

# **Maidstone Borough Council's Digital Strategy 2018 - 2021**

# CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Our Future Organisations	4
Context	6
Delivering the Strategy	7
Digital Community	8
Digital Council	10
Action Plan	13

# Maidstone Borough Council Digital Strategy 2018 – 2021

Maidstone Borough Council's Digital Strategy describes how digital and shared ICT resources will support our organisations' core activities and strategic priorities into the future.

## Introduction

*The introduction to the strategy and the section describing Our Future Organisations has been jointly written by officers representing the digital and ICT functions of the three Councils comprising Mid-Kent Services (MKS). The purpose of joining together to write these sections of the strategy is to align our future approaches to working in the digital age and consequently provide a clear and coherent set of priorities for our shared ICT service to work to.*

The Digital Revolution is changing the world. The pace of change driven by technology over the past 10 years has been breath-taking. It will only increase in the next 10 years and we must be prepared as an organisation to meet the future.

Maidstone Borough Council's Digital Strategy highlights the importance of implementing a digital infrastructure and culture across Maidstone – utilising digital technology to drive better services and reduce costs - and helping to ensure that everyone who wants to, has the chance to benefit from these changes

The adoption of a Digital Strategy is about more than just the technology we use. It will enable the three MKS Councils to radically rethink how we work with our staff, suppliers and partners to deliver efficient, cost effective and high quality services for customers. Senior officers will play a key role in the success of the Digital Strategy and the development of a digital and agile culture through their leadership, support and encouragement of innovation

## Transformation Challenge Award

The partnership was awarded £569,000 of funding from the DCLG's Transformation Challenge Award, which committed the Councils to developing better online services, improving customer satisfaction and delivering efficiency savings.

## Digital in our strategic plans

"Service - Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner."

"Equality - ...services that are fair and easy to access."

"Integrity - We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do."

"Value – aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend."

## Our Future Organisations

This strategy makes an effort to describe how our organisations will operate in three to five years' time and the contribution that ICT & Digital technology will make

### Customers

Our future service delivery model will maximise the use of digital technology, but not forget the person we are serving – services will be designed through an iterative process of research and user-testing to achieve best results. The move towards more digital working will help us manage demand better and target scarce resources at the most vulnerable. In five years' time we expect that:

- ✚ The default channel for communications and engagement will be electronic.
- ✚ Customers will be able to use an online account for the majority of their service requests and information. They will manage their own data (e.g. change of address, telephone numbers) and their relationship with the Council (the services they choose to take).
- ✚ Customers will continue to be assured that the Council can be trusted with their personal information.
- ✚ Communications with the customer will be targeted and personalised.
- ✚ The Council will implement a Digital Inclusion Strategy to ensure those who cannot use digital services will not be excluded.
- ✚ We will continue to make use of customer insight tools to better understand our residents and businesses. A good understanding of customer needs is central to service design.
- ✚ There will be a reduced requirement for staff-supported transactions, offering the potential to reduce the size of our face-to-face customer service centres.
- ✚ Where appropriate, the Council will take an active role in conversations on social media.

### Workforce

Our workforce remains our most important asset – without them we cannot deliver services. Changing demands require them to more mobile, flexible and cover a wider range of tasks and activities than ever before. Future digital technology, improved communications and transformational change will release our workforce from their desks, allowing them to operate from anywhere. In five years' time, we expect that:

- ✚ Our workforce will continue to deliver excellent customer service using technology and processes designed to support them in their work.
- ✚ Moving to digital working will help keep individual workloads manageable by reducing administrative work.
- ✚ Staff will feel empowered to change what doesn't work and there will be opportunities to gain skills relevant to the modern workplace.
- ✚ Staff will spend time with customers who have complex needs because everyday transactions and requests for information will be dealt with digitally.
- ✚ Staff will not be tied to a specific location, allowing them to operate from anywhere.
- ✚ We will equip our working environment to enable our staff to maximise their productivity by working digitally.

# Our Future Organisations

## Technology and Service Re-design

We have the power and duty to provide well over 400 services, ranging from picking up abandoned shopping trolleys to licensing zoos. The legislation providing these powers and duties extends back to Acts passed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond. The processes and technology supporting these services have evolved over many years - in some cases decades - and require considerable administrative support to maintain the mix of paper and electronic case and file management.

These processes do not lend themselves well to the end-to-end digital transactions we aspire to. Our services need redesigning, maximising the potential of technology to deliver efficiencies and customer service improvements. To achieve this:

- ✚ Service re-design will be business led; technology will be an integral enabler.
- ✚ We will prioritise the design of digital services that enable customers to self-serve and data inputting will be reduced to a minimum.
- ✚ Technology will support collaboration across the Council and with our partners
- ✚ When procuring new ICT systems we will, where possible, use open source tools and consider making source code open and reusable, publishing it under appropriate licences.
- ✚ We will standardise systems across the ICT partnership.
- ✚ We will promote the most efficient methods of payment and service delivery.
- ✚ Service performance indicators and monitoring will be focused on outcomes for customers.

- ✚ We will have reduced the cost of service delivery by delivering more services digitally.

## Community and Partners

We are a trusted and integral part of our community, working to improve outcomes for all through close working with a wide variety and number of organisations. Reducing digital exclusion relies on improving access, skills and motivation to use the internet and trust in online services. Together with our partners we can reduce digital exclusion and promote a local economy maximising the use of digital and technology to benefit our Borough. To achieve this:

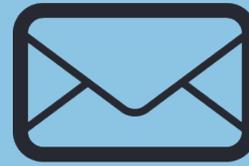
- ✚ We will maximise the use of digital in our economic strategies.
- ✚ Use digital means to promote a closer relationship with local business and to encourage new opportunities.
- ✚ We will work with our partners including parish councils and community groups to increase the number of people who are using Council services online.
- ✚ We will encourage the use of technologies to improve quality of life for our residents.

# Context

The Council has already made good progress in embracing the digital agenda. We have been using digital technology as part of our Customer Service Improvement Strategy 2013-16, helping to improve the customer experience and target resources. A wide range of services has been successfully moved online, with positive customer feedback and successes in managing demand.



**Over 1.1 Million website visits in 2017**



**More than 16,000 residents have chosen e-billing**



**Over 15,000 online transactions per month**



**9 out of 10 UK adults use the internet at least weekly**



**69% of UK adults have completed a Government process online**



**90% of UK households in Britain have internet access**



**77% of UK adults regularly buy goods or services online**

## Challenges

### RISING DEMAND



### RISING EXPECTATION



### FEWER RESOURCES



We live in an age of technological revolution. People rightly expect the same quality of services from us as they get in other aspects of their lives. In order to face many policy and financial challenges, we need to transform how the council works and redesign public services around residents.

## Opportunities



The savings available through encouraging more of our residents to use digital services to connect with us are significant. National figures from SOCITM suggest that each digital transaction costs Councils around 15p whereas every face to face contact costs on average around £8.62

# Delivering the Strategy

The digital vision identifies how Mid Kent Services see the future of digital developing over the next 3 to 5 years. Maidstone have prioritized two key areas on which to focus our efforts, and we have developed six supporting themes which will guide the decisions we make and the way in which we will deliver in order to achieve our vision.



## A Digital Community

- A digitally enabled Maidstone
- More community engagement
- Easily connect with Council
- When and where you choose
- Tell us once



## A Digital Council

- Transformed culture and skills
- A mobile workforce
- Joined-up data
- Led by customer experience
- Open by default data approach

## Our Digital Themes

We have six Digital Themes which support the two key areas and relate to how the Council will improve the delivery of services using digital technologies as well as enabling communities to use modern technology to more efficiently access services and collaborate with the Council.

### Digital Customer

Reducing digital exclusion by providing digital skills and access to digital services for all residents of the borough

### Digital Place

The Council will support where necessary the provision of fast and effective digital infrastructure for residents, businesses and visitors, and will exploit digital technology to make the borough a better place

### Digital by Design

Embracing digital technology to enable council services to be delivered online with the capability to meet the future needs of the authority, with digital services designed in such a way that customers choose to use them as a default, whilst still supporting those who are not yet capable of doing so.

### Digital Workforce

Building a culture that embeds digital ways of working at all levels of our organisation, in order to build our digital capability and create a digital workforce which is agile, mobile and using the most appropriate technologies to support service delivery.

### Digital Infrastructure

Ensuring we harness new and emerging technologies to support the redesign services in a way which meets the changing expectations of staff, residents and businesses.

### Data for Digital

Making better use of data and making data more accessible to residents through online council channels, increasing accessibility and transparency.

# A Digital Community



## A Digital Community

People living, working in and visiting Maidstone will have access to the benefits of a digitally enabled society and digital will facilitate greater community participation and informed decision making.

Customers will be able to easily connect with the Council at a time and place convenient for them, they will only need to tell us once and can be confident that we will get it right first time.

## Supporting Themes

### Digital Place

We want to have a connected Maidstone, that reaps all of the benefits that digital can offer. For this to be achieved everyone in Maidstone needs to have access to fast broadband.

Kent County Council is working with the Government's broadband agency **Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)** to improve access to superfast broadband services across Kent.

The **Making Kent Quicker programme** covers a range of projects that Kent County Council is leading to improve broadband infrastructure.

95% of properties across Kent and Medway can now access a superfast broadband service of at least 24mbps.

BT provides a **basic broadband** service for those on benefits

The **Telecommunications Infrastructure (Relief from Non-Domestic Rates) Act 2018** was given Royal Assent in February 2018. By enabling 100% business rates relief, the bill provides incentives for operators to invest in the broadband network.

Actions in this area are covered in our **Economic Development Strategy**.

## We will

- ✔ Work with KCC to ensure the roll out of high speed broadband across rural communities
- ✔ Work with KCC on ensuring Maidstone Businesses benefit from the extended roll out programme.
- ✔ Encourage all new developments to provide the required infrastructure to enable fibre to all premises
- ✔ Work closely with KCC to consider and implement ways to increase the speed, reliability and coverage of broadband across Maidstone, especially in rural areas
- ✔ Help identify areas where poor broadband provision is hindering the development of business to help inform the areas of focus for the extension programme to the BDUK funding.



# A Digital Community

## Digital Customer

We have been deploying digital technology as part of our customer service improvement strategy for some time, helping to improve the customer experience and reduce resources.

We currently offer over 80 services online via e-forms with around 180,000 transactions submitted in 2017. We already have a customer portal offering customers the opportunity to manage their Council Tax and Housing Benefit accounts online and in 2017 purchased a customer account package to enable all customer transactions to be brought together in one place.

Overall, we have been successful in moving customers to digital ways of transacting, leading to an 80% reduction in the number of face to face contacts since 2016. This has helped us save money, but more importantly, keep up with customer demand.

### We will:

- ✔ Ensure we provide support for those people who can't use online services on their own
- ✔ Develop a digital inclusion strategy
- ✔ Enable all transactions to be done online and all information to be sent to residents electronically through processes such as e-billing
- ✔ Develop a seamless multi-channel system that enables customers and staff to track customer transactions regardless of how they were submitted
- ✔ Encourage more people to try digital services by providing friendly advice and assistance to customers

## Digital by Design

The Council will move to a principle of 'Digital by Design' across all services. Delivering services through the channels that customers and businesses want to use and are most appropriate to their enquiry.

For the majority of transactional contact, self-service options will be available. These channels will reduce the need for contact with the council, creating capacity for complex enquiries from customers to be supported as needed. Consideration will be given to the end to end customer journey to identify when and why a customer contacts us, acknowledging that different customers have different needs.

The pace of technology innovation is leading to different expectations of services. People want transactional services and information to be accessible 24/7 through their preferred device and that demand continues to increase, as does our need to deliver services at a lower cost.

### We will:

- ✔ Design our digital services around our customers' needs and adopt a standardised approach to user centred digital service redesign, based on the Local Government Digital Service Standards
- ✔ Use an agile approach to building services following our Discover, Build, Measure & Iterate model
- ✔ Ensure that we use a digital-first approach when improving or providing new services
- ✔ Identify appropriate performance measures for digital services to make sure they meet our expectations





## A Digital Council

Staff will be enabled through culture, information and technology to provide an excellent

connected service to all residents and businesses in Maidstone. Joining up data and improving the experience for our customers will guide the way we do business and we will have an open by default approach to data

## Supporting Themes

### Digital Workforce

We will build a culture that embeds digital ways of working at all levels of our organisation, in order to build our digital capability and create a digital workforce which is agile, mobile and using the most appropriate technologies to support service delivery.

The **Government's digital strategy** predicts that within 20 years 90% of all jobs will require digital skills and we need to ensure that we support staff to cultivate an environment of digital self-confidence and capability.

Digital technology and the opportunities it provides will become a key consideration in service planning and policy development across the council and all services will actively identify opportunities to implement digital technology as part of the service planning process.

Development of an agile workforce can bring service improvements and allow rationalisation of buildings and back office functions and increase productivity through new ways of working.

## We will:

- ✚ Embed the need for digital skills in to all job roles
- ✚ Build the digital skills of our workforce and councillors
- ✚ Include the requirement for identification of opportunities to implement digital technology as part of the service planning process.
- ✚ Set challenging corporate 'channel shift' and digital targets
- ✚ Further explore agile working to improve services to the customer, better utilise buildings, support the staff travel plan and also enable a work / life balance for staff
- ✚ Continue the move to paperless offices with the exploitation of functionality of existing systems through new ways of working
- ✚ Reduce print outputs through a move to automated responses, improved web information, introduction of customer portal and other digital methods



## Digital Infrastructure

We will seek to put ourselves in a position where we can harness new and emerging technologies to redesign public services in a way which meets the changing expectations of services, staff and residents

Truly digital end to end processes can only be delivered if they are built on a proper digital infrastructure, made up of modern systems that are easy for customers to use, meet the needs of a modern mobile workforce and connect with each other out of the box. We currently have many legacy systems that were designed, built and purchased before the digital age and these systems act as a real barrier to delivering our vision.

We must ensure that what we buy is consistent with our Digital Strategy and objectives. Any new systems should be cloud native, mobile ready, interoperable and proportionately secure, and we will encourage a flexible relationship with technology providers by, where appropriate entering into contracts with shorter time frames to enable us to keep pace with technology changes.

### We will:

- ✔ Define what makes a 'good' system for the digital age and update our procurement strategy and commissioning process so that systems are only purchased if they meet this definition
- ✔ Review whether core corporate systems, such as Outlook, should be replaced with more modern, cloud based systems that would better support mobile digital working and deliver savings
- ✔ Move from the current position of a fully managed on premise IT infrastructure service to a mix of on-site, off-site, cloud and other technologies

- ✔ We will exploit digital tools to enable our staff to work flexibly and operate where required
- ✔ Ensure every digital interaction will be safe, secure and appropriate
- ✔ Explore at an early stage the potential of emerging digital technologies, and be open to adopting these as soon as they are seen to be beneficial and reliable. These include:
  - ✔ Artificial Intelligence and robotic automation
  - ✔ Automated communications including chat bots
  - ✔ Voice recognition
  - ✔ Evolving security features for staff and residents to access services, such as thumb, voiceprint and face recognition
  - ✔ Immersive experience, including virtual, augmented and mixed reality
- ✔ Work to adopt central government tools, such as GOV.VERIFY and GOV.NOTIFY



# A Digital Council

## Data for Digital

The Council holds a vast amount of data about its residents and businesses but does not maximise its value. Data about the same individual is held in multiple back office systems but is rarely connected or shared. This siloed approach impacts our ability to get a true 'single view of the customer' and often requires the customer to notify the council more than once about the same thing. Our data should be seen as a business asset so that through better use of systems it is easy to find, is managed consistently across the Council and can be translated into information to enable intelligent decision making, subject to legal requirements designed to ensure personal privacy including the General Data Protection Regulation.

We will make sure that there is an array of information readily available on-line for citizens to resolve their enquiry themselves

- ✚ We will make all relevant information available to staff, members and partners, wherever they are, to ensure robust decision making
- ✚ Ensure one version of the truth for property, business and citizen records with clear data ownership and management.

## We will:

- ✚ Develop an open data strategy and data sharing policy for data to be shared more freely between departments
- ✚ Enable the collation of customer data in a secure system that allows easy access to appropriate staff and departments
- ✚ Using Data Analytics to support prevention and early intervention
- ✚ Work with partners to explore opportunities – including sharing data and intelligence - for digital to deliver a 'one public service' approach to service delivery
- ✚ Use geographical data and demographic information to optimise delivery of all relevant services.



# Delivering the Strategy

The following is a high level list of actions or projects that link with the delivery of the digital strategy. The list is not complete and will continue to be developed over the course of the strategy. Time frames for delivery may change as new projects emerge.

Actions	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021
Ongoing Redesign of Council website			
Implement a digital customer services platform			
Introduce systems, integrated with the digital customer service platform to facilitate electronic methods of communication			
✚ Email subscriptions for Council news			
✚ Digital notifications for updates to Council services			
✚ Online consultations, surveys and engagement			
Create and maintain Digital Inclusion plans addressing the key barriers to take-up			
Develop a set of digital KPI's to measure service performance against digital strategy objectives			
Refresh the procurement guidelines with a view to procuring the right digital systems			
Maintain and update our privacy policies and data sharing agreements to facilitate the sharing of information between departments			
Explore alternatives to Connexica business intelligence system and develop a policy to maximise insight from the data we hold			
Implement electronic payment software that is fully compliant with the banks' Payment Card Initiative			
Explore the use of AI, and voice activated services such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home			
Digitise or otherwise deal with paper files to reduce storage requirements.			
Explore the use of Social Sign on for the digital customer service platform			
<b>Revenues and Benefits</b>			
✚ Purchase and implementation of additional Capita advantage digital modules including suite of online forms and automation processes			
✚ Link online service requests and transactions to corporate digital customer service platform			
✚ Programme to increase the take up of ebilling and e-notification for benefits			
<b>Communications</b>			
✚ Explore potential for e-newsletters to replace or compliment Local magazine.			

Actions	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021
<b>Parking Services</b>			
☑ Introduction of parking enforcement mobile technology as part of the new enforcement contract			
☑ Procurement of new cloud hosted parking system to replace the current Imperial system.			
☑ Design of new digital customer facing service to manage virtual parking permit system			
<b>Planning</b>			
☑ Programme of work to increase the proportion of applications submitted electronically			
☑ Provision of more open data for customers			
☑ Explore options for electronic notification of nearby planning applications			
☑ Transfer existing processes for service requests to new Digital Customer Services Platform.			
<b>Building Control</b>			
☑ Creation of online application process			
☑ Transfer existing processes for service requests to new Digital Customer Services Platform.			
<b>Housing</b>			
☑ Procurement of housing register application system to replace Locata			
☑ Link new housing register system with corporate digital customer service platform			
<b>Finance</b>			
☑ Transfer existing payment related processes to new Digital Customer Services Platform			
☑ Explore better integration between finance and payroll systems			
☑ Review the appropriateness of Direct debit for annual payments			
<b>Policy &amp; Performance</b>			
☑ Implement improved complaints handling system			
☑ Implement an improved FOI handling system			
☑ Make more information available online to reduce FOI requests			

Actions	2018 / 2019	2019 / 2020	2020 / 2021
<b>Democratic Services</b>			
☑ Roll out of Skype for Business to Councillors			
☑ Reduce printing for agendas and papers for committees			
☑ Explore alternative webcasting options including the potential to use You Tube			
<b>Customer Services</b>			
☑ Introduction of web chat			
☑ Trial the use of bots for simple web chat enquiries			
<b>Waste and Street</b>			
☑ Extend the use of mobile worker to parks and open space			
☑ Improve the provision of customer report tracking to keep customers informed of progress with reports			
☑ Implementation of workforce tracking			
☑ Project to enable street cleansing data to be presented publically on the councils website			
☑ Introduce targeted outbound messages and reminders to reduce the number of missed bin reports			
<b>Commercial waste</b>			
☑ Introduction of customer accounts			
☑ Review the Abavus waste module			
<b>Crematorium</b>			
☑ Mapping of the cemetery and completion of electronic burial records to enable public searchable records			
<b>HR</b>			
☑ Build a recruitment mini site			
☑ Electronic New Starter Pack			
<b>Environmental Health</b>			
☑ Develop fully online service requests, integrating into Idox Uniform.			

