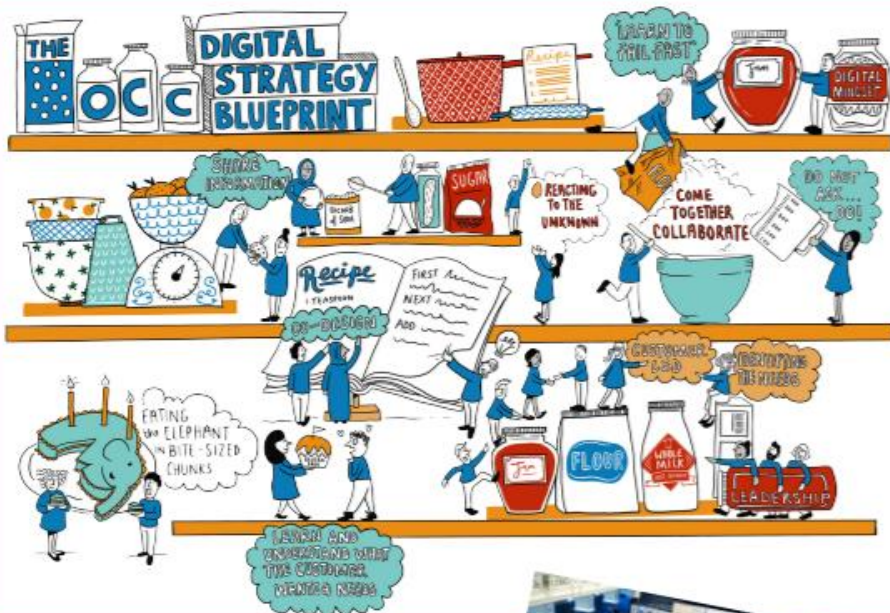# Digital Strategy 2019-2022

A blueprint for how we design and deliver better customer outcomes, through the pragmatic application of digital technologies and other innovative ways of working

Oxfordshire County Council's Digital Strategy: 2019-21

A group of participants from across the Council assembled in Oxford Town Hall with the ambition of co-designing a Digital Strategy.

At the event we:

- Defined our digital vision
- Co-authored a first version of the strategy
- Agreed that the strategy would be at the heart of our service design
- Experienced working together across our day-to-day organisational boundaries

'Our **DIGITAL VISION** is to achieve the **BEST OUTCOMES** for Oxfordshire's 'customers' using digital services and systems that **WORK FOR ALL**, leaving no one behind'

Our Digital Strategy describes how we will:

Organise ourselves to design and deliver good customer outcomes

Use technology and data

Interact with our customers

Ensure access and inclusion

1

Our

Digital

Vision

'Our digital vision is to achieve the best outcomes for Oxfordshire's communities, residents, businesses and visitors (our 'customers') using digital services and systems that work for all.'

Digital - which is the joining together of services, customer experience, technology and data - is a key tool in achieving our ambition for a county where local residents and businesses can flourish. We will continue to invest in our skills, technologies, knowledge and relationships - and we need to combine these in new ways to achieve our strategic goals.

However, we will need to respond to an environment characterised by:

- Customer expectations and needs that are increasingly complex and varied

- Continued funding challenges and reductions

- Legacy technology that is often a barrier rather than an asset

- The ever-increasing velocity of change - and the need to embrace new technology and ways of working ever-more quickly

- The prevalent mix of in-house and 3rd party technologies that are common across local government

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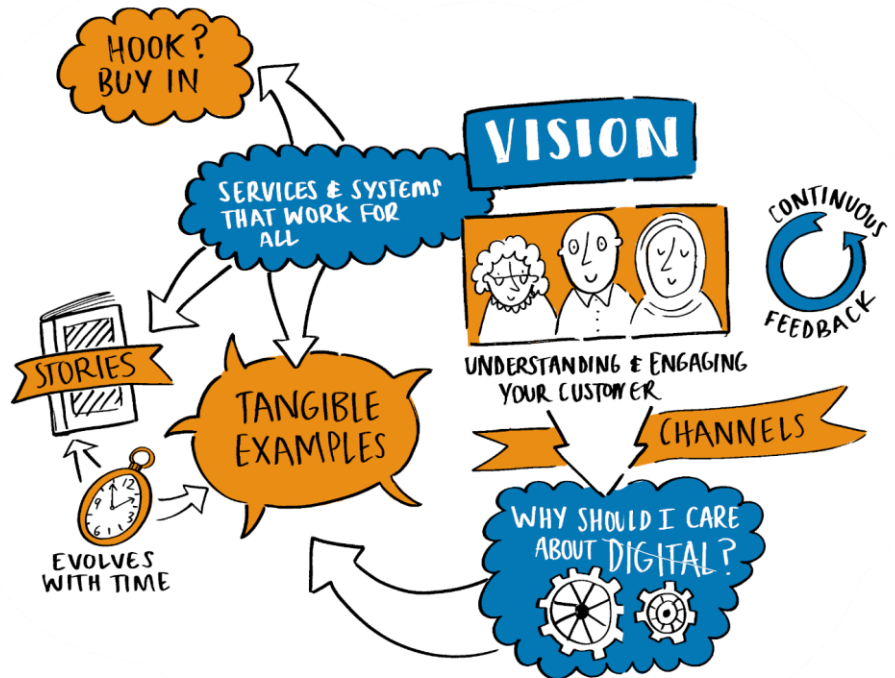
We will be role models for a new set of values, behaviours and ways of working. This will not happen immediately, but we will strive to adopt these and support each other to do so.

How we will deliver our Digital Vision

- We will develop our solutions in line with the Local Digital Declaration (see Appendix A) - which we will sign – and we will share our experiences and lessons learned across the Council, with our local partners and within our wider public service networks.

- Customer engagement and user centric design will be at the core of our digital services so that they deliver improved customer outcomes and, in doing so, relieve Council pressures.

- The way we use and share data is key. We will actively lead initiatives with our local and regional partners and service providers about how we invest in data science and data sharing capabilities, tools and platforms.

- We will encourage, incentivise and trust our staff to experiment and embrace digital change – and arm them with the skills to do so. Our internal processes and behaviours will support our staff to do so.

- The Digital Team will play a central role in supporting the Council to design, select, procure, deliver and support digital solutions – as well as ensuring consistency and adherence to standards.

- Over the next three years we'll take advantage of the tools and technologies that are currently available to us, whilst investing tactically where we need to.

- We will develop our internal capabilities to reflect the mixed economy technology landscape of in house and 3rd party systems that is prevalent across local government.

- Our digital systems will support us to collect better insight, data and customer feedback – which we will use to improve our customer offer, the services we deliver and our policies.

- We will embed our Digital Strategy within the Council's transformation programme, following its agreed design principles (see Appendix B).
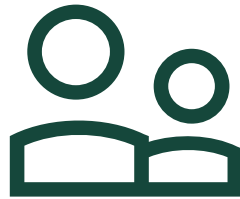
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Digital

Themes

Our Digital Strategy describes how we will:

Organise ourselves to design and deliver good customer outcomes

Interact with our customers

Ensure access and inclusion

Use technology, data and business intelligence

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To meet our customers increasing expectations and the Council's strategic objectives, we need to change the way we design and deliver our services. Digital will allow us to better support our customers, as well as make our internal processes more efficient.

Theme 1: How we will organise ourselves to design and deliver good customer outcomes

In 2021…

- Our primary measure of success will be the benefit and outcomes we deliver to our customers rather than the progress against our own operational targets.

- The way we recruit and develop our people will be aligned to a defined digital mind-set and a defined set of customer centric behaviours and capabilities.

- All our staff will be familiar with, and confident using, the digital tools they need to serve their customers. They will have the time, skill and permission to engage with customers and design solutions that reflect their needs, wants and desires.

- We will be confident in showcasing our outcomes within the Council, to our wider partners and to our customers. We will use digital platforms to share and learn from each other, as well as the wider personal and professional communities that we belong to.

- Working across internal and external organisational boundaries will be commonplace - and we will support each other and share information & resources wherever we can.

- The Digital Team will play a central role in supporting the Council to design, select, procure, deliver and support digital solutions – as well as ensuring consistency and adherence to standards.

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In an internet enabled and consumer driven age, the experience of using our online services must be such that our customers prefer to use them, allowing us to prioritise investment on digital and free up staff to focus on dealing with complex human interactions.

Theme 2: Interacting with customers

In 2021…

- Our digital services will have been designed with a deep understanding of our customers. Customer insight, data collection and feedback will be a central part of our service design.

- We will launch digital services when they are 'good enough' and then quickly improve them, learning as we go, in real time.

- Our website will provide self service access to the vast majority of our services, and customers will be able to find the information they need quickly, easily and without having to contact us.

- Our contact channels will meet our customers expectations of what a 24/7 digital experience is. This will include next generation technologies as they become increasingly prevalent, affordable and proven in a local authority settings (eg AI and voice activation).

- We will routinely tell our customers when there are new services available online, and explain how we have designed and/ or improved those services based on the data we have collected as well as their feedback and involvement.

- Our customers will have a consistent user experience through our digital channels, supported by the application of service and design *patterns* - reusable parts of the user interface that have been tested and subjected to continuous improvement.

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Over the next three years we'll take advantage of the tools and technologies that are currently available to us, whilst investing tactically where we need to.

Theme 3: Using technology, data and business intelligence

In 2021…

● Our technology offer will pragmatically address the mix of in house and third party systems that are commonplace across local government.

● Where appropriate, every new IT solution procured will operate according to the government's technology code of practice, and we will set a high bar for open standards.

● Recognising that value is derived from 'joining up' the processes and customer journeys that cross multiple systems, we will be experts in integration and automation, not just in the development of our own solutions.

● We will be adept at demonstrating the value of new technologies through our internal Centres of Excellence and partnerships with other authorities and organisations.

● Using BI as the basis to develop and improve our services will be commonplace. Standardised operational business intelligence (BI) requirements will be built into our development and procurement specifications.

● We will be able to demonstrate our expertise in collecting, sharing and combining data sources to enable real-time service improvement, decision making – and to support predictive analytics and demand management.

● We will be open with our customers and partners about how we share and use their data – and we will be trusted to do so.

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We will positively design in access and inclusivity - in line with our Equality Policy & Strategy - so that when our customers engage digitally with us they feel safe, confident and represented

Theme 4: Ensuring access and inclusion

In 2021,

- To support the Equality Policy & Strategy, we will:
  - Actively champion it within the Digital Team
  - Offer training to staff across the council
  - Project our values during the selection of 3rd party suppliers

- We will practice 'inclusion by design'. Our digital services will use appropriate channels, eliminate unnecessary categories or limits, and reflect all protected characteristics.

- Where we have deployed automated decision, we will have done do with a full consideration of the risk of unconscious bias.

- Our digital services will meet industry accessibility standards.

- We will provide Assisted Digital Support for our customers who are not able to interact with us on line – and continue to support them to be more digitally literate.

- Our workplace culture will positively encourage staff to use digital thinking and tools as part of their everyday working life.

- We will actively champion, promote and develop digital opportunities for our customers to improve their lives and support their communities and businesses.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Local Digital Declaration

"This declaration affirms our collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and our commitments to realising it."

It commits signatories to work on a new scale to:

- design services that best meet the needs of citizens

- challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need

- protect citizens' privacy and security

- deliver better value for money

The Local Digital Declaration is a joint endeavour initiated by the UK Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS), and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK.

Ambition

"We want to co-create the conditions for the next generation of local public services, where technology is an enabler rather than a barrier to service improvements, and services are a delight for citizens and officials to use. We know that one size doesn't fit all, but by developing common building blocks local authorities will be able to build services more quickly, flexibly and effectively. Only in this more open and flexible market will we unlock our full potential for innovation."

The ambition of the declaration requires both a culture shift and a technology shift, and 5 principles have been defined to help achieve this:

- We will go even further to **redesign our services around the needs of the people using them**. This means continuing to prioritise citizen and user needs above professional, organisational and technological silos.

- 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 a common structure to the data we create.

- 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.

- We will **demonstrate digital leadership**, creating the conditions for genuine organisational transformation to happen, and challenging all those we work with to embrace this Local Digital Declaration.

- We will **embed an open culture** that values, incentivises and expects **digital ways of working** from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.

Appendix B - OCC's transformation design principles

Customer offering
- We will co-design our offer with service users, partners and professionals, and ensure the customer experience we provide is consistent and effective.
- We will prioritise services which deliver the greatest impact in helping to build community resilience and manage demand while ensuring customer needs are met.

Delivering change
- We will empower and support our people to be innovative and entrepreneurial, take appropriate risks and be proactive in making a difference to the people we serve.

Partnerships
- We will be proactive in exploring partnership working opportunities, at an early stage, across all aspects of our work that help to achieve identified priorities and will seek feedback about proposals and changes to service delivery.

Performance management
- Performance management of services, staff and partners and suppliers will be proactive, consistent and transparent, and will facilitate effective scrutiny by Councillors and the public.

Organisational structure
- We will take a whole council view of common functions and in order to improve both efficiency and effectiveness, we will consolidate them where it makes sense to do so.

Assets
- We will optimise the use of our assets and work with our partners to consolidate their use.

Processes
- We will simplify, standardise and automate our processes, and facilitate higher levels of self-service (for both external and internal customers), wherever it is more effective or efficient to do so.

Technology
- Systems, applications and infrastructure will be designed around business need, within the total financial envelope available to us.

Information
- We will be proactive in our use of data and analytics, using all the information available to us to inform decisions, sharing as much of the information we hold as we can with our partners and the public.