DIGITAL STRATEGY

Vision

We want to use the best of digital technology to enable our users to access services and systems, effectively and efficiently, in the way they choose, when they choose.

This strategy explains what we're going to do to build a truly digital council over the next three years. It builds on the ambitions in our council plan as we aim to ensure that East Devon is a great place to live work and visit. Becoming a digital council is about fundamentally improving our resident, visitor, business, member and staff experience through simpler, better services and tools.

We have built our strategy around six themes:

1. Customer access and service
2. Digital and mobile work force
3. Digital democracy
4. High-quality, accessible data
5. Digital and Net Zero
6. Responsive, resilient and secure infrastructure and systems

We recognise that, in delivering this strategy, there are some fundamental issues to be aware of:

- The **pace of change** in this digital world is rapid. We want to make sure our services **keep up with the advances in technology** and adopt the best technologies that give the greatest impact to our citizens.
- Realisation of significant savings and improvements for customers are dependent **on fundamental changes to our ICT infrastructure and targeted investment**.
- As **community leaders** we have the opportunity to use technology, such as the Internet of Things, and a wide range of data to improve the **economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our communities**. For example, by mapping air pollution, traffic flows and recycling, providing customers with real time data to inform their decisions on travel choices and improvements to their everyday lives.
- We want to provide our **most vulnerable adults and children** with support that is truly collaborative across services in the area, by working with partner with local agencies in a protected and safe environment.
- We need to **learn from best practice and collaborate** with Government, councils, corporate bodies and specialist organisations.
- We will build on our successful partnership with our ICT partner, Strata, ensuring **effective governance, clear direction and oversight** of our transformation programme are in place.

In essence, this strategy highlights a fundamental shift in emphasis as to how we use IT. In the past it has been about underpinning services, now it is about service delivery.

Moving away from	Moving to
IT enables staff to perform their role	Digital is the enabler of citizen engagement and services
IT as a cost saving activity	Investing in IT will create greater savings elsewhere in the Council
Call centre focussed	The primary channel of delivery is digital
Desktop estate	Mobility first, mobile, laptop and device agnostic
Labour intensive upgrades to large systems	Incremental upgrades and component-based systems. Lo-code, no-code solutions for quick and easy roll out.

1. Customer access and service

What is our aim (outcome) for January 2025	How will we achieve this?
All customers can use our online services	• Build and maintain an evidence base of user needs and behaviour to inform our decisions (informed by our Equality Impact Assessment)to improve our digital inclusion and not leave anyone behind • Adopt an 'inclusive design' approach based on user research, using functions such as voice-activated technology to access our services
Our website is accessible to all	• Ensure that we achieve an Accessibility score of 'Good' for our website • Develop a gateway approach to service design that assesses the needs of those with disabilities and differences
The majority of customers serve themselves using online transactions and information at a time and place, and using the digital technology, that they choose	• Introduce a "digital resource/team" with skills and roles that puts digital at the core of the council, responds to changing customer needs and behaviour, transaction data, best practice in the private sector and councils, advances in technology, and builds responsive services • Continuously develop our services and products, not leaving technology to stagnate where it gathers risk, but continuously improve each service to ensure it keeps pace and allows us to iterate what we can offer • Review the relevance and effectiveness of the Firmstep platform compared to other technologies • Restrict the use of paper for communication and transactions to exceptional circumstances
Customers can record and track progress with their enquiries and customer service advisors can deal with multiple enquiries	• Build a single view of the customer so that customers are able to access all online services via a single entry point and the council can build a holistic view of customer needs • Review of current CRM and roadmap for single view of customer • Expand use of the My Account facility
Face-to-face, telephone and email contact is reserved for high and complex needs	• Improve online access making it streamlined and accessible for all • Developing an inclusive approach that encompasses as many customers as possible • Handle the majority of customer enquiries at the first point of contact by professional customer service advisers or an automated service (Webchat/robots) • Reduce the volume of telephone numbers • Reduce the volume of generic email in-boxes and general email contact

Our customer service, back office support and expertise is organised to meet the aims of our Digital Strategy	• Service and process transformation to redevelop customer service

2. Digital and mobile work force

What is our aim (outcome) for January 2025	How will we achieve this?
Our staff are motivated and have the digital skills and tools to provide high- quality services	• Implement a digital skills assessment and training plan for our staff and ensure all staff have at least the basic competency level, annually assessed? • Support staff and leaders to develop an agile and iterative mindset that encourages innovation and a test and trial culture
Our staff have the digital skills and tools to work collaboratively and effectively whatever their location, which has enabled us to reduce the static desktop estate	• Treat our staff as valued users, using the best of modern services to take the drudgery out of processes' leaving them to focus on external users • Introduce and exploit the use of Microsoft Office 365 within each service, to offer cost savings, efficiencies within key areas of the organisation • Enable staff to work in an agile and flexible way by ensuring appropriate policies and procedures are agreed and implemented • Enable mobile officers to receive cases, input and update via mobile devices • We will review and redesign and automate our internal processes where this improves productivity

3. Digital democracy

What is our aim (outcome) for January 202	How will we achieve this?
Our members have the digital skills and tools to work collaboratively and effectively whatever their location	• Provide members with Office 365 • Provide members with training and skills to fully utilise the suite • Survey members and provide the right devices and access to collaborate • Review Mod Gov and decide 365 migration • Review streaming services and migrate to 365 if possible

4. High-quality, accessible data

What is our aim (outcome) for January 202	How will we achieve this?
Our transactions are improved continuously based on accurate and timely data about demand and performance	• Build data services with the remit to bring insights directly to business areas. • Improve access to reporting tools and devolving data reporting to staff
We know our data requirements and have a clear roadmap is in place	• Create a data strategy that underpins our approach to data, how we use it and keep it safe. Including understanding of core data sets, data quality standards, ontology, extraction, transformation and visualisation • Review use of third-party data and partners data and integration of data into our core data sets
We have a better understanding of the needs of our place and our users from timely, accessible data sets and we use this information to inform our decisions	• Reconfigure our data systems and architecture to ensure easy access to data in or near real time

5. Digital and Net Zero

What is our aim (outcome) for January 202	How will we achieve this?
We have made a tangible contribution to our Net Zero commitment through innovative use and adjustments to our use of ICT	• Implement Strata's Net Zero plan • Build staff calculators for travel decisions • Track staff reduction in use of paper, travel and energy • Track reduction in customer visits to offices • Track Strata's reduction in power use

6. Digital and Net Zero Responsive, resilient and secure infrastructure and systems

What is our aim (outcome) for January 202	How will we achieve this?
We have moved to a Cloud First approach	• Review our IT infrastructure and architecture to ensure it is fit for purpose, identifying and replacing our outdated systems • Optimise the use of the Cloud where it provides user access, cost and other benefits • Use shared and common resources like gov.uk and GDS to provide efficient use of technology
Our infrastructure and systems are modern, flexible, lightweight, secure and integrated	• Review the digital capabilities of our technical teams and the balance of our in-house and outsourced requirements • Consolidate and reduce high volumes of applications and software • Move away from labour-intensive upgrades to large systems to incremental upgrades and component-based systems and 'lo-code, no-code' solutions for quick and easy roll out
We have a financially sustainable technology model	• Early stage investment to develop the infrastructure and architecture that is fit for the future • Develop business plan to show the return on investment over a 5-7 year period (Agilisys report)
Systems are secure and robust	• Security audits carried out • Governance arrangements are in place for cyber security including incident planning, disaster recovery and escalation reporting • LGA funding and training to take place • Dojo training in place