

Oxford City Council

Draft Digital Strategy

2016/17

Digital Strategy: Introduction



Why Digital is important

In just over two decades the internet has become a huge part of our everyday lives. Today 86% of adults in the UK are online. More people are using online services for shopping, banking, information and entertainment because they tend to be quicker, more convenient and cheaper to use. Public expectations for better online services from local authorities are growing.

The challenges we face

There has never been a more challenging time for Local Government. Financial constraints are requiring us to reinvent ourselves to be more efficient and effective, while at the same time public expectations are growing, particularly in terms of making it easier to access services and interact with us in a way and at a time which suits them.

Opportunities to change

We are committed to and recognised as delivering excellent service to our customers, putting them at the heart of what we do. We have better information about our customers, their needs and behaviours than ever before that we can use to inform service delivery. Improvements are constantly being made to technology and we have a rich, local community of developers and data analysts we can work with. There are also growing opportunities to collaborate and share with others to improve our services together. The changes we need to make are less about technology, and more about our approach to how we use it to deliver excellent services.

What we aim to achieve

This Strategy sets out how we will meet our challenges and exploit the opportunities open to us. It is formed around five key objectives that articulate what we want to achieve;

Our vision is to deliver world class digital services to our customers by;

- Being **Digital by Design**; Making our digital services so good, convenient and easy to use that people make them their first choice and are able to succeed the first time unaided
- Promoting **Inclusion**; Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access and use digital services to do things that can benefit them day-to-day
- Putting the **Customer in Control**; Enabling our customers to engage with us in ways and at times that best suit them.
- **Supporting Business Growth**; Supporting local economic growth through by improving digital infrastructure and partnering with business to exploit new digital opportunities
- Using **Collaboration**; Achieving better outcomes through working together, sharing good practice and making our data open by default



Digital by Design

Making our digital services so good, convenient and easy to use that people make them their first choice and are able to succeed the first time unaided



KEY FACTS

- Over 120,000 visits are made to our website each month, with over half a million page views
- Mobile device users make up over 50% of our online visitors
- Over 102,000 online transactions are made each year by our customers
- 184 online services are available through our website, including 165 online forms
- 76% of our online form submissions come from just 18 forms
- Completion rates for our online forms are around 40%
- In 2015/16, 26.3% of all transactions with the Council were made online. By Sept 2016 this had increased to 31%

Where we are now

The drive to place more Council services online has been part of our Customer Contact Strategy for some time, and we have made great progress to;

- Make access to our services easier
- Improve convenience and reduce waiting
- Be more efficient in dealing with requests
- Meet customer expectations for online services

We have also improved how these online services are presented;

- Our new website went live in January 2016 and is designed for all device types
- We have had a mobile app since 2015 which provides a range of services including bin collection day reminders and 'report it' forms

- The layout of the majority of our forms have been improved as a result of user testing and external advice.
- We have re-written all our web pages in plain English and made them shorter and more focused.
- We are using Google Site Search to improve our customer search experience

How we need to change

There is still significant potential to improve our performance and delivering better digital services. To achieve this step change we need to change the way we work.

We will;

- Ensure that we use a digital first approach when improving or providing new services
- Design our digital services around our customers' needs first, through using excellent research, carrying out user testing and acting on feedback to make further improvements

- Encourage people to turn to digital services while being careful not to exclude those less able to use digital channels
- Improve our project delivery by using the most appropriate project management methods, and give our project teams the responsibility for making key project decisions.
- Ensure we have the capacity, resources and technical flexibility to deliver new and improved digital services
- Identify appropriate performance measures for new digital services to make sure they meet our expectations
- Look for further opportunities to reduce paper to be more efficient and safeguard the environment.



Inclusion

Ensuring everyone has the capability to access and use digital services to do things that can benefit them day-to-day



KEY FACTS

- Oxford has a low likelihood of overall digital exclusion with only 6.8% of adults in Oxfordshire never having been online
- 69.96% of households in Oxfordshire do not receive 4G mobile data from all providers
- 100% of adults in Oxfordshire have all five Basic Digital Skills, but only 34% have used all five in the last three months.
- Nationally, 80% of government interactions are with the bottom 25% of income earners, who are less likely to be online
- 10% of our callers state they had online access issues

Being digitally capable can make a significant difference to individuals, through being able to cut household bills, find a job, or maintain contact with distant friends and relatives. It can also provide broader benefits, by helping to address wider social and economic issues like reducing isolation and supporting economic growth.

Where we are now

We have taken steps in the last year to improve our accessibility and be more inclusive;

- Our new website uses Browsealoud to assist visitors with visual impairments, reading difficulties or English as a second language
- We ensure that new web design meets AA accessibility standards
- We have re-written all our web pages to make them shorter, more to the point and using plain English.

However, our SOCITM Better Connected website survey rating for

accessibility shows we need to improve further.

While regional statistics present a positive picture of digital inclusion in Oxford, we know from our customer insight work that a significant number are either not ready or not able to move to using digital services over other channels. Within our own workforce there are differing levels of digital skills.

The Government's Digital Inclusion Strategy sets out the 4 main challenges people face as being access, skills, motivation and trust.

How we need to change

To make sure the web is truly for everyone, we need to focus on more than just online access. We need to equip our residents with the skills, motivation and trust to go online, to be digitally capable and to make the most of the benefits the internet brings.

We will;

- Provide online access points at our front-of-house contact centres
- Encourage more people to try digital services by providing friendly advice and assistance to customers
- Ensure we provide support for people who can't use online services on their own.
- Commit to improving the digital skills of our own staff and engage them in projects to develop new ways of working within the council and with our customers
- Move all our websites to using secure protocols to provide a safer and more private browsing experience for our customers
- Ensure we design for accessibility, making our digital services easy to use first time to give customers greater confidence
- Work towards a 4-star accessibility rating for Better Connected



Customer in Control

Enabling our customers to engage with us in ways that best suit them and designing digital services that put customers first.



KEY FACTS

- We receive over 240,000 telephone calls and deal with over 44,500 face-to-face enquiries each year
- Our Contact Centre telephony service has a satisfaction rating above 99%.
- 33% of our callers choose the telephone because it's more efficient and 7.5% because the service is not available online.
- Social media contact is growing rapidly with over 86,500 engagements on Facebook and 61,600 on Twitter in 2015/16
- Our mobile app delivers over 3,100 bin collection reminders per week

Putting our customers in control means challenging our assumptions about how best to engage with them and understand their needs in order to provide a better online customer experience.

Where we are now

Customers have always been at the heart of what we do as a Council.

In 2016 we achieved full corporate accreditation in Customer Service Excellence, with all our services being able to demonstrate how we listen and respond to our customers' needs.

In terms of customer contact, our Govmetric feedback system provides us with around 1,500 customer responses each month. While our telephone service consistently scores highly, our web service scores don't yet match these levels.

We know that currently many of our customers prefer to telephone us as they feel it is more efficient or because our online services do not

provide them with the information they need to avoid making a call.

Our use of social media is allowing us to build up a better picture of our customers and their interests, and so target our communications more specifically. In May 2016 we generated over 568,000 views on Facebook from just over £1,400 in targeted promotion.

How we need to change

Building on the success we already have we will;

- Work to improve satisfaction with our web channel to help encourage people to do more online.
- Introduce a single customer account for our residents covering all our online services
- Provide online progress tracking for customers to reduce their need to call us
- Promote personalised information through our web site

based on our customer intelligence

- Prioritise the development of new digital services for those where there is the highest demand from customers
- Research the potential for our customers to move to use digital services and promote them more effectively
- Develop new channels to interact with customers to meet their needs, like webchat.
- Develop our strategy for using social media to ensure we make the best use of it as a communications channel
- Look to create more digital-only services, with assisted digital help where appropriate



Supporting Business Growth

Supporting local economic growth through by improving digital infrastructure and partnering with business to exploit new digital opportunities



KEY FACTS

- Oxford's digital business sector is worth £1.2bn, and has seen a 19% GVA growth between 2010-2014
- The sector has also seen a 32% employment growth between 2011-2014 and has the 2nd highest concentration of digital tech employment
- There are at least 1.2m small businesses in the UK without a website or online presence
- 85% of consumers search online before buying, and will go elsewhere if they cannot find a business
- 33% of digital tech businesses feel Oxford has a weak digital infrastructure

Bringing technology, data and communities together can result in a positive economic impact, operational excellence and improved quality of life.

Where we are now

Oxford has a strong and growing digital business sector, and we want to help this grow further. It was a finalist in the European Capital of Innovation awards 2016.

Through our Smart Oxford partnership we are working with a wide range of city partners to deliver a strategic programme that will develop and promote Oxford as a smart city. The Vision of Smart Oxford is of a city where innovative ideas, active citizens, and aligned stakeholders come together to co-create a better Oxford.

Through Super Connected Oxford we are using £5m funding from Government to become a Super Connected City; offering free Wi-Fi access in 40 public buildings and on all buses operating in the Oxford city zone.

As part of the Super Connected City programme we provided funding vouchers to over 500 local businesses to help them upgrade to faster internet access. We are working towards a wireless concession scheme that could offer free Wi-Fi access and improved mobile coverage in Oxford.

With partners, Better Broadband for Oxfordshire is investing £30.1m in a programme to bring fibre enabled broadband (speeds of 24mbps and above) to over 95 per cent of homes and businesses by the end of 2017.

How we need to change

We will;

- Work with partners to ensure that the digital infrastructure and investment necessary to support growth is in place
- Work with partners to ensure the digital skills needs of employers in and around Oxford are met
- Run a Smart Oxford Challenge to help raise awareness of Smart Oxford, capture the public's

imagination and help them understand how technology and data can provide benefits and improve how the city operates more effectively and efficiently

- Identify ways to improve transactions between local government and business to make them more efficient, effective and easier to use.
- Ensure any new IT systems use open standards and open APIs so that we can increase the range of suppliers and products we can work with
- Seek to meet our digital development needs from local suppliers wherever possible



Collaboration

Achieving better outcomes through working together, sharing good practice and making our data open by default



KEY FACTS

- Our website contains almost 600 downloadable documents, many in proprietary formats, that are difficult to access
- We received 778 FOI requests in 2015/16 with many of these directed from a third party website.
- Defra have published over 14,000 of their datasets as open data

Where we are now

The provision of digital services in the public sector has seen a revolution since the creation of the Government Digital Service. Its approach to redesigning digital services for high volume transactions is centred on collaboration; sharing code sources, making their data more open, creating common interfaces for digital services (called 'Government as a Platform') and moving to the use of public registers as common, authoritative sources. Its [Digital Service Standard](#) is seen as best practice in the sector.

Oxford already participates in [LocalGovDigital](#); a network for digital practitioners in local government which has an aim to raise standards in web provision and the use of digital by councils across the country. We have contributed to the development of a [Local Government Digital Service Standard](#) to best meet the sector's needs. This is being supported by detailed advice and regional peer assessment.

There are a growing number of third party services being used to improve how people interact with local government, such as [whatdotheyknow.com](#) for Freedom of Information requests. By collaborating with these providers we can improve the service we offer to our customers.

Collaboration at a local level means better understanding our customers (business and residential) and getting closer to our local developer community. We can do this through involving them in the work we do and becoming more transparent with the information we hold.

To date we have made limited progress in making the information we hold more available. An open data approach can give customers information and informed choices about the services they use, our managers the information they can rely on to provide what our customers need and businesses and the community or voluntary sector the opportunity to take the data released and produce goods and services from it.

How we need to change

We will;

- Be active participants in LocalGovDigital in order to benefit from national best practice in providing local government digital services
- Work to the Local Government Digital Service Standard, and participate in its regional peer assessments
- Work with Smart Oxford to develop an Open data platform that residents, businesses and local developers can use
- Support local hackathons to develop practical applications from our shared data
- Educate our staff in how to make our data more accessible
- Explore the potential to use Government as a Platform to improve our services
- Collaborate with third party services that add value to our online presence

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