ICT & DIGITAL STRATEGY

WREXHAM

2020 - 2023

This document is available in Welsh

wrexham
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
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INTRODUCTION BY THE LEAD MEMBER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Councillor David Kelly,
Lead Member for Organisation –
Planning and Corporate Services:

The production of this Strategy is a key element of my portfolio of responsibilities and I am pleased that this document points the Council in the right direction to move forward. We have made so much progress in the ICT and digital areas during the current Covid-19 emergency situation and both Members and council staff have embraced new and modern ways of working.

There is no going backwards and this Strategy sets the direction of the new journey. The Council's previous ICT and Digital Strategy covered the period from 2017-2020 and was approved in June 2017. The main objective was to use the power of digital technology to transform the way the Council works and how we engage and support our communities. I would like to thank all those involved in its successful delivery.

Ian Bancroft,
Chief Executive:

This Strategy builds on the work undertaken over the last three years and during the recent period when the Council has been responding to the demands of home working arising from the current coronavirus pandemic. The objective is to empower our staff with the right technology and necessary support to work more flexibly and cost-effectively reducing the need to enter information into conventional systems when they return to the workplace. This will make better use of their time and will also save money on printing, paper and reduce carbon footprint as less travel will be necessary.

Digital working is far wider than the technology, it is about the collaborative and user-centric approach that digital allows and the opportunity it brings to do things smarter. A Strategy which promotes the continuous improvement of

services using data and business intelligence alongside exploiting new technology can improve outcomes for our service users. This will arise directly for those customers who expect a similar experience from councils as they do from their bank or online retailers where a 24 hour service is available, our next generation of customer will expect to contact us online and is unlikely to consider telephoning or calling into a council reception. Other customers will benefit from the improvements enabling council employees to work digitally when out in the field and focus their attention on those services where technology is not a substitute.

COUNCILLOR DAVID KELLY

LEAD MEMBER -
ORGANISATION PLANNING AND
CORPORATE SERVICES

IAN BANCROFT

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Digital is more than just technology. It is about the collaborative and user-centric approach that digital allows and the opportunity it brings to do things smarter.

The purpose of this document is to define the Council's ICT & Digital Strategy for the next three years and determine how this will contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan 2019-2022. The 'Ensuring a Modern & Resilient Council' priority identifies the need to 'develop a digital council that enables us to modernise the way we work and engage with our customers'. This document will detail the high level strategic direction and plans for the full range of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Digital Service delivery for 2020-2023.

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically shaped the way in which we work, driving change in deploying technologies at a pace never experienced before. It has changed mind sets where customers, staff and elected members have had to find new ways of communicating and going about their daily business. The objectives set out in this Strategy aim to embrace these changes, build on progress made to date and to drive forward Wrexham County Borough Council as a truly Digital First Authority. At a regional level this strategy plays a pivotal role in shaping projects that support the Welsh Government and WLGA to realise their ambitions for a national digital service across Wales. Improved digital connectivity has been identified as the most important factor in the ongoing economic and social transformation of North Wales. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board has a project to aid the development of digital connectivity to match this transformation to 2030 and beyond. The Strategy developed by NWEAB supports the *Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales*, with development funded through the North Wales Growth Bid and other sources of funding.

Digital is more than just technology. It is about the collaborative and user-centric approach that digital allows and the opportunity it brings to do things smarter. By continuously improving services using data and business intelligence alongside exploiting new technology it is possible to improve outcomes. ICT provides the core infrastructure that will help support innovative digital service redesign. A modern, secure and resilient infrastructure will underpin successful development and safeguard systems that are fit for the future. Any opportunities for development should be considered in line with a return on investment and prioritised to deliver the biggest impact both for the Council and the wider community.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Like many local authorities, recent years have highlighted an increased demand on services within an environment of reducing resources and limited budget.

Customer expectations are changing all the time and residents now expect a similar experience from councils as they do from their bank or online retailers. Our next generation of customer will expect to contact us online and is unlikely to consider telephoning or calling into a council reception. A timely response, access 24 hours a day 7 days a week and regular updates have become the norm.

Technology is rapidly changing as a response to customer demand and we need to embrace the opportunity this brings.
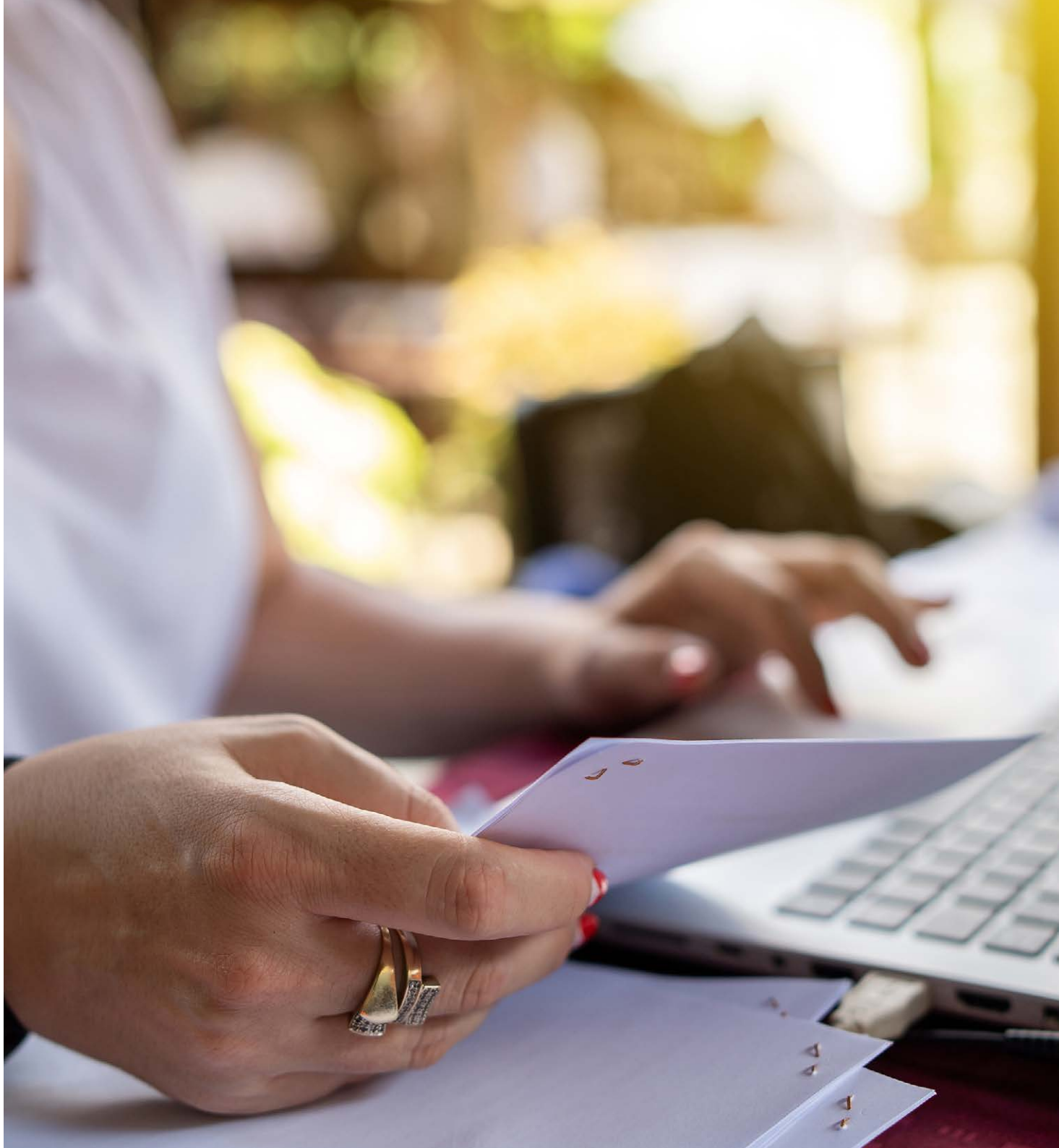
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Despite customer demand for online services our data has shown that a high percentage of in-person processes remain. Although there are some good examples of digital innovation there are also many areas where old ways of working have been built into new technology. There is limited integration between systems resulting in manual double handling and often process redesign is not an inclusive process involving all stakeholders. It is essential that services work together on user-centric design that shapes the customer experience.

ICT continues to modernise practices and processes ensuring applications and data reside on supported and secure systems. Geographically, some areas of the County Borough also experience poor broadband connectivity and both demographic and socioeconomic factors can determine who and where it is possible to get online. The benefit of collaborating with our partner organisations, voluntary groups and the wider community is fundamental to improving digital engagement across the area.

Despite the challenges identified above it is important to understand the positive developments that have already taken place within both the Council and the wider community. Covid-19 has accelerated technical development within the Council and helped to change the behaviour of our customers. Statistics show a customer shift during lockdown towards contacting the Council online, with our reception areas closed customers have used other means to make payment, report an incident or apply for a service:

Customers who have signed up to:

MyWrexham
MyAccount
Save time. Do it online.

End 18/19 – 19,049
End 19/20 – 49,507
31 August 2020 – 60,520

Three years ago significant investment was made into a customer digital platform that has the potential to become the front end of the organisation. This has functionality to create seamless integrated processes with automated status updates, digital task workflow and management information reporting. The Council has also recently gone live with a new website, content is now easier to find and meets accessibility standards. The website should be the first port of call for customers wishing to contact the council.

Implementation of a fully agile cloud contact centre is currently underway. This will enable our Customer Service teams to work flexibly and deal with enquiries by telephone, email or web chat in the same way. This system will further help them to support customers in moving to online communication channels and will be a crucial step in enabling us to explore shared services with other Welsh Councils.

Work is no longer a place but an activity that can be done at home, in an office or in the field….

The Modern Ways of Working programme is driving change throughout the organisation and Digital is one of the five work streams of this programme. Reviewing our accommodation also helps to provide the opportunity to look at how we work as well as where. Work is no longer a place but an activity that can be done at home, in an office or in the field but this move to an agile workforce has to be supported by digital technology and processes that are fit for purpose.

Wrexham has also recently invested in a new purpose built datacentre comprising of a generator, dual Uninterrupted Power Supplies (UPS), fire suppression, CCTV, High Volume Air Conditioning (HVAC) and environmental monitoring which provides the authority with a secure and robust environment to support its key ICT infrastructure. Dual links out to the internet have also been commissioned and feed into separate authority owned premises to provide resilient communications channels.

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Digital isn't an option – it's **THE** option.

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VISION:

Our digital ambition is to re-imagine service delivery that will meet the future needs and challenges of our communities and support the Council to work efficiently and in innovative ways.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this Strategy reflect the Council Well-Being Objectives that the Modern & Resilient Priority contributes towards:

O1 – CONTINUE TO MODERNISE SERVICES

O2 – SUPPORTING A RESILIENT COUNCIL

RESILIENT:

Develop a robust infrastructure that can meet any future challenges or opportunities. Everything from new technology, reduced budgets or a worldwide pandemic

SIMPLIFY:

Our internal processes to drive efficiency at every opportunity

HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

PROVIDE:

Services that customers opt for digital by choice. Empowering staff, customers and the wider community to embrace new technologies to support them to work and live in Wrexham

CULTURE:

Digital first, a workforce that has skills and technology to embrace changing needs, structures that encourage innovation and collaboration, co-design

DELIVER:

A modern, fit for future service for our customers and communities – developing innovative digital services that are user-centric and improve the customer journey

CUSTOMERS & COMMUNITY –

A DIGITAL COUNTY BOROUGH

To become a truly digital Council we need to adopt a holistic approach to everything we do. Developing as a smart County Borough could include innovation such as digitised signage, installing broadband in council owned housing, incentives for private landlords and encouraging tech start-ups to area. It is therefore vital to think digital across all services.

Increasing community capacity and enabling groups to be self-sustaining can also be supported by digital. Helping groups to raise income through digital platforms such as crowdfunding will reduce reliance on the public purse and enable communities to take the lead on improving and shaping the places in which they live.

It is essential that we support our customers to self-serve. We understand that not everyone has access to digital processes as they may not have a device, access to the internet or the digital skills to use it. By identifying ways to enable access to digital through libraries, GP surgeries, banks or leisure centres for instance it will be possible to increase opportunities for everyone in the community. By working with our partners and the voluntary sector it will be possible to identify initiatives to help support and provide digital skills based learning.

Through regular consultation and engagement with our customers we will ensure that they recognise the benefits of accessing our services digitally. This will form part of a focused plan to move customers from face to face and telephone contact to digitally enabled channels.
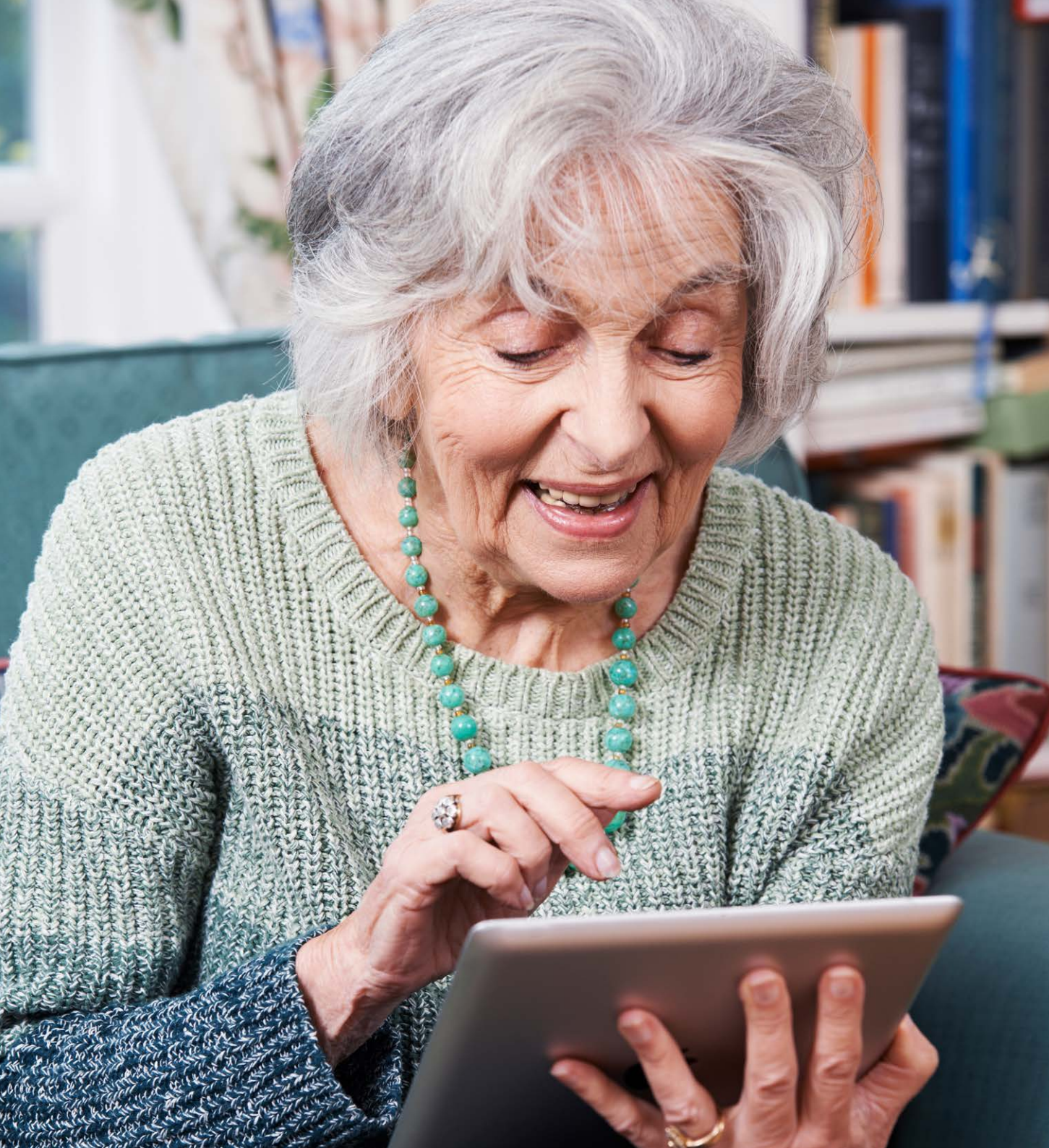
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DIGITAL DESIGN:

The way in which we design our ways of working should meet the needs of individuals, businesses and our partner organisations. Removing expensive ways to pay, having 24/7 access with updates on progress when reporting or applying for services and one view of the customer via the digital platform will allow for a streamlined, easily accessible customer journey that is also more efficient for the Council.

Rather than digital services by default it would be better that our digital processes are so user-friendly they become the option of choice. Merely reducing traditional channels and replacing them with ineffective digital ones creates failure demand and isolated customers who find it hard to get the services they need. Therefore, our approach to building new ways of working should incorporate end to end process redesign with the user experience at centre. By creating streamlined, cost-effective digital processes that are easy to use and remove waste from the process will reduce demand on our limited resources.

All online council services and official information should have a consistent user experience, share a single design system and interaction patterns. We will regularly involve customers in focus groups and user-testing to ensure our new processes meet their needs and that the technology is fit for purpose.

ACCESSIBILITY:

The council's website and digital services will be built with re-use in mind, so that our information and services can easily be found through search engines and are accessible using third party devices such as voice assistants and assistive technology.

All online content will be in the user's language of choice, Welsh or English, throughout the end to end process.

All council information is in open and accessible formats by default, this removes any barriers to access for people with disabilities.
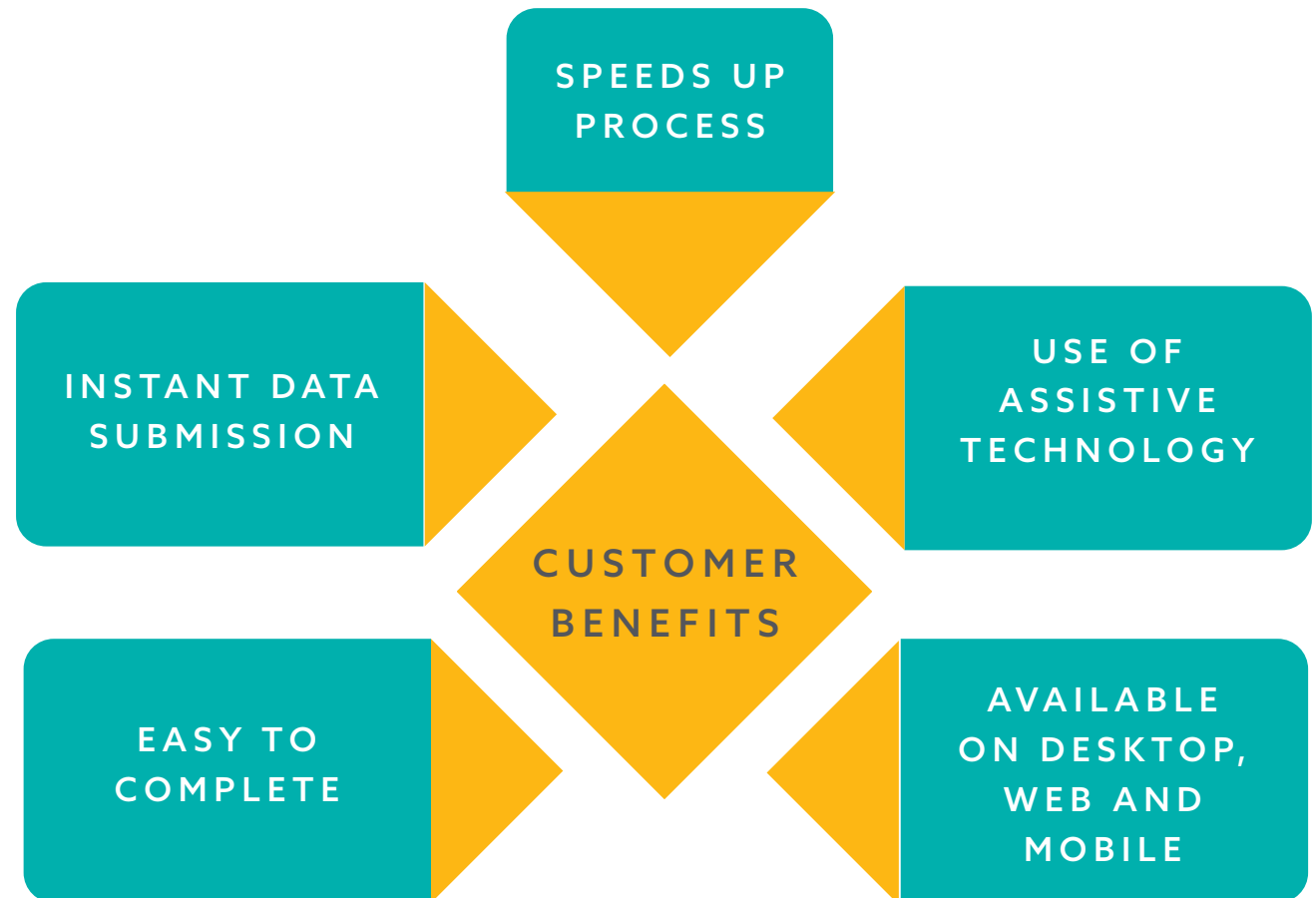
REDESIGNING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

WORKING WITH PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY

ENABLING CUSTOMERS TO SELF SERVE 24/7

LEARNING FROM CUSTOMERS

FEEDBACK
CONSULTATIONS
COMPLAINTS
FOCUS GROUPS

SPEEDS UP PROCESS

INSTANT DATA SUBMISSION

USE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

CUSTOMER BENEFITS

EASY TO COMPLETE

AVAILABLE ON DESKTOP, WEB AND MOBILE

HOW WE WORK – A DIGITAL COUNCIL

We need a workforce with the skills to do their jobs in a digital world. We need leaders who understand digital, its potential and benefits both for users and the authority as a whole.

In order to further develop digital leadership our elected Members and senior management will have a key role as digital champions across the Authority. The Digital team, ICT and Human Resources will also work closely together to develop a range of initiatives that support digital skills development at all levels. This work will also be reflected in the Organisational Development Strategy.

We already collaborate closely with the private and public sector and we can benefit from cutting edge technical expertise and share learning across Welsh local authorities.
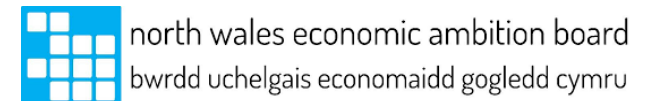
SKILLS:

Developing the digital skills and capability of individuals is critical. Teams need to be confident and knowledgeable when using technology and they need to understand the benefits that new ways of working can bring to their role. When officers are comfortable with digital technology they can support our customers in using it too.

Recruitment and retention of staff with the skills to support and develop technology, along with ongoing investment to keep up with technological advancements, is essential to maintain a digital platform that meets the needs of future customers.

Empowering our staff with the right technology and necessary support to work more flexibly and cost-effectively will reduce the need to enter information into conventional systems when they return to workplace, making better use of their time. This will also save money on printing, paper and reduce our carbon footprint as less needless travel will be necessary.

Developing the digital skills and capability of individuals is critical.

CHANGING TOGETHER:

The most successful digital redesign projects come from the service itself. This is when the business takes an objective view of their current processes and work with the specialists in the ICT and Digital teams to develop digital solutions that are fit for purpose. Everyone should own digital and be given the opportunity to become part of future solutions.

Critical to success is the need to digitally empower the workforce. Through involvement in the redesign of processes, use of mobile technology and immediate access to systems wherever they are, with the ability to update and progress work from the field, an agile workforce will be developed.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Internal communications tools are also needed to support these new ways of working. Digital platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and Trello, access to blogs, video and live chat encourage conversation across an agile workforce. Without this there is a risk that officers become isolated and outputs are reduced. Digital communication makes it easier for people to work together without barriers and allows for innovation, experimentation and collaboration.

We also need to continue developing our external communications. Wrexham is recognised in local government circles for its use of digital marketing techniques – particularly its blogging, customer-focused content, use of analytics and its 'conversion-focused' approach to communicating with residents. But not everyone in the organisation has been part of this journey, and at times we still have an old-fashioned 'PR' mind-set, where we centre our communications around our own needs, instead of our customers'.

Developing skills and digital leadership across the organisation will increase understanding and support for our external digital comms, helping us further improve the way we communicate with local people...and helping us find solutions to new challenges like fake news and harmful misinformation.

REDESIGNED EFFICIENT PROCESS

DIGITALLY EMPOWERED STAFF

UPSKILLED, TRAINED AND KNOWLEDEGABLE.

AGILE WORKFORCE

IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO SYSTEMS ANYWHERE, ANYTIME.

EFFICIENT IT SYSTEMS + **DIGITALLY EMPOWERED STAFF** + **MOBILE WORKING TECHNOLOGY**

=

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY + **REDUCED COSTS**

DATA:

There is a wealth of data held across our council services in a large number of systems. The ability to utilise this data to drive decision making is dependent on having integrated systems and adequate business intelligence reporting tools. Data needs to be in common and usable formats so that it does not have to be manipulated before we can use it.

Collecting and analysing the right data will drive performance, and inform the design and delivery of services. Predictive analytics based on previous customer interactions can give a tailored service that leads customers to feel valued and informed about things that matter to them. The ethical use of data can be used to proactively deliver services rather than adopt a reactive approach. Early intervention can prevent costly mistakes, avoid problems occurring and improve the health and well- being of our communities. Sharing data with our partners can also lead to improved outcomes, particularly within services such as Health and Social Care.

Continuous improvement and prioritisation of process redesign needs to be determined by demand and the data held can help to evidence this, by focusing on those areas that deliver the greatest business impact through digitization real transformation of service delivery can happen.

Collecting and analysing the right data will drive performance, and inform the design and delivery of services.

HOW WE WILL SUPPORT THIS – ICT FRAMEWORK

ICT is the enabler to business change and as such a strong infrastructure will help to build confidence in digital services ensuring our customers, staff and elected members gain trust in the benefits of the digital age.

However continuous investment within ICT and Digital Services will be required to ensure this is driven forward and that services have the right tools to modernise their service sectors. This investment within ICT and Digital should not be taken in isolation of one another as this can often prove costly. A holistic approach to change is required so that the bigger picture is always in focus.

Immediate projects that embrace Modern Ways of Working include:

• Migration to Microsoft Office 365 and the implementation of Microsoft Teams

• Improving agile working by ensuring an increasing number of staff who can work remotely

• Implementation of softphones so that staff members have access to their extension number to make and receive calls from their laptop whether in the office or at home.

ICT will continue to analyse applications to understand which workloads benefit from cloud technologies and those that perform better from our on premise datacentres, thereby adopting a hybrid cloud philosophy. Software asset management needs to be continually reviewed in order to maximise the functionality we already have. It is appreciated that financial considerations remain paramount and this needs to be balanced with continued development and keeping our technology up to date. Therefore, by ensuring we continually review our systems we can further deploy functionality that we have or reduce those applications that are not being used.

We will be working towards Cyber Essentials+ accreditation to ensure systems and processes are managed in line with industry standards and best practices to provide cyber resilience. Ensuring a secure and stable infrastructure builds trust to channel shift our work requests online. Poor experience leads to a lack of trust followed by a return to traditional contact methods. A thorough review of cyber security tools will be undertaken to provide services with industry standard defence and alerting tools.

The Council will also continue to support the implementation of Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) and work as part of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) to support greater and faster broadband connectivity across the county and in rural locations. This will support both the businesses and households of the county to thrive in a digital era and provide access to services that make a difference to everyday lives.

Horizon scanning where the ICT and digital industry is heading ensures we continue to understand technical trends and advancement. It will then be possible to exploit new technologies and develop these to identify new and innovative ways of delivering services that fit with our direction of travel.

It will also be important that customers should be able to access digital services through a device of their choosing, be it a smart phone, virtual assistant AI technologies (such as Amazon Alexa and Echo Dot), tablet or traditional laptop and these services must meet accessibility and Welsh language standards.

HOW WE WILL MONITOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS STRATEGY

USER SATISFACTION STATS FROM WEB FORMS

FEEDBACK ON WEBSITE

ANNUAL CS SATISFACTION SURVEY

STAFF ENGAGEMENT/ CONSULTATION

ICT MEASURES/ TARGETS

ENGAGEMENT WITH MYACCOUNT & GOVDELIVERY

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (IN COUNCIL PLAN)

MEASURE: % OF SERVICE REQUESTS THROUGH SELF-SERVICE RATHER THAN MEDIATED TELEPHONY

MEASURE: % OF CUSTOMERS WHO FEEL IT IS EASY TO ACCESS COUNCIL SERVICES

MEASURE: NUMBER OF SERVICES AVAILABLE TO CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE ONLINE DIGITAL PLATFORM

MEASURE: THE NUMBER OF SERVICE REQUESTS RECEIVED FROM CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE ON-LINE DIGITAL PLATFORM

MEASURE: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH ALL COUNCIL SERVICES A) ALL B) WELSH SPEAKERS

LINKS

COUNCIL PLAN