

Customer, Digital and Technology

Plan 2023/24

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Purpose

The Council Plan 2023 – 2026 stated that we're committed to being:

"A modern, customer-focused organisation that uses the opportunities that digital technology can offer to deliver accessible, efficient and cost-effective services where appropriate, at the same time making sure that no-one is left behind."

This paper sets out a strategic intention and a plan for 2023/24. This will provide the foundations for a longer term and comprehensive strategy for 2024 onwards.

Executive Summary

The scope of this plan includes three interrelated perspectives: Customer, Digital and Technology. They are combined in a single plan as we need technology to deliver digital outcomes to deliver customer outcomes.

We aim to be a modern, customer-focused organisation that uses the opportunities that digital technology can offer to deliver accessible, efficient, and cost-effective services where appropriate, at the same time making sure that no-one is left behind.

This means that in the future:

- Residents will find it quicker and easier to pay for services, report issues, make applications, and find support
- It will cost us less to deliver good services and outcomes to our residents
- We will be learning from resident feedback to adapt and improve the quality of our services
- Staff and councillors will have the technology they need to deliver services and outcomes
- Our technology and data will have been kept secure from cyberattacks

We will achieve this through:

- Increasing transactions made through more efficient, online channels
- Services focusing more on the specialist work only they can do
- Providing human assistance where it is most needed
- Using more automated processing, email notifications, and modern technology
- Working together with other public services
- Investing in our technology infrastructure to improve our cybersecurity
- Our Customer, Digital and Technology teams having the capacity and capability to deliver their objectives.

We have designed several actions and project across Customer, Digital, and Technology to achieve our objectives. A series of tangible measures will help us understand the progress we're making against our objectives. We will report our progress through the Corporate Management Team.

Scope

This plan considers three interrelated perspectives: Customer, Digital and Technology. They are combined in a single plan as we need technology to deliver digital outcomes to deliver customer outcomes. They are inseparable in the modern era.

Customer

How we help people access the services they need, including

- Resident engagement, including service updates and service design
- Customer service standards, including operating model and out of hours
- Contact channels, including self-serve and channel shift
- Contact handling, including technology

Digital

How we meet people's expectations through modern cultures, processes, business models, and technology, including:

- User research and business analysis
- Data engineering and analysis
- Service design and change management
- Digital products and services

Technology

How we provide people with the tools they need to deliver services and outcomes, including:

- Hardware and software for staff and members, including legacy and digital skills
- Infrastructure, including cloud and hybrid working
- Cybersecurity and information governance

Customer

- How we help people access the services they need

Digital

- How we meet people's expectations through modern cultures, processes, business models, and technologies

Technology

- How we provide people with the tools they need to deliver services and outcomes

Strategic intention

Aim

We aim to be a modern, customer-focused organisation that uses the opportunities that digital technology can offer to deliver accessible, efficient, and cost-effective services where appropriate, at the same time making sure that no-one is left behind.

Outcomes

This means that in the future:

- Residents will find it quicker and easier to pay for services, report issues, make applications, and find support
- It will cost us less to deliver good services and outcomes to our residents
- We will be learning from resident feedback to adapt and improve the quality of our services
- Staff and councillors will have the technology they need to deliver services and outcomes
- Our technology and data will have been kept secure from cyberattacks

Approach

We will achieve this by:

- More residents choosing to contact us using more efficient, online channels
- Moving more initial customer contact to Customer Services, so that other services can focus on the specialist work only they can do
- Refocusing customer services on transactions where human assistance is most needed
- Using automated processing to improve our productivity
- Sending more notifications by email, rather than by post
- Keeping our use of post, paper, and physical hardware to a minimum
- Generating more income through our subscription and paid-for services
- Sharing our services, knowledge, and experience with others to collectively save money and improve resident experiences
- Collaborating and sharing data with other public services to provide better resident experiences
- Investing in our technology infrastructure to improve our cybersecurity
- Taking a cloud first approach to new technology and moving more of our existing technology to hosted or cloud services.
- Our Customer, Digital and Technology teams having the capacity and capability to deliver their objectives.

Measures

If we are being successful, we should see:

- High customer service accuracy rates, improving customer satisfaction, and reducing wait times, abandonment rates and cost per transaction.
- Increased use of online, digital, and app channels
- Decreased use of phone, email, and office visit channels
- Budget reductions through reduced Customer Service transactions for recycling and rubbish, and council tax services
- Budget reductions from other services through moving work to Customer Services

- Budget reductions through co-investment and/or grant funding in a multi-organisation project
- Budget reductions through reduced postage costs
- Increased income from bulky waste and garden waste collection services
- Improved staff and councillor satisfaction in their technology and technical support
- No foreseeable, high risk or high impact cybersecurity incident
- Less technology hosted in our datacentre
- Compliance requirements met

Planned work April 2023 to March 2024

This year our Customer, Digital, and Technology teams will:

- Respond to over 110,000 phone calls, emails, visits, and other interactions
- Offer digital products and services with over 31,000 interactions and over 1 million page views
- Provide technology to around 360 staff and councillors, supporting service delivery and achieving outcomes
- Maintain, update, and continuously improve our services, products, and technology, as well as continue to meet our compliance requirements

Alongside our everyday activities, we will take these actions to make progress towards our long-term strategic objectives. These actions have been prioritised to bring forward work that enables or accelerates budget reductions. It also recognises that there is some work that has to happen, such as to meet compliance requirements and protect ourselves from cyberattacks.

Customer

1. Move to a new customer service operating model that maintains customer service standards at a lower cost
2. Review Customer Services operations for opportunities to further reduce phone calls and visits to the Council offices, so that we can focus human assistance where it is most needed
3. Move further parking and environmental health related work to Customer Services
4. Consult Service Managers on opportunities to move further work from service areas into Customer Services (dependent on further technology improvements)
5. Contribute to the design of, and transfer to, the future Council Offices

Digital

1. Transform our environmental health service to deliver a good service that meets statutory requirements at a lower cost
2. Transform our housing options service to ensure future service sustainability
3. Begin the research, design, and development of digital service for residents to tell us they have moved home. This service could include: 'tell us once' style customer experience, integrations with back-office software in multiple services, and upsell marketing. This could lead to an integrated customer record, opening more transformation opportunities.
4. Deliver budget reductions by moving more notifications from letters to emails and reducing how much we print and post.
5. A user research programme to learn how to adapt and improve our products and services
6. Implement GOV.UK Pay to take payments online and through Customer Services to improve our PCI compliance
7. Work with other councils to develop our 'manage my taxi licence' service
8. A proof-of-concept data engineering and analysis project to demonstrate how we might use technology to understand our performance better.
9. Research, design, and implement a new commercial office and meeting space service
10. Continuous improvement of Customer Service's technology to introduce more scripted process and integrations that reduce their training needs
11. Continuous improvement of the Council website to encourage more people to use our online services rather than call, email, or visit us.

Technology

1. Start to record staff and councillor satisfaction in their technology and technical support
2. Maintain and improve our cybersecurity position through
 - a. Continuing to improve how we protect our user accounts and devices
 - b. Making our users more aware of how they can contribute
 - c. Testing our Incident Response Plan
 - d. Refresh and implement cybersecurity, information security, supply chain and patch management policies
3. Move to modern service desk software to improve user experience and productivity and to implement more robust processes such as asset, problem and change management. A new solution will also provide the ability to produce analytics and statistics for decision making that hasn't been in place to date.
4. Move to new device management for public computers and mobile devices to provide better user experience
5. Update our mapping software to maintain compatibility and access new features (ESRI ArcGIS)
6. Reconcile our land ownership data to make sure it is properly digitised
7. Subject to business case, work alongside our finance service to update and improve the user experience of our financial accounting software and move it to cloud hosting (Capita Integra)
8. Subject to business case, work with our services on updating our regulatory services software and moving it to cloud hosting (Idox Cloud)
9. Refresh datacentre and network equipment
10. Agree information governance policies and, subject to funding, apply technical controls to Office365
11. Move our applications away from Windows Server 2012 R2 before the end of support in October 23

Governance

The overall governance for this interim plan will be held by the Corporate Management Team. Technology work will be reported as IT Enabling Projects to the Executive Director and Portfolio Holder.

Risks are recorded and monitored through service risk management arrangements.

Progress against the identified measures will be monitored and reported to the Corporate Management Team and Portfolio Holder.

Conclusion

This paper outlines how the Council will work towards being a modern, customer-focused organisation that uses the opportunities that digital technology can offer to deliver accessible, efficient, and cost-effective services where appropriate, at the same time making sure that no-one is left behind.

This ambitious set of actions and projects in the next 12 months should reduce the council's budget while improving the customer experience.

This will provide the foundations for a longer term and comprehensive strategy for 2024 onwards.