

# **DIGITAL STRATEGY**

## **2014 - 2017**



## Introduction - Overall vision

The overall vision of the digital strategy is to ensure that customers are able to and *prefer to* access efficient services and information easily online, also to ensure the commitment and engagement of staff and members to enable the changes to take place. Changes in the organisation's approach to the way it delivers services will lead to corresponding changes in customer behaviour. Therefore it is important that the organisation can support and maintain these changes with the cultural change and the technology required.

Much technological progress has already been made and the principles in the digital strategy will enable the full benefits of this progress to be realised. As well as benefits for the customer, there will be business benefits to the organisation as a result of successfully encouraging more customers to transact online. The key to encouraging customers to access digital services is to make them easy to use, reliable and preferable to the alternative. Existing contact channels need to remain in place so that customers unable to benefit from self-service are still able to access information and services.

## Links to other strategies

The digital strategy will support the delivery of the priorities of the corporate strategy, most notably, an ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of the residents and the local area.

As a key corporate strategy, the digital strategy has close links to other strategies and corporate policies. Its precursor, the ICT Strategy, includes actions to ensure that we provide trusted and robust ICT that enables the delivery of high quality services to our customers and the driving down of costs through more efficient processes and more effective management of information.

The digital strategy also has close links with the Geographical Information Systems Strategy (GIS) which outlines how the Council will use GIS to allow increased public access to data and to improve productivity and performance and frontline business intelligence.

The Campaigns and Engagement Strategy aims to ensure effective campaigning and engagement with customers so that they understand services available and how to access them. The digital strategy can help achieve these aims and offer new methods of direct communication with customers

## Background and context

The changes required to achieve this vision will have huge implications for the way in which we deliver services. There have been a number of external and technological changes which have influenced the development of this strategy and some work has already been undertaken.

The advent of the Government's Digital Strategy emphasises the preference for the use of digital access channels over traditional channels. The 'digital by default' approach will serve to endorse the changes proposed in the Council's digital strategy.

The reduction in local government financing has meant that costs need to be reduced whilst still maintaining services. Greater use of digital capability will support this aim.

Customer expectations have altered over the past two decades with the development of the internet. Increasingly, customers are expecting to be able to request services and obtain information online at times and in places that suit them. The success of the move to online applications for parking permits and railcards shows that customers are happy with this transition when they want to access a service. Previously, customers had to wait a number

of weeks between applying for these services and receiving them and feedback indicated that some customers found this wait unsatisfactory. The permits and railcards are now issued within a day of application and negative feedback is no longer being received.

## **Aim**

The purpose of the digital strategy is to set out the objectives and outcomes which will be delivered in order to ensure that customers are able to and are encouraged to access services easily online whilst supporting those who cannot do so.

Digital channels have to be fit for purpose and easy to use. Access is required and the skills to use them. These services need to be reliable in order to build loyalty and confidence amongst users.

The strategy will also outline the changes required to allow effective management of information and online access to it for customers, members and staff. The way we store, process and access information is changing rapidly and the objectives in the digital strategy will help us to realise the benefits of these changes. This strategy will make digital services the services of choice, enabling us to redesign services to respond to customer need.

## **Underlying principles**

There a number of guiding principles which underlie the implementation of the digital strategy:

- The default approach will be on providing digital access to services and information
- There will be an emphasis on customer channel migration towards online services
- The emphasis will be on achieving end to end digital completion of transactional processes
- Services will be designed to work seamlessly through the digital and non-digital stages of a process
- Processing and sharing information will make maximum use of technology available
- The need for non-digital storage of information will be removed
- Information will be up-to-date with service areas having clear responsibility for this
- New job descriptions will actively promote the use of digital systems in all aspects of work

## **What it means for the organisation – customers, staff and the Council**

The digital by default approach will ensure that all services and information are, as far as possible, available fully online and are easy to use. The actions required to ensure delivery of the digital strategy will have an impact on customers, members, staff and partners. We need to give staff and members the knowledge, skills, tools and the confidence to maximise opportunities available in moving to digital delivery of services. It will mean changes to the way we use the technology available and changes to our working practices. It will also help to realise a number of benefits for the Council and for customers.

Consideration needs to be given to the types of information available as this information needs to be able to be accessed quickly and easily. Data quality and integrity needs to be ensured and the information available needs to be up-to-date. This will ensure the most effective use of this information and will help to foster confidence in those accessing it.

Digital information provides more effective business continuity in case of a disaster. The measures in the ICT strategy to upgrade disaster recovery provision will be more fully realised if all information is stored in a digital format. This will reduce risk to the Council.

Business benefits will be seen in productivity and performance improvements in a number of ways. There will be increased migration of customer contact away from the more traditional channels of face to face and telephone to the more cost-effective online and self-service channels. Better use of technology and management of information will also help to reduce costs. Back office transactions and processes will be more streamlined.

Digital information and ways of working will enable better business intelligence and so aid more effective service planning. Greater emphasis on capturing and storing information electronically will enable the development of online reporting and statistical analysis and the sharing of this information across services.

## Technical capability

An understanding of the capability of customers to use online services is key to providing services in the most effective way. Based on national comparisons, around 67% of households are likely to have internet access. Nationally, 83% of all households have online access either at home, work, school, via mobile devices or from other online centres such as libraries or in the workplace. For Chorley this would mean that 38,180 of all households have access to the internet. In addition, mobile internet usage has doubled between 2010 and 2013 from 24% to 53% of the population.

In a postal survey of residents, carried out in June 2013, respondents were asked about use of the internet and their preferred method of contacting the Council. The internet was the most popular means of contacting the Council to make a payment (44.1%) and to get information or advice about a Council service (40.3%). The majority of respondents accessed the internet through home broadband (77.8%), while smaller numbers did so via their mobile phone (38.6%) or at work or school (31.3%). Of respondents who contact the Council through the internet, the majority (60.8%) indicated that they use the internet to access Council services or information. Of respondents who reported having access to the internet but did not use the internet to access services or information from Chorley Council, 46.5% indicated that this was because they 'prefer to talk to people' and 43.5% that this was because they were 'not aware of services that are available on the website'.

Information from a recent Lancashire County Council survey suggests that significant access issues remain around technological knowledge and skills, basic skills and access to and costs of IT equipment.

All this information suggests that action to raise awareness of the online services available and where and how to access them will increase take-up and help to realise efficiencies. It is also clear that assistance and alternatives must remain available for those customers unable to use the online contact channels.

## Delivering the strategy

The delivery of the digital strategy revolves around four key areas.

1. **Information:** A review of the way information is held, accessed and presented is currently underway as part of the ICT strategy. These developments will provide more accessible and well-managed information on which to base the improved delivery of services. Information will also be shared internally across the organisation making it more easily accessible. The review includes the launch of My Ward, improvements to the Land Charges service, a reduction in printing, the extension of the use of GIS and EDMS, a review of information systems for Members and a review of letters to customers as part of the hybrid mail project.

2. **Redesign of service delivery:** The redesign of our service delivery based on how information is available and can be accessed. The ICT strategy will enable this change in service provision. There will be a shift from all channels to e-channels. The changes will be about more than merely replicating the current way of providing the information or service. Speed and convenience of access will be key.
3. **Cultural change:** Encouraging and inspiring the cultural change required to move to a digital first approach. We will need to raise awareness of what is available and promote the benefits for customers and staff.
4. **Ability and Capability:** A consideration of both the ability and the technical capability of customers. As well as being confident that customers are able to access services easily online we need to ensure that support is given to those customers unable to use digital channels and those customers without the technical capability are signposted to the relevant places. Consideration also needs to be given to the customer's propensity to use digital options.

## Key Actions

The delivery of the strategy will take place over three years. The key actions below will be incorporated into work packages on a service by service basis. The first year will concentrate upon two areas. These will be the consolidation of the services and processes which have already been migrated into Customer and Transactional services and the Revenues and Benefits service.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. **Information will be stored digitally across all service areas**  
The detail of the technology which will enable this is outlined in the ICT strategy. Included will be extensive use of CRM, EDMS, MyShare and GIS. Work will be continued to ensure that storage of and access to customer and service information is on a digital basis.
2. **Introduce online applications for all services**  
A number of online application forms are already in use for high volume services. Where online application channels already exist these should be the default application method. Online forms will be developed in-house for service areas where it is not currently available.
3. **Review and redesign non-digital processes and transactions**  
Some remodelling and redesigning of current transactions and service delivery will be required to enable seamless end to end processes and the transition to online capability.
4. **Capture customer information digitally**  
Work will be undertaken to ensure that comprehensive customer details and information received by both self-service and assisted digital contact is easily and readily available and can be shared across services. Email contact will be replaced with structured information gathering via the use of website forms and My Account.
5. **Provide service related information in a digital format**  
The website and My Account will become the primary source of information for customers. The work done on removing leaflets will be extended. The website will also increasingly become the knowledge base for frontline staff dealing with customer queries.

## KEY ACTIONS

- 6. Survey and consult with customers electronically**  
Extend the use of digital systems to market services and consult and gain feedback on services.
- 7. Maximise the use of legacy systems**  
Ensure that the technology available within any legacy systems is used to transact with customers and internally where this is the most effective and efficient manner.
- 8. Review all outgoing correspondence**  
Work closely with services to review whether outgoing correspondence is necessary and then whether it can be provided digitally. Review the value of multiple contacts to customers chasing up information.
- 9. Use external websites wherever possible**  
Where information or an application process is available on an external website this will be accessed rather than duplicating a process or maintaining a separate set of information. Further consideration will be given to working with third parties on service provision as has already been successful for parking permits and rail passes.
- 10. Customers will be signposted and referred to self-service options or other alternatives**  
This will include the extended self-service provision by way of the new terminals in the Customer Services area.
- 11. Remove non-digital options and alternatives where appropriate**  
Some paper forms have been successfully removed from the Revenues and Benefits service. This will be extended to other service areas ensuring that the impact on the customer and on other areas of the service is carefully managed.
- 12. Production and packaging of letters will be external**  
As part of the hybrid mail project the production and packaging of the letters for the revenues and benefits service is to take place off-site. This change is underway and will be implemented for all production of letters where digital communication is not possible.
- 13. Reduce onsite printing**  
The move to digital ways of working will reduce the requirement for documentation to be printed. The production of letters offsite will also reduce this need. This means that savings can be realised by reducing the print machinery currently in use and the associated costs.
- 14. Consider the exceptions and make provision for them**  
Provision needs to be made for those groups of customers who genuinely cannot access online or digital services. Face to face interaction and support will be provided where necessary. In terms of service provision, only a statutory or legislative reason will prevent the provision of digital capability first.
- 15. Review the sharing of customer information**  
Review the internal processes for accessing data so that customer information held by council teams can be shared by other teams.

## KEY ACTIONS

### **16. Extend digital working among visiting officers and officers in the field**

Work already underway to enable mobile working and digital working by visiting officers will be extended into all services. Tablet devices will be considered if clear business benefits can be achieved.

### **17. Use the improved information captured to improve Customer intelligence**

Capturing more customer and service information digitally will allow greater measurement and analysis of customer needs and service planning.

### **18. Internal communication and interactions will be digital**

Following the launch of My Share, My Projects, and the new intranet, maximum use will be made of these systems to ensure digital communication within the Council. This will include electronic screens in meeting rooms.

### **19. Maximise the use of My Account, My Ward and My Parish internally & by members**

All internal and member service requests and reports on progress of jobs will be made on a self-serve basis using the 'My' technology.

### **20. Maximise the use of GIS and mapping technology**

The data sets and information being developed as part of the GIS Strategy will be used to provide better information and to improve frontline business intelligence

## Measuring the success

The delivery of the key actions will be managed through the project management methodology. This means that each action will identify the benefits that will be realised when the work is completed. There will be a series of key measures which will be used to monitor outcomes. Targets for these measures will be set and monitored as key local performance indicators:

- % of applications for services received online
- % of customer contact via online means
- % transactions completed end to end via digital means
- % customers satisfaction by access channel
- Number of customers registered for My Account
- Number of incoming paper-based application forms

## Reporting and Review

The detail of the project delivery will be managed through the project management methodology and the organisational plan. This means that it will be reported on a regular basis to Members through overview and scrutiny, to Strategy Group and the Executive Member. In addition, the progress in delivering the strategy will be reported on a six monthly basis to the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance and to Strategy Group.

The strategy will be reviewed and refreshed at the end of 2014/15 to update the key actions and make any further changes that are necessary.