus, Castleland Community Centre, Royal National Institute for the Blind and Digital Champions representative in addition to council representatives from 50+ Forum, Customer Relations, Supporting People, Vale Homes and Library services.
- 3.5** GTVO targets activity towards those citizens who are most likely to be digitally excluded - older people, social housing tenants, economically inactive, people with disabilities and those in in-work poverty.

#### **4. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 4.1** The main way in which GTVO provides citizens with digital skills is by training at "drop-in sessions" at various locations across the county. These are run by 27 volunteer digital champions (trained by Digital Communities Wales) who contributed a total of 1138 hours. 307 unique participants attended the sessions and 100% reported that they felt more confident in using a digital device and 89% (272) reported that they now access the internet more regularly (data from 2018).
- 4.2** In July 2019 GTVO will launch Wales' first scheme to lend iPads to library customers to provide accessibility and improve digital skills. Each library will have 2 tablets to loan out with 8Gb of data download available per month and will be prebuilt to allow quick start-up to encourage customers to start using the tablets quickly. The scheme will be rolled out in rural areas of the county in the first instance.
- 4.3** Tablets will have security features that will restrict access to appropriate content and will notify customers and library staff if the customer attempts to access inappropriate content. Library staff will delete all content and user information when each tablet is returned.
- 4.4** Library staff will be able to track and if necessary disable tablets in the event that they are not returned or there is an indication that they are being used inappropriately. Additional security features include each tablet being inscribed with a unique identifier.
- 4.5** This scheme builds on existing services offered by libraries such as digital access via PC suites and lending of eBooks and eMags from libraries, which have more than doubled to over 18,000 in 12 months.

## Agenda Item:

- 4.6 Newydd Housing Association have begun a pilot to use Amazon Alexa devices in Care Homes and Sheltered Housing to address issues of social isolation and promote independence. The results of this pilot will be reported to committee in the future.
- 4.7 Citizens Advice are now providing support to citizens claiming Universal Credit under their "help to claim" initiative, funded by the Welsh Government. Under the scheme staff members will assist citizens in making an application on line using Chrome Books.
- 4.8 In addition, the councils Housing department has been providing training and support to tenants to access digital services. Digital Inclusion sessions have been provided across 5 community hubs, supported by Adult Learning team and Volunteer digital champions. At the time of this report information about the number of tenants who have received training is not yet available
- 4.9 The GTVO partnership is currently in the process of producing a Digital Inclusion Action Plan for 2019-21 to shape and priorities its activities. Proposals under consideration include:
  - 4.9.1 Working with armed forces organisations to address issues of digital inclusion and to create a source of digital champions
  - 4.9.2 Work with local partners to understand and address the scale of digital exclusion in the traveller community
  - 4.9.3 Work with council services to offer front line council staff the opportunity to improve their own digital skills and become digital champions, able to support citizens in accessing council and other services digitally.
  - 4.9.4 Develop a system for production of management information, identification of outcomes and benefits realisation
  - 4.9.5 Ensure that all work undertaken by council departments and partners in this area is captured and resources utilised efficiently

## **5. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 5.1 The issues relating to digital inclusion are being addressed collaboratively, maximising use of resources and helping to ensure that solutions are sustainable
- 5.2 Activities being undertaken under the auspices of GTVO and by council departments to provide access to online services have a preventative impact in that they ensure citizens have access to sources of employment, help address social exclusion and address the poverty agenda by ensuring citizens have access to the best rates for utilities, lending and other services.

Agenda Item:

## **6. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

**6.1** There are no financial implications

### **Employment**

**6.2** Providing digital skills to citizens and staff increases employment opportunities.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

**6.3** Ensuring equal access to digital services for all citizens contributes towards the equalities agenda,

## **7. Background Papers**

None