

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION
by
COUNTY COUNCILLOR RACHEL POWELL
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND CULTURE
December 2021

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REPORT TITLE: *Digital Story of Powys: Cultural Services Digital Strategy*

REPORT FOR: Decision

1.	<u>Purpose</u>
1.1	The COVID-19 pandemic has made Cultural Services re-evaluate the way services are delivered to users, and it is recognised that a lack of strategy and understanding around the benefits of using digital technologies is preventing the service meet its wider strategic objectives. In response to this Powys Cultural Services has developed a Digital Strategy.
1.2	The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Powys Cultural Services Digital Strategy as set out in Appendix A.
2.	<u>Background</u>
2.1	<p>In March 2020 COVID-19 lockdown restrictions forced the Council to close libraries, museums and archives in Powys. With only limited public access to onsite facilities, services had to rapidly develop and change. There was a significant increase in use and membership based around the digital offer and the e-library was promoted as the safe way to enjoy reading and library resources. Usage in April 2020 compared with usage in April 2019 revealed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• e-audio downloads increased by 87%• Loans of e-books increased by 110%• Active users of Borrowbox increased by 81%
2.2	During the pandemic free access to Ancestry.com greatly promoted and stimulated interest in family history research, and Powys Archives has seen a significant increase in queries from researchers wanting further online access to collections and resources.

2.3	In December 2020 Powys Cultural Services secured funding from the Welsh Government Cultural Service Fund to develop a digital strategy to further enable and enhance online access, community engagement and transactional services, and to enhance digital resource, capability and capacity.
2.4	In January 2021 an external specialist was commissioned by Cultural Services to undertake a review of current digital provision; to complete a scoping study and sector evaluation and prepare a strategy document which sets out options and recommendations on the future operation and development of digital services. The digital strategy appears in appendix A.
3.	<u>Advice</u>
3.1	The Cultural Services digital strategy, <i>Digital Story of Powys</i> now provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic direction for Cultural Services in terms of digital delivery of services, including development of activities, skills and resources that equip the service to continue to deliver and develop during the COVID-19 recovery period and into the future. • Links to and supports Powys County Council's digital strategy; Digital Powys 2019-2025 which has the following vision: "<i>embracing new technologies to improve our customers' experience</i>".
3.2	This report seeks the Portfolio Holder's approval of the Digital Strategy for Cultural Services.
4.	<u>Resource Implications</u>
4.1	In addition to revenue budget which is already allocated to digital provision within the service, it is proposed that this is supported and enhanced through external grant funding opportunities. A Cultural Services <i>Digital Story Strategic Group</i> has been established from current staffing and will oversee the delivery of the strategy. The Group will work closely with ICT to ensure all work programmes align to and support corporate digital delivery.
4.2	The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes that the Strategy sets the direction for the service but as yet the full costs to deliver it are not fully understood. It is expected that any additional funding required will be sourced from external opportunities rather than creating an additional financial pressure on the Council.
5.	<u>Legal implications</u>
5.1	Legal: the recommendations can be accepted from a legal point of view
5.2	The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has

	commented as follows: “ I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report”.
6.	<u>Impact Assessment</u>
6.1	The impact upon service users, staff and other stakeholders will be considered and recorded through individual service assessments.
7.	<u>Recommendation</u>
7.1	It is recommended the Digital Strategy for Cultural Services as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

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