

# East Devon District Council

## Digital Strategy

### Why Digital?

Internet and digital technologies have transformed lives on a global scale and continue to do so at an ever increasing pace.

9 out of 10 UK households now have access to the internet. 89.8% of 16 or over aged residents in Devon are recent users of the internet. Nationally, internet use is on the increase for those aged 65 and over. In 2018, 86% of households of two adults 65+ have used the internet recently. In 2011, the percentage of internet users 75 and over was just under 20% but this nearly doubled by 2016.

Smartphone uptake in the UK has now eclipsed laptop penetration, with 85% of citizens using smartphones surpassing the 78% with laptops; nearly 8 out of 10 adults access internet 'on the go'.

We face the challenge of providing new improved services whilst coping with reduced funding and changes in expectations and demands. Through effective change management the introduction of a '**digital by design**' approach will enable us to deliver the priorities in our **Council Plan** and support our **Transformation Strategy**.

Following in the footsteps of the Government Digital Service (GDS) and many other councils, we know that digital can help us achieve reductions in the cost of public services through increased efficiency, automation and effectiveness. Just in the way GDS has improved processes such as renewing a passport or taxing a car, we need to focus on designing digital processes and solutions with a strong emphasis on user experience (customer journeys) and ease of use.

Additionally, digitalisation provides the opportunity to deliver vastly improved and accessible data that can be used to support better decision making and to predict and plan both tactically and strategically.

The digital revolution also presents unique challenges and we know that we must understand and prepare for these – these include addressing issues such as cyber resilience and cyber bullying.

We do not underestimate the importance of maintaining human interaction in the services which we deliver. What is key here is understanding the demand for council services and what can be moved onto a digital platform and what still needs to be handled with human interaction. We recognise that moving complex processes online can remove the flexibility of a service driven through effective human interaction; whereas common and simple processes delivered digitally can produce significant cost reductions through standard and repeatable responses.

However, we are working towards a Digital East Devon because it will benefit the people of East Devon, develop our district as a place and improve the outcomes that the Council can deliver.

## **Our digital aims**

Our challenge is to provide the right service to the right people where and when they need it and for the best price.

Services across the Council are already embracing technology to deliver their service objectives. Yet organisationally we're only touching the surface of what digital by design can achieve. The opportunity of using technology designed around the customer is huge and will continue to transform the way we deliver services.

By making East Devon **digital by design**, we can provide efficient, cost effective services to a growing majority of residents. By designing and commissioning systems which are simpler to use and provide a good customer experience, the aim is to raise residents' confidence to the point where **digital is their first choice**.

Becoming a **Digital East Devon** means that wherever possible, we'll take advantage of new tools and techniques to design and develop services focused on the customer.

The aims of this Digital Strategy are to:

- Set the scene for East Devon District Council and partners for the future direction of digital services, infrastructure and innovation.
- To be an over-arching document that gives a clear direction of where the Council, working alongside Strata Service Solutions Ltd and our partners, wants to be in the next three years – recognising that we will continually adapt and evolve to keep up-to-date with the latest advances in digital technologies.
- To focus our limited financial and people resources on achieving the best digital outcomes across the whole Council, the district and beyond.
- To address the growing demand for digital services and focus on what residents want in order to deliver outcomes that matter to them.
- To enable the Council, residents, businesses and partners to get the most out of digital.
- To ensure that EDDC shares knowledge and that we collaborate for the greater good of local government and the services it provides.

## **Where are we now?**

We have already started our digital journey and currently have 165 online forms. We believe the Firmstep implementation will provide a step change in our delivery of digital services.

In 2017/18, x people visited our website. There were x of transactions through our existing online forms across a range of services including xxx

X number of our customers have downloaded our mobile app which gives customers information about councillors, waste collections, local news, eating out, planning and the ability to report issues such as animal fouling or graffiti.

We are already working on the introduction of a new set of intelligent online forms which link to the Revenues and Benefits system – this will improve the customer experience because the customer will not need to know in advance what they are entitled to. The system will analyse their responses and advise them accordingly. This capability ensures that we can deliver Universal Credit.

We have delivered a new digital call centre solution to help improve our handling of incoming telephone calls. This provides us with the ability to route the calls to the right person and develop a greater insight into call volumes and patterns so that we can ensure the right levels of resourcing.

We have created online forms to support our new income generating Green Waste service and have updated our smartphone app to include the new scheme.

We are working on a project to better support and facilitate mobile working for our teams in Planning, Building Control and Environmental Health. This will provide access to the business application when they are working on various sites across the district.

## **Where we want to be:**

Our ambition is to be a digitally connected Council and community. Our digital ambition is to become Digital East Devon; a digital council which makes the best use of the opportunities offered by the ever-changing world of technology and to ensure that our mind-set and culture are 'digital by design'.

This means:

- a council that facilitates digital exploitation and innovation;
- a district characterised by a growing digital economy;
- smarter public service.

Our digital approach will be developed to align, support and enable the realisation of our Council Plan and Transformation Strategy and become a common theme running through all of our strategies.

## **Digital principles for a Digital East Devon**

A robust and effective strategy is built on a strong set of principles.

East Devon has signed up for a joint initiative from Government Digital Services (GDS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This initiative aims sets out the following principles and working in partnership with Strata Service Solutions Ltd, the Council will use these to deliver its digital ambitions.

The declaration talks about 'what good digital transformation' looks like and contains five principles that describe what organisations can do to achieve this.

1. We will go further to redesign services around the needs of the people using them – this means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational technologic silos.
2. We will 'fix our plumbing' to break our dependence on inflexible and expensive technology that doesn't join up effectively – this means insisting on modular building blocks for the IT we rely on and open standards to give common structure to the data we create.
3. We will design safe, secure and useful ways of sharing information to build trust among our partners and citizens, to better support the most vulnerable members of our communities and to target our resources more effectively.
4. We will demonstrate digital leadership, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen and challenge all those we work with to embrace this declaration.
5. We will embed an open culture that values and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce, This means working the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations and reusing good practice.

For all new IT solutions the declaration states that they must operate according to the Technology Code of Practice. The criteria defined within the code of practice and how we manage this in partnership with Strata, is set out in Appendix One.

## Priority outcomes for Digital East Devon

Our Digital Strategy for 2018-2021 sets out how we will use our IT and officer resources to optimise service delivery to achieve the following three priority outcomes. These are consistent with our Council Plan and Transformation Strategy, so that our communities, residents, visitors, partners and businesses are served by an innovative district council – Digital East Devon.

### 1 Digital by design

**This means we will make digital by design our priority so that residents and customers get what they need in the most cost effective way possible.**

We will:

- use the principles and priorities articulated in the strategy in all our key IT projects;
- implement Firmstep (digital platform) and work to integrate with key customer facing systems and service teams in line with the project plan;
- put in place a continual process of review and improvement for all our digital transactions based on clear user need;
- change the culture of customer service with more automation and less human interaction where it makes sense, to deliver the very best customer experiences 24/7;
- provide services and information through easy to use digital channels so that these are simple to access and navigate with the same easy experience from their mobile phones as from a desktop, laptop or tablet PC;
- develop communications channels such as Skype for our customers making it easier to engage with the Council;
- ensure that officers and Members of the Council work using the same technology to ensure that we can easily collaborate as 'one council';
- make our front line web content more succinct, searching simpler and results more relevant. We will also improve our review and gatekeeping processes to ensure that content is regularly reviewed and kept up to date;
- increase our self-service options by providing information to customers that is consistent, accessible and up-to-date;
- work with Strata to explore the development of an 'online' reception service so that documents and photos from walk in customers can quickly and easily be entered into a digital workflow without human intervention.
- use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) wherever possible so we can to continue to make it even easier to request services and let us know when things go wrong;
- work with Strata to pilot emerging technologies that may improve customer experiences and workflow such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) chat bots or voice control;
- develop our business intelligence; new performance reporting capabilities and Power BI to enable leaders, managers and employees to make informed decisions with new knowledge and customer insights previously unavailable;

- use analytics of online user behaviour to ensure there is evidence of user need for new developments and highlight where online solutions are not performing as expected.

## **2 Digital Community**

**We will use a digital approach to help people and communities help themselves, ensuring people with different digital needs are appropriately supported and using technology to enable them.**

We will:

- develop customer confidence to encourage those who are currently less digitally active to use digital technologies by helping them with assisted access;
- ensure our most vulnerable service users understand cyber harm and basic prevention techniques;
- improve solutions in response to user feedback and evolutions in user behaviour;
- increase self-service options by providing information to customers that is consistent, accessible and up to date;
- develop opportunities to work with our partners in a variety of ways to ensure digital inclusion.

## **3 Digitally Empowered Workforce**

**This means we will develop a digitally skilled workforce committed to making the best use of digital technologies and data in delivering services and to making informed decisions on the things that matter most to our customers and communities. We will create digital leaders across the organisation with a mind-set that is forward thinking, innovative, customer-focused and agile.**

We will:

- continue to support WorkSmart to facilitate mobile and flexible officers; helping them to streamline their service delivery. This means deploying the right digital tools and systems so they can input data, output data, make decisions in as near real time as possible and collaborate with officers across the district without having to travel;
- explore and providing solutions which support mobile and flexible working such as WhatsApp within emergency planning, instructional and informational film for staff distributed via iPhones and mobile desktop I-pads where appropriate;
- deliver a new mobile friendly intranet;
- increase the awareness of cyber threats and Data Protection and the role employees need to play in reducing risks with particular attention being paid to reducing human error, the threat of malicious emails and weak passwords;

- develop and training digital skills in the workforce to skill staff to make the most of available technology, supporting them in the way they work;
- work with managers to continue to improve the digital customer experience through experimenting and iteration. This means the senior management team championing systems thinking reviews and encouraging a digital mind-set – how can old processes be done smarter using automation? The culture of Digital East Devon will be a culture of digital first and constant improvement where staff feel confident to innovate, explore and trial digital solutions;

#### **4 Digital Place**

Working with other councils, partners and businesses to develop resilient systems – delivering better focused digital public services in a constantly changing environment by working together.

We will:

- work closely with other councils in Devon to support digital developments;
- participating in projects aimed at collecting data from multiple sources (Big Data projects) that enable the development of the region, supporting smarter decision making and investment;
- work with Strata to ensure that we improve systems resilience, making the best use of spare capacity in any of our resources, reducing our exposure to external incidents and increasing our collective capacity to respond;
- promote Open systems or systems which are scalable/aligned to enable collaboration at the appropriate time;
- help to provide the infrastructure for a digital district;
- help to grow digital businesses in our district;
- bring together and analyse data to support regional economic growth and local public sector reform;
- promote ever-faster broadband speeds across the district to assist in crossing the productivity, income, skills and business competitive gaps that exist in East Devon.

#### **Vision beyond 2021**

This Digital Strategy highlights what we aim to achieve by 2021. However, transformation is a continuous process and we need to continue to innovate beyond then.

It's difficult to predict how digital will develop, but we know voice recognition will play a key part. However, rather than thinking about how we adopt specific technologies, we'll take action now to become more adaptable to change and respond quickly to rapidly changing circumstances.

We'll work internally, with Strata and with digital partners to make best use of emerging new technologies. We aspire to demonstrate that local authorities can deliver cutting edge digital services to their citizens.

We'll continue to use systems thinking and technology to **focus on the needs of the customer** and continue to be ambitious and lead innovation to achieve our goals.

## Appendix One – Technology Code of Practice

Code of practice criteria	What does this mean?	Our response
Define user needs	Understand your users and their needs. Develop knowledge of your users and what that means for your technology project or programme.	We start with a systems thinking approach which means that end to end processes are designed around 'what matters' to our customers.
Making things accessible	Make sure your technology, infrastructure and systems are accessible for users.	Our Firmstep implementation will ensure that customers can access services through a customer portal.
Be open and use Open Source technology	Publish your code and use open source to improve transparency, flexibility and accountability.	Strata use open source applications and code as and when appropriate. As an example, we use Umbraco open source content management system for our internet and intranet sites.
Make use of Open Standards	Build technology that uses open standards to ensure your technology works and communicates with other technology and can be easily upgraded and expanded.	Strata use Application Programming Interface (APIs) to integrate systems with 3 <sup>rd</sup> party applications, enabling data to be exchanged efficiently and effectively between the systems.
Use Cloud First	Use public Cloud first as stated in the governments cloud first policy.	Strata have developed a shared infrastructure environment (a cloud environment) connected by a Multiprotocol Label Switching – MPLS directs data from one network to the next to deliver high performance telecommunication networks in a way which connects everything together securely. This environment delivers a consistent desktop environment using VMWare.

		<p>In addition, Strata access traditional hosted cloud services for solutions such as iTrent which is delivered by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party using AWS.</p> <p>Strata's approach is very much a hybrid approach, with a mixture of applications delivered out of Strata's cloud environment and applications delivered via AWS/Azure etc.</p> <p>With over 1000 different applications currently being delivered, it would be impossible for all to be delivered via traditional public cloud.</p>
Make sure things are secure	Keep systems and data safe with appropriate level of security.	Strata takes a security in depth approach, laying protections especially from the internet and also undertakes monthly vulnerability scanning and an annual security testing performed by external security specialists.
Making privacy integral	Make sure citizens' rights are protected by integrating privacy as an essential part of your system.	East Devon and Strata work closely together to ensure data protection requirements and principles are embedded throughout the life cycle of systems and projects.
Share and re-use technology	Promote good practices and avoid duplicated efforts by sharing and reusing services, data and software components.	The whole concept of Strata is to share and re-use technology. East Devon is represented at the Joint IT Steering Group by Karen Jenkins and this group is leading to a reduction in the duplication of effort.
Integrate and adapt technology	Your technology should work with existing technologies, processes	With a set of common standards now developed across Strata and the

	and infrastructure in your organisation and adapt to future demands.	three partner councils, it now means that the technical environment is more adaptable and can flex to meet future demands.
Make better use of data	Consider how to minimise data collections and reuse data to avoid duplications of datasets.	Strata are developing a policy of collect once and use many times for data to allow effective re-use as and when required.
Define your purchasing strategy	Your purchasing strategy must show you've considered commercial and technology aspects and contractual limitations.	East Devon has a clear procurement framework and Strata works closely with the Teignbridge District Council framework and procurement team.
Meeting the Digital Service Standard for Digital Services	If you are building a service as part of your technology project or programme you will also need to meet the Digital Service Standard.	East Devon delivered the revised web content and transactions through its Open for Business project and used the standards outlined in the government's digital strategy.