Agenda Item No:	12
Report To:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	9 November 2017
Report Title:	Digital Transformation Strategy
Report Author & Job Title:	Michelle Pecci Head of HR and Customer Services Ben Robinson Customer Services Manager
Portfolio Holder **Portfolio Holder for:**	Cllr. Alan Pickering Human Resources & Customer Services

ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary:	The attached strategy sets out how the council will go about developing greater online service delivery to provide customers with the widest choice of ways to access to services and to improve efficiency of service provision. The report recommends that Cabinet approve and adopt the strategy and associated action plans, and delegate the member level monitoring of the strategy delivery to the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee.

Key Decision:	YES
Significantly Affected Wards:	
Recommendations:	**The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

> **I.** **Approve and adopt the attached Digital Transformation Strategy**
> **II.** **Delegate the member level monitoring of the delivery of the strategy and actions plans to the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee**

Policy Overview:

Financial Implications:	Procurement processes for a new Customer Service Platform is to be concluded but it is anticipated that an investment of up to £160k will be required over two years. There is will be funded from budget allocated to this project in the delivery

plan. It is intended that on-going revenue costs of circa £58k will be met from efficiency savings. A one of increase of £15k to the Corporate training budget is necessary too to be met from the delivery plan allocation.

Legal Implications   It will be necessary to undertake a GDPR impact assessment on the new software platform as it is essential that any new system is able to comply with this important legislation.

Equalities Impact Assessment   See Attached

Other Material Implications:

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: **None**

Contact: Michelle.pecci@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 01233 330602
Ben.robinson@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: 01233 330849

Report Title: Digital Transformation Strategy

Introduction

1.   This report has come via the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee who are charged with making recommendations to Cabinet in order to support digital transition and technical advances that promote more effective service delivery.

2.   At the meeting on 19 September 2017 the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee, gave support for the attached strategy and now recommend to Cabinet that the strategy be adopted.

Background

3.   The council has a good track record of 'channel shift' where we have changed our business processes to make it easier for customers to transact with us online. This was driven by the need to reduce costs and for the council to ensure efficient deployment of resources. Now many of our services are accessible online, some of them online by default (i.e. there is no other choice of access channel).

4.   This has worked well and overall we have delivered the required efficiencies and introduced some innovative ways to deliver services, examples include Revenues and Benefits services that are largely online and we have a wide range of 'report-it functions on our website enabling customers to make online report of issues such as fly-tipping, missed bin collections or noise nuisance.

5.   More recently, the focus on the move to online services has been smaller scale and ad hoc digitisation largely led by services taking opportunities as they arose. As a result, there has not been a joined up strategy in making sure that we remain fit for purpose, and keep up with customer demands across all service areas, nor do we have a consistent approach to online services. This has had the impact of placing a big demand on the in-house development team who are 'expected' to come up with a system in unrealistic timescales without considering the whole life cost of the development, nor the relative priority for the council.

6.   The expectations of our customers are changing; increasingly customers expect to be able to go online to request a service, pay a bill, report a problem or see how far the council has got in dealing with their request at a time and place that suits them.

7.   We currently offer a reasonable range of services through our website but behind the scenes there is considerable manual intervention, meaning that

officers have to re-enter details of service requests into business systems and customers receive limited feedback as to the progress of their request.

8. This is in direct contrast to the way that other government services are delivered. A good example being a Passport application process. The whole application is online, even allowing a digital photograph to be submitted. Throughout the process, passport applicants receive information to advise the progress of their application, for example:
   - "we have received your application"
   - "we have received your old passport"
   - "your application and photo have been approved"
   - "your new passport has been dispatched".

   Previously applicants would have to telephone to determine progress, or wait for a letter to say there was a problem with the application or photograph. This approach is increasingly becoming the expected and accepted method of providing services, even online shopping enables you to track the progress of your order.

9. As well as meeting the expectations of our customers, the benefit of using technology to deliver services is that the back office functions become more efficient, requiring less manual intervention, helping to manage demand and reduce calls into the civic centre. This can mean that we can spend more time dealing with complex enquiries, and those customers who are unable/do not wish to access online services.

Proposal

10. Attached to this report is a proposed Digital Transformation Strategy that aims to put our customers at the centre of service design and service delivery. There are four strands of the strategy:

   1. Website
   2. Technology
   3. Digital inclusion
   4. Culture

Website

11. The website is the key digital tool that customers will use to access ABC information and services. We have recently upgraded the back office system that manages our website with the aim of improving the data and information it produces so that we can analyse how and what our customers are accessing.

12. Once we have sufficient data from the new system we will be able to redesign the content in a more user-friendly way. For example currently if you search "moving house" you are presented with 14 items which include "cockerel noise", three pages about under occupancy, and a number of items for ABC housing tenants. The aim will be to use the data from the new website to structure the website in such a way that the most relevant information is presented together

to make it easier for customers to find the information they need. The easier it is for customers to navigate the website the more likely they will return to use it for future transactions.

13.   Tied into this redesign will be consideration of accessibility from both a plain English/literacy perspective as well as a disability perspective. A range of tools will be explored that help support customers with disabilities or literacy difficulties that might make it difficult for customers to access web services.

Technology

14.   The technology strand is focused on introducing new software that can support end-to-end service delivery, in much the same way as the Passport Office example above, improving customer service, ability to access services as well as reducing the need for manual intervention by the back office.

15.   The proposal is that we procure a new Customer Service Platform that has a web functionality (similar to Report-It) but with the capability of integrating with business systems. For example: a fly-tip is reported online and automatically emails the contractor for attention, the contractor will then be able to update the status when it has been cleared, and a series of emails, or texts are sent letting the customer know that the contractor is aware of the fly-tip and has cleared it.

16.   Currently we have a high number of internally developed applications. Whilst this is positive in that we can amend and further develop as we need to. The disadvantage is that this means there is a high level of maintenance and support to keep up with service demands and integrate into other systems. If we were to develop a platform in-house it would be an almost impossibly large project to resource by the IT service. Procuring an off the shelf product has many benefits in that it is largely built, the bugs, glitches and developments are dealt with by the software supplier meaning the IT team can focus on other work.

17.   The other element of this strand is the use of technology in our day-to-day work. We will be introducing devices that make it easier for mobile and flexible working. This combined with the new Customer Service Platform will allow officers to complete business processes efficiently without the need for time-consuming processing and write-ups when back in the office. This will require a good understanding of our customers' needs and expectations as well as fundamental review of processes. These skills will need to be developed and learning and development in these areas will be rolled out across the council. It is important that staff understand how to map a process, or how to map a customer journey so that we do not digitise clunky processes and clunky customer service.

18.   A further benefit of the customer services platform is that it can provide a 'one-view' of our customer which will be useful in enhancing the current My Ashford functionality but also for the detection of fraud. Currently it is difficult for the fraud team to fully investigate the extent of a suspected fraud as they do not have access to all business systems.

19.   An important consideration of introducing a customer service platform is the impact of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). It will be necessary to conduct a GDPR impact assessment as well as ensure that the information we collect is stored, processed, destroyed and shared correctly and that appropriate privacy notices are provided to customers whose data is stored on this system. The Governance & Data Protection Officer has already been engaged with this digital strand to ensure this fundamental issue is embedded in the project.

20.   The benefits of a new system should be fully understood and welcomed, it is necessary to highlight the functionality in a wider sense. It will need to be appreciated that the any new platform will not deliver everything. We will need to understand and accept that 80% of needs met is acceptable especially if the 20% of unmet needs are very small areas of business that would be disproportionate to invest in specialist system. Traditionally our first point of call to deliver these unmet needs has been to our in-house development team, however at times the time spent developing, maintaining and updating bespoke systems for discrete service areas is disproportionate to the benefit received. In order to determine if the internal development time is appropriate it will be necessary to implement a robust framework in which internal development needs are approved.

Digital Inclusion

21.   As technology develops and customer requirements grow it is important that no one is left behind and unable to access services. The reasons for digital exclusion are complex, and rarely is there one reason for exclusion. The four main challenges are:

          1.   Access- the ability to connect to the internet
          2.   Skills- to be able to use the technology
          3.   Motivation- knowing why using the internet is a good thing
          4.   Trust- fearing lack of security and online crime

22.   There are many organisations across the public and private sector who already provide services to help overcome digital exclusion. A significant element of this part of the strategy will aim to promote, advertise and signpost sources of information and resources to help individuals to overcome digital barriers.

23.   However, a tangible way that Ashford Borough Council can contribute to digital inclusion is through enforcing the new Local Plan Policy of requiring housing developers to provide 'fibre to the front door'. This has benefits to both residents and businesses and will promote economic benefits too.

Culture

24. Developing and delivering digital services with the customer at the heart of the process is only possible if staff understand the vision and have the skills and motivation to work and think differently.

25. We will commence this strand with a comprehensive digital skills audit to determine where our strengths and weaknesses are and a temporary increase of £15k to the corporate training budget for 2018/19 will be prudent to ensure we have the ability to respond quickly to significant skills gaps that may otherwise hamper progress.

26. The skills audit will help to inform the corporate training programme and will enable us to identify those staff who have specific digital skills to become a 'Digital Champion'. Digital Champions will be called upon to provide help and support on a less formal basis to colleagues as well as on occasions to help test systems before they go live and help shape new digital services within their service areas.

27. All service plans and appraisals will have a digital objective/target that will make a difference to a key business process. For example, the Legal team may seek to use greater functionality of their case management system, to help internal efficiencies whereas the HR team may introduce mobile functionality of the HR/Payroll system.

28. As well as a shift in approach from services we will need to have a smarter way of making decisions about internal development versus off the shelf investments. A change in emphasis for the IT team will require us to invest in skills development for the IT team to ensure they are capable of supporting a more web-based approach and will require a more robust framework in which to approve IT development work. A recent review of the IT service highlighted this issue and a further report on the governance of IT development will be considered by Management Team to ensure appropriate decisions are being made in light of corporate objectives.

Implications and Risk Assessment

29. This project will impact upon each service area and will be a long-term project, real transformation is a continually evolving. The main risk of these long-term projects is that delivery is stalled, as the day job becomes a priority. It is proposed that a small core team of officers continue to lead the strands with additional support from the Customer Service Business Analyst who has business process mapping skills. Directors and the wider Management Team will monitor progress, risks and issues for this project to ensure that any risks to delivery are identified and unblocked.

30. In addition it is recommended that the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee monitor the overall delivery of the strategy to ensure delivery stays on track.

31. A significant officer resource is likely to be required to implement the Customer Service Platform. Once a supplier has been selected, a detailed project plan will be produced outlining an implementation plan and the resources required.

32. A further risk of focusing on digital service delivery is that quality face-to-face service delivery will be overlooked. The culture element of this plan will look to introduce the concept of customer focused service redesign. We will use different customer profiles, based on ACORN data, when reviewing business processes. These profiles will include those who cannot access, or do not wish to access services online to ensure there is a good quality and simple solution for this group of people too.

33. It is acknowledged in the culture strand that well skilled staff are important if we are to realise the delivery of this strategy. This is the reason that a skills audit will be carried out as a matter of urgency to establish a baseline on which to build. The recent review by SOCITM will help to identify the skills that the council needs in order to help deliver its digital ambitions.

Equalities Impact Assessment

34. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. The key issues arising are that we need to ensure that as business processes and the website are redesigned that we take into account the diverse nature of our customers. Accessibility tools are a key part of the website design and consultation with specific stakeholders will be undertaken as part of this project. In addition customer profiles that represent people with different characteristics will form the basis of service redesign to ensure we meet the needs of all those in our community.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

35. This strategy has been developed using a series of working groups and SPACE sessions with a wide range of staff across the council including Unison reps. The draft strategy has been shared with Unison for feedback and further consultation will be undertaken through the Joint Consultative Committee on 2 November 2017.

36. The IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee have considered this strategy and now recommend to Cabinet that this strategy be adopted.

37. The SOCITM consultants who have been reviewing the IT Service for the Director of Finance and Economy have confirmed that they feel the Digital Transformation Strategy has a good/viable project structure and is integrated with the business. This is important validation from professionals experienced in IT and Digital projects.

Other Options Considered

38. Do nothing, continue with an ad hoc approach to technology and digital transformation with limited corporate ownership and direction. Services will continue to deliver the day job however capacity will not be released to improve resource on the value added elements of our service delivery, or for time to innovate.

39. We could continue to use mainly internally developed apps to help improve digital service delivery however the volume of apps we already have are already difficult to maintain and develop further and we do not have the necessary resource to keep up with demand. A central platform that could replace many of these apps and will have the software provider making development improvements within the licence fees and will free up capacity for other important IT work.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

40. Increasingly customer expectations are that they should be able to transact with us online, they can with their bank, supermarket and other government departments. There is risk of reputational damage if we are not able to keep up with customer expectations. In addition failing to act will continue to perpetuate a range of inconsistent, poorly planned and unfocused system developments.

Portfolio Holder & Chair of IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee Comments

41. **Cllr Knowles- Chair of IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee:**

    "The Customer Service and IT teams have worked well to bring together this digital transformation strategy and the digital transformation team should be applauded for all their hard work.

    Digital transformation is one of the most important activities that this Council, and the Public sector in general, will undertake in the near future as it impacts on every strand of service delivery to the end citizen and each activity within each our service verticals.

    Technology and working practices will change due to this strategy, and because of technology change, adoption of new software platforms and applications, the digital transformation team will need to adapt the strategy accordingly. IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee will need to review progress made accordingly.

    There is a great opportunity through this strategy for Ashford Borough Council to look at collaboration with other public sector partners and find ways to work

together with partners to drive efficiencies and deliver better services to citizens."

42. **Cllr Pickering- Portfolio Holder HR & Customer Services:**

"As a Council we recognise that digital services have been evolving rather quickly and we also recognise that our customers are now expecting far more services to be available on line and as seamless as possible.

This strategy gives the council the focus to be able to roll out our IT Digital Transformation proposals. This is under the direction of the IT & Digital Transformation Advisory Committee, and the Chairmanship of Cllr Callum Knowles, who brings considerable knowledge and experience. The Head of HR and Customer Services, whose involvement at this level is on the basis that she heads up the two departments most affected by the way we transform our services, website and its functionality, will coordinate delivery.

The new systems will not be in place overnight as it is such a major project, the current plans run onto 2020 with step changes every year until a further review of the progress and next steps is carried out.

There will be some initial costs; however, we believe that these will be recouped by the cost savings achieved and greater efficient working practices during the transition.

We are also very conscious that a fair number of customers may not have access to the internet or not have the skills. We shall continue to ensure they continue to receive a good quality service."

Conclusion

43. The expectations of customers are increasingly demanding access to services at a time and place that is convenient to them. Online service provision is becoming part of day-to-day life. This strategy helps to ensure that the council keeps up with customer expectations.

44. An important benefit of greater digitisation are the efficiencies created by freeing up officer time due to fewer transactional queries, and less manual processing so that time can be spent with customers with more complex queries, or with those who cannot, or do not wish to access services online.

45. This strategy aims to support the transformation by making sure that the tools, the culture and the view of the customer are consistent and that the steps to achieving change are clear.

Contact and Email

46.   Michelle Pecci: michelle.pecci@ashford.gov.uk

47.   Ben Robinson: ben.robinson@ashford.gov.uk

Digital transformation 2017-2020
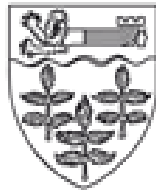
November 2017

Our vision for digital transformation 2017-2020

"As a developing digital council we will use technology to provide our customers with the best possible service which adapts to their changing needs."

Digital by choice, not default

Digital transformation will mean putting our customers at the centre of service design, and this will mean making sure that we also provide non-digital channels for those customers who are not digitally able.
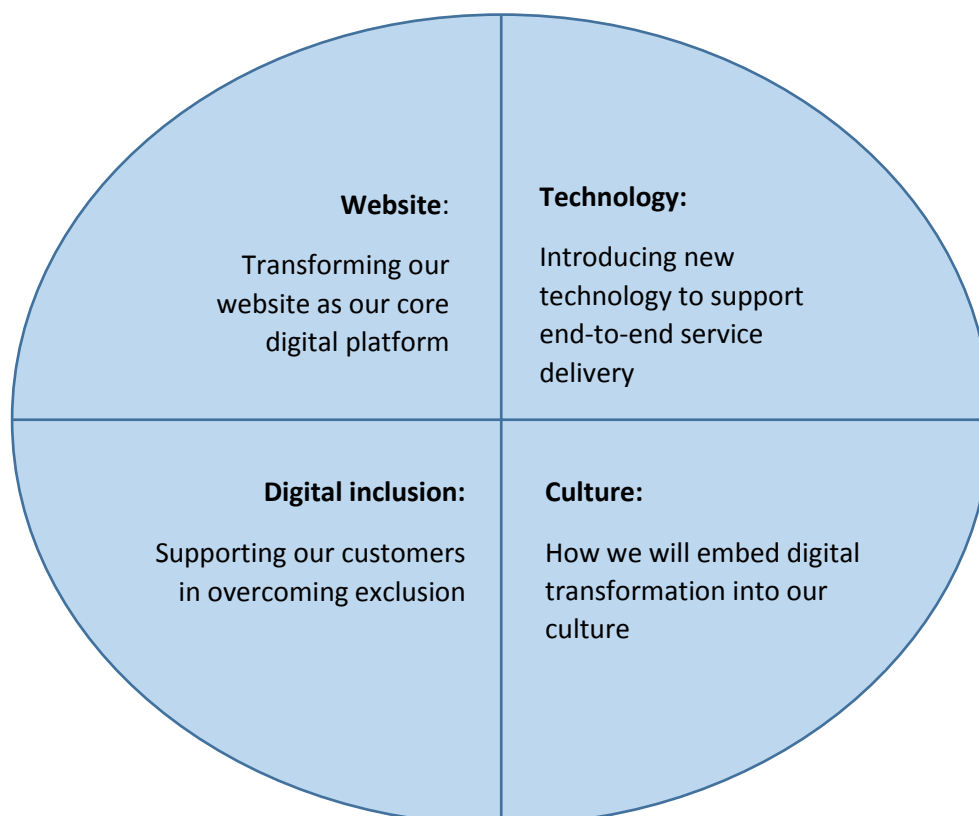
Physical and virtual technology are important enablers and tools to achieve digital transformation, however digital transformation is more about developing a culture internally and externally that puts digital service design at the heart of how we deliver.

By introducing improved and increased digital services, our customers will have greater choice about when and how they access our services. This is particularly important as our customers become more 'digital savvy' and have expectations that they should be able to transact with us on-line at a time and place that suits them.

This will ultimately need a fundamental shift in mind-set away from a more traditional service-centric model we currently use at Ashford Borough Council

The challenges to achieving this vision will include how we develop and update business applications to support modern on-line services and maintaining momentum to make this transformation a success.

This document sets out four strands that will guide us in addressing these challenges and focus our priority actions.

Website:

Transforming our website as our core digital platform

Technology:

Introducing new technology to support end-to-end service delivery

Digital inclusion:

Supporting our customers in overcoming exclusion

Culture:

How we will embed digital transformation into our culture

Our Priority Areas

1.0 <u>Website</u>

The website is the core digital platform our customers use and must be at the centre of our digital focus. We have recently updated the back-office system that manages our website, this will help us to improve the reporting and data we get from the existing website so we can get a greater understanding of user experiences, journeys and interactions. We can then use this intelligence to change the structure of our website to make it more user friendly.

Our website in numbers:	
845,333	page views in 2016
58.7%	returning visitors
41.2%	of contacts is via our website
48.5%	website views via mobile/tablet

1.1 What will we do?

a) Accessible and user friendly

We will create a fresh looking, quicker and easier user journey online for customers making sure that the website is accessible to everyone. In turn helping officers to streamline processes and work in a smarter way.

This will be achieved through redesigning and modernising the Ashford.gov website, following the principles and standards set by the Government Digital Services. We recognise that the design and structure of our current website can be confusing, this is exacerbated by having duplicated pages, sometimes containing out of date information.

We will create a website that is both well designed and functional and will use analytical data to help us do this. The redesign will entail reviewing the language we use so that we use the same terminology that our customers use as well as structuring the site more logically.

b) Technology led

Central to our vision is that customers will be able to transact with us when they want and where they want, 48.5% of our customers used a mobile or tablet device to access our website, so it will be important that we are fully mobile and tablet enabled on all our pages and that our self-service and web-forms are quick and easy to use however they are accessed.

We will also look at software and tools that support digital inclusion, examples may include web-chat and video content.

Our staff will be provided with the tools to help them work as efficiently and flexibly as possible whether they are office based, or out and about.

c)   Customer accounts

We will invest in the functionality of the 'My Ashford' secure personalised customer accounts that are accessed via ashford.gov. Customers will be able to view accounts held with the Council and be able to report issues and keep track of their progress. The account will also enable outward communication to customers.

d)   Better use of analytics and data

Using data from the website, we will monitor customer journeys to continuously improve our services, both digital and face-to-face. Customers visit our website to find information and we will be able to see whether this has been successful, investigate if it has failed and take steps to prevent it happening again.

Priority 1 :   Website

Draft website transformation plan 2017- 2020

	What we will do	**Who**	**Budget required**	**When**
Website				
	We will redesign our website (ashford.gov.uk): • ensuring we follow the best practice guidance issued by GDS on digitally inclusive language • ensure the content is written in plain English • introduce options for web-chat, skype and other digital assistance tools • building on the success of the Benefits video and, where possible produce video content to help people with low literacy skills • regularly ensuring the website meets required accessibility standards using tools such as site improve etc • refresh content regularly • seek feedback from user testing at all stages of the process • hold service workshops to disseminate and interpret feedback and analytics. • ensure that our pages are mobile enabled.	Web team/ IT/ Communications / Customer Services	Y Some additional resource may be required, to assist on this project further details to follow with a project plan	July 2017 - December 2018
	Customer accounts: • Enhance the MyAshford functionality. • Better use of email address data to communicate with our customers.	Web team/ IT/ Communications / Customer Services		December 2019
Analytics	We will use analytics and feedback to improve and inform our service design, whether those services are digital or face-to-face.	Web team/ services		Ongoing from April 2018

2.0   Technology

The success of any digital transformation project will focus on integrating new and existing technologies such as social media, mobile, Skype and cloud computing with digitally reimagined business and service processes.

Simply introducing individual devices and digital technologies to solve discrete service or business problems will not lead us to successfully transform our business offering, these are the tools that will enable change, and therefore should not dictate how the change is achieved.

The culture and technology strands of this digital strategy are closely linked, new technologies will require a new way of working, behaving and thinking by the organisation to be a success.

2.1   Digital Technologies

The strength of digital technologies does not lie in each one individually, instead it stems from how we integrate them to transform how we work and do business with our customers.

2.2   What will we do?

a)   Digital Customer Platform

A new 'Digital Customer Platform' solution will be purchased to help us to integrate digital services and new ways of working with existing back office solutions. This will help drive more efficient and effective processes, addressing customer needs quickly and enabling staff to spend time on more complex enquiries and 'value adding' work instead.

b)   Social

The use of the various existing and new social media platforms continues to grow amongst both customers, staff and members. This presents us with opportunities to integrate the data from it with business systems and engage with people on a virtual platform. This might be as simple as exploring options to 'sign-up' for new services using social media sign-ins or using social media accounts to provide service updates and news.

c)   Mobile and flexible working

As the most popular devices used to access our website are mobile devices it makes sense that any new digital service, software system or process will need to be compatible with all types of mobile devices. Ensuring the main website and the services offered are 'responsive' on all devices makes the user experience better, easier and encourages return visits.

Mobile technology has revolutionised the possibilities for flexible working. We have introduced the use of tablets to improve the efficiency of management meetings and this will be rolled-out to members in due course. Site based staff increasingly use mobile devices as a core tool of their work, completing records and updating back office systems whilst on site. We will review the success of our mobile working to-date, ascertain the lessons learned, and prioritise areas to develop and focus on in the future.

To facilitate mobile working it is important that the infrastructure supporting flexible and mobile working is reliable and accessible to all, so greater emphasis will be given to the availability of the Public Sector roaming service "Govroam" and public/guest Wi-Fi in ABC buildings.

d) Internet of things

The Internet of Things (IoT) such as internet connected boilers and heater systems, smart meters etc. has many possibilities for the council to explore. Initially we will look to use these technologies internally where we can make efficiency savings however as we become more familiar with this technology and the possibilities we will look to explore how our customers, partners and other stakeholders could benefit from greater use of IoT.

e) Communications

Adoption of Unified Communications (UC) for the integration of communication services such as instant messaging (chat), presence, voice, audio and web conferencing, desktop sharing etc. This can aid a better, more flexible and efficient work practices.

We have introduced Skype for Business (SfB) as the corporate tool for UC, and as it is used we will develop new working practices around this with officers using it offsite to interact with the back office function, customers and clients in a more flexible manner.

f) Cloud computing

A significant benefit of cloud computing is resilience and responsiveness, however with this comes a revenue cost without necessarily a commensurate back office saving. Currently we are adopting a hybrid cloud-computing model to aid resilience and free up internal resourcing for other more important projects.

We need to develop a better understanding of how a cloud computing strategy can help us deliver our services more efficiently and effectively and develop a cloud strategy that will guide our decision making when starting out on technology and systems projects. Making sure that it is easier to scale the services as our digital transformation processes mature and improve.

g)   Online collaboration

Cross service, projects often require many officers to input into reports, project plans and other documents. This can result in multiple version and significant editing and multiple versions to review. We will consider online collaboration tools to help make this process more efficient and improve communication when managing processes such as these.

Priority 2: Technology

Draft technology transformation plan 2017- 2020

	What we will do	**Who**	**Budget required**	**When**
Digital Customer Service Platform	Procurement of a "Digital Customer Platform" (DCP) to help integrate new ways of working digitally and process improvements with back office systems.	IT/Customer Services/Digital team	Y Circa £100k, level to be confirmed on conclusion of procurement process	August 2017 – August 2019
	Develop a priority list of services / process to be delivered in a Phase1 development of the DCP. Priority will be given to any service being run from a similar solution as part of any trials depending on final decision. We will implement a digital group that will help shape the priority list for approval from the newly formed IT and Digital Transformation (ITDT) Advisory Committee.	Digital team and ITDT Committee		August 2017 – December 2017
Collaboration	We will explore online collaboration tools that will improve cross service working.	IT/Digital team		Ongoing

Communications	Complete rollout of Skype for Business (SfB) Unified communications platform across the authority and communicate the functionality and benefits to the organisation	IT/ Communications	Y £10k for replacement handsets from existing hardware budgets	April 2018
Cloud	Develop a "Cloud Strategy" to formalise our strategy for making decisions around what services and solutions will be provisioned in "the Cloud".	IT	Y From existing software revenue budgets	March 2018
Mobile and Flexible	We will ensure that mobile friendly is the starting point of all system developments and new software. We will ensure ABC buildings (e.g. Civic Centre, Sheltered Schemes) have public/guest Wi-Fi connectivity where appropriate using the Govroam service. We develop a programme to rollout hardware upgrades to mobile workers that will support flexible working.	IT		Ongoing
Social media	We maintain a review of the functionality presented by social media accounts to simplify customer log-ins to help remove barriers to use of digital channels.	IT/Digital team		Ongoing

3.0   Digital Inclusion

Like most authorities, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) has already experienced a significant level of channel shift in recent years encouraging our residents and businesses to transact with us online.   As technology develops, and customer requirements grow, further transformation work is planned and it is important that no one is left behind and unable to access services.

While we are focusing our efforts towards digital an element of our customer service model is still designed to accommodate customers who cannot access online services by offering assisted self-help, telephone contact as well as face-to-face appointments; and by enabling those people who are able to transact with us online it further frees up resource to support customers affected by exclusion.

Very often the reasons for customers not accessing digital services is not through choice but due to a number of challenges to getting online and there is no single approach to solving the problem.   Appendix 1 provides more information about the barriers to digital inclusion, but the four main challenges can be categorised as:

- Access - the ability to actually connect to the internet
- Skills - to be able to use the internet
- Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is advantageous
- Trust - a fear of crime, to not knowing where to start to go online

Helping more people go online can help to tackle wider social issues, support economic growth and close equality gaps as well as provide our customers with a wider choice of how they interact with us and other organisations they deal with.

3.1   Rates of Exclusion in Ashford

Appendix 2 shows an excerpt from a heat-map produced by the Tech Partnership in association with the Local Government Association and Lloyds Banking Group. This shows the likelihood of inclusion, or exclusion in Ashford.

The borough of Ashford has medium overall likelihood of digital exclusion, with infrastructure (i.e. Broadband and 4G speed and availability) being a significant challenge together with skills and education.

Income and health are less likely reasons for exclusion in Ashford, but they are still a factor. All data can be viewed at http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com.

3.2   The impact of being digitally included

Being digitally capable can make a significant difference to individuals and organisations day to day. Broader benefits can include addressing wider social and economic issues, like reducing isolation and supporting economic growth, which is the No.1 priority in the Council's corporate plan.

a)   Individuals and Families

Accessing services online is becoming the default option for many people, these services range from public services, information, education, entertainment and each other. Those who are offline and not capable of using the internet risk missing the benefits that the internet can offer.

For individuals this can mean reduced costs of living by being able to shop, compare prices and pay bills online. Similarly, being digitally excluded decreases a person's employment opportunities as increasingly application processes are online and basic ICT skills are required. A 2009 Price Waterhouse Coopers report 'Champion for Digital Inclusion' highlighted that people with good ICT skills earned between 3-10% more than people without.

For families the inability to get online due to one or more barrier impacts on children, preventing them from fully engaging with their education as schools are using online tools and resources to support learning both in school and as part of the homework curriculum.

b)   Older people

In situations where people already feel excluded, the impact of isolation is exacerbated by being digitally excluded; this typically affects groups such as the elderly or disabled. In Ashford 19% of the population are over 65. The stereotype is that older people are not motivated to go online but increasingly this group have been introduced to different devices by their families. The challenge that older people have is knowing what the technology can do, and being confident using it in different ways.

Technology advances have the potential to change the way older people interact with others and receive healthcare support. Building confidence in digital skills will help older people access help through assisted technologies, social media, and provide greater awareness of community support, events and facilities local to them.

c)   Businesses, Voluntary/Community and Charitable organisations

As well as reducing some operating costs through efficient working methods, etc. digital reach is vital for these groups too. A business without a website cannot share their opening times and may lose custom to a business that does have a website; a charity who does not accept online donations is missing-out on a potential donor base that can make all the difference to a small charity.

3.3   Who is doing what?

The Government Digital Service (GDS): The GDS have been implementing one of the largest digital transformation programmes in Europe. The result has been significant investment in government digital services (online passports, tax returns, benefits claims etc.) as well as a well-developed set of guidance and standards for organisations embarking on their digital journey.

There has been a range of government funded digital support services. The Tech Partnership is one of the most recent, this is a network of employers who want to create skills for a digital economy. The Tech Partnership have a programme that aims to ensure everyone has at least basic level of digital skills needed for life. Their website provides information and resources for employers, teachers, students and trainers.

There are many private sector initiatives, some companies have a digital inclusion focus as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes, others have them more explicitly linked to their own digital strategies. Perhaps one of the most well-known digital programme is the Barclays Digital Eagles programme where their staff are supporting in providing support to access digital skills to members of the local community through workshops and events. There are many other private sector initiatives.

Housing providers: many social landlords have digital programmes aimed at supporting their tenants in developing digital skills and digital confidence. They recognise that tenants with digital skills are more likely to be able to find employment (and sustain their tenancy). There are also advantages to the provider of investing in these schemes because of the savings that can be made through on-line tenancy administration (paying rent, reporting repairs etc.)

The voluntary and community sector: organisations such as Age UK have digital inclusion programmes aimed at supporting older people to gain confidence when using technology to help them reap the social and financial benefits of being online.

Local councils: Kent County Council also have inclusion strategies such as 'borrow an iPad' run through libraries, and have open access computers so that people can use library equipment and internet connection for personal use as well as more typical library services such as genealogy. These initiatives are designed to help people get to grips with technology.

3.4   What will we do?

Given the complexity of the barriers and the number of organisations already working to tackle digital exclusion we will aim to focus our efforts in the most effective way possible to avoid duplication of effort.

We will:

a) ensure that the council's services are designed appropriately to ensure digital inclusion; we will do this by putting our customers at the centre of our service design, making sure our staff have the skills and knowledge to be able to consider how they deliver services in a digitally inclusive way.
b) promote, advertise and signpost to sources of information, resources and activities designed to help individuals, local businesses, charities, voluntary and community organisations overcome digital barriers.

c) undertake specific projects (where we are best placed) to address the barriers to digital inclusion in the borough of Ashford.

Priority 3: Inclusion

Draft Digital Inclusion action plan 2017- 2020

What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
ABC will adopt a new planning policy within the local plan for all new developments to install fibre to the premises to ensure inhabitants are able to access superfast broadband within these developments in the future. ABC will work with Kent County Council to maximise the impact of the roll out of the BDUK project and other grant schemes to bring superfast broadband to existing residents and businesses through the delivery of fibre to the cabinet in existing residential and business areas. In addition, ABC will work with other telecoms providers to maximise private investment in telecommunications networks within the borough.	Economic Development/Planning		Linked to Local Plan approvals
We will explore the feasibility of creating a database of Wi-Fi hotspots across the borough so that people with connectivity barriers have options for getting on-line (e.g. pubs, cafes, shops, community centres etc.) We will publicise where local access points are available through Gateways/libraries etc. so that people without the equipment to go online know where they can get access to equipment.	Communications and Digital team Communications		2019 post completion of phase II of website

We will allow a public Wi-Fi access point in ABC buildings (e.g. Civic Centre, Sheltered Schemes) using the Govroam service.	IT		
We will redesign our website (ashford.gov.uk): • ensuring we follow the best practice guidance issued by GDS on digitally inclusive language • ensure the content is written in plain English • introduce options for web-chat, skype and other digital assistance tools • building on the success of the Benefits video and, where possible produce video content to help people with low literacy skills • regularly ensuring the website meets required accessibility standards using tools such as Site Improve	Web team IT Communications Customer service		Late 2018/19
We will review the conditions applied to the community grants scheme to ensure that the conditions for funding for digital projects are simple for the voluntary and community sector to navigate and access.	Cultural Services		Post web project
ABC will investigate developing a volunteer programme to help individuals gain digital confidence; the intention will be that the volunteers can take these skills into their communities beyond any organised events. Partner organisations could be schools, the local college, community & voluntary sector partners and local branches of private sector organisations who are signed up to the UK's Digital Inclusion Charter (e.g. Argos, Asda, Barclays, BT, EE, Lloyds Banking Group, Remploy, Three).	Digital team		Post web project

We will signpost and publicise services and information that help with Digital skills (e.g. The tech partnership, Age UK, Housing Associations, etc.,)	Communications and Digital teams		
We will: • will remind people of the benefits of using ABC's digital services • remind our customers of the assistance that is available from ABC (assisted self-help customer services model) • signpost customers to economic and social reasons for accessing online services (e.g. genealogy, staying in contact with distance family, money comparison sites for saving money, accessing online weight loss or healthy option services) • link into national campaigns that support digital inclusion such as Get Online Week (2 – 8 October 2017)	Communications		Ongoing
We will: • signpost and highlight how to spot secure sites and how not be to be caught out by fraud • Use our website to notify the public of any scams we are made aware of (in conjunction with Kent Police and the wider community safety partnership) • We will use a range of tools including social media/text/website to assure our customers that communication from the council is genuine	Communications, IT and digital team		Ongoing

4.0   Culture

Delivering good quality digital services with the customer at the heart of the processes will rely on the organisation as a whole getting behind the vision. In the same way that customers have different expectations of, and barriers to, digital services staff (and members) will have views that will affect the way digital delivery is received.

If we are serious about taking the next step, then we need to take everyone on the journey with us. It is crucial that people at **all levels** of the council are engaged as it takes everyone to make our digital vision a reality.

4.1   Common internal challenges

Lack of digital skills:

Staff can lack confidence and struggle to keep up with technology developments and are intimidated by new software and equipment. Very often, 'on the job' systems training covers the process in-hand is not refreshed, or is delivered in a narrow way (potentially training bad habits too).

This is particularly true of older generations; in Ashford 8.5% of staff are over 60 years, and almost 22% are aged between 51-60 years. Approximately 14% of staff are aged 30 or under; this group typically have greater confidence with technology and have grown up using digital tools.

This different experience base can manifest itself as a steep learning curve (both skills and understanding), leading to possible resistance from older employees, and frustrations from more digitally savvy staff when the pace of change is slow.

This is damaging not only for the pace of digital change but also for productivity, turnover and reputation of the council as an employer making talent attraction and retention difficult.

Leadership:

Linked to the generational divide, as senior staff tend to be older, it can be that senior staff are less digitally savvy which can influence the pace and attitude to change as they can feel out of their depth in understanding what technology can do. It is important that senior staff are able to be role models that support and encourage change as they are setting the expectations for the rest of the council.

Fear of change:

Often digital services are seen as a way for organisations to cut costs (jobs), and like many authorities, Ashford Borough Council has undertaken a significant level of channel shift in recent years to deliver savings. The primary driver for Ashford is a greater choice of access channels for customers and reducing transactional processes to allow a better focus on value adding, and better quality face-to-face services for those customers who need support with needs that are more complex.

4.2   What will we do?

To be able to take the next steps on the digital journey it will be important to ensure that the common challenges highlighted above are addressed. Embedding digital into a workplace is more than simply introducing a new software system, a new way of working or a new piece of kit. There needs to be a consistent message and behaviours lead from the top that underpin 'the way we do things'.

Leadership on the digital agenda is about articulating the value of digital to the council and consistently reinforcing and challenging the organisation to consider services in innovative ways as well as supporting teams and individuals in taking risks.

The competency framework and corporate values (Ambitious, Creative and Trustworthy) reinforce these behaviours and day-to-day ways of working highlights the importance of digital, for example:

Ambitious

Creative

Trustworthy
acting on behalf of our community

- We are fortunate that we already have approaches that are designed to support new ways of working; cross-service SPACE sessions are a pre-requisite for all projects to encourage collaboration and effective idea sharing and contribution.
- Services have web-editors who have responsibility for making sure their service has a comprehensive presence on the ABC website.
- Our customer services model is designed to maximise customers' ability to self-help either at home or with assistance in the civic centre.
- Key HR activities affecting all staff such as payroll, training and appraisals are provided through software solutions.

In addition to internal role modelling, we are also a role model externally and it is important that our behaviours and messages both internally and externally are consistent.

There will be external signs that we are taking digital services seriously, the use of systems such as Report-It and Modern Gov and the changes in working practices that this Modern Gov will lead to. It is important that our Elected Members have the confidence in these tools as well as to use these tools as they will are key ways in which our customers will transact with us and find out about the issues that matter to them.

Staff have expectations that they should be able to work flexibly being able to complete processes on-site. Having the ability to work in different locations on a range of devices. It will be important to review our successes to date and translate the lessons learnt into future mobile and flexible working priorities.

Priority 4: Culture

Draft Digital Staff Culture plan 2017- 2020

	What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
Skills	Skills Audit: We will conduct a skills audit of all staff to ascertain whether there are basic skills gaps that need addressing and also to identify more capable staff to share their knowledge with others.	HR	Possible training budget requirement TBD	Nov 17
	Introduce digital champions: Having highlighted the more digitally skilled staff we will approach this group to become service digital champions that: • provide support to less digitally capable people (internally and externally), • contribute to digital projects • contribute to drop-in sessions designed to help build confidence with technology as well as social media and other on-line tools • help to develop how to guides and videos.	HR/Digital Team		Jan 18
	Introduce digital member champions: These members will lead the way and support how new technologies and systems will be rolled out and used by members.	Member Services/Digital Team/IT		TBD, following Modern Gov test launch

	Recruitment: To attract and test digital capabilities of potential new recruits we will introduce greater use of digital tools in recruitment and selection, for example: • Use of social media such as Twitter/Facebook/Glass Door • Use of on-line testing and better assessment of digital skills during recruitment. • Update competency based questions database to include digital competence questions	HR		Q4 2017/18 April 2019 Q1 2018/19
	Appraisals: We will include digital objectives in annual appraisals; these will be to develop either a digital capability or skill, to support someone else in becoming proficient, or to take part in a digital project.	All managers		Q4 2017/18
	Service Plan: Services will be required to include at least one digital objective/project in their annual service plan.	Policy team		2017/18 Service planning
Leadership	Digital channels to communicate key corporate messages: The Chief Executive and other senior managers will consider the use of video messages and Blogs to complement face-to-face communication methods.	Communications		Q1 2018/19
	Corporate Twitter accounts for leaders: We will consider how we can support senior leaders in communicating externally though social medial channels.	Communications /Digital Team		Q1 2018/19
	Digital skills:	HR		

	It is important that the leadership of digital transformation is seen as authentic and managers will be encouraged to undertake training to use digital tools in-order to: • be able to role model • understand the potential benefits • gain insight into how easy it is to overcome challenges			During 2017 and 2018
	A range of digital tools are available managers will be required to: • consistently apply good practice principles of using tools such as Skype, email and other online tools • use and promote the use of technology as a tool for efficient working	All Manager/Digital Team/ IT		During 2017 and 2018
	Promote a customer centric approach to problem solving as well as collaborative working (using SPACE) to review services and processes.	Digital Team	Budget required for training TBD	Q1 2018/19
Change management	Agile working methods: Agile working enables problem solving to be achieved in a swift and iterative way, this is important in IT development projects where low-level prototyping and testing are often easier in a live environment. We will provide staff with training on how to use agile working techniques to problem solving.	Digital Team/HR	Budget required for training TBD	Q2 2018/19
	Customer centric service design: • We will develop a range of persona's that can be referred to when reviewing a service or process to encourage services to focus on the service from a customer perspective rather than the council's perspective. • We will provide training on how user based service design.	Digital Team/HR/ Communications	Budget required for training TBD	Q1 2018/19

We will include a field on the PID template where digital transformation and implications can be highlighted.	Policy team		Q3 2017/18
Corporate values: Newly articulated corporate values to be launched as part of the communications we will ensure that the link with digital services is explicit.	HR/ Communications		Q3 2017/18
Include standard digital operational competency in all new JDs as a tangible indicator to all existing and potential staff that digital services are intrinsic to our way of working**.**	HR		Q4 2017/18
We will carry out workshops with services to establish staff ideas on service improvements on the top areas of focus for digital transformation (build into 2019/20 service plans).	Digital team/HR		Spring/ Summer 2018
Digital project communications through Root & Branch: We will ensure that the progress, successes, and learning from failures of digital projects are regularly shared through the council's on-line staff magazine.	Communications /Digital Team		From Autumn 2017
Communications: We have a range of electronic communication methods including the intranet; we will review these to ensure they remain relevant, responsive, up to date and easy to use. The staff benefit platform My Ashford Rewards has capability to become an internal communications hub that supports blogs, video content, online polling, recognition schemes and discussions we	Communications /HR		Ongoing from Q4 2017/18

will review this capability with a view to launching an enhanced offer. Social media: There is an expectation that we will use social media channels to communicate with our customers. We will ensure that we include social media in all communications plans and on literature and publicity where possible include social media logos and QR codes that direct customers to the appropriate URL. We will also work with services to support them in developing their own social media feeds and campaigns as a communication channel.			
Annual Staff awards: A new category that reflects the priority of digital transformation will be created to recognise and celebrate good work and outcomes.	HR/ Communications		2018 Awards

APPENDICES

The barriers to digital inclusion

Typically, there is one or more barriers that work together to prevent digital inclusion.

The four main challenges are:

1. Access the ability to actually connect to the internet	2. Skills to be able to use the internet	3. Motivation knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing	4. Trust a fear of crime, to not knowing where to start to go online
Accessibility	Literacy skills	Risks	Identity
Location	Digital Skills	Necessity	Security
Cost	Security skills	Financial benefits	Reputation
Infrastructure	Confidence	Social benefits	
Language	Technology	Health and wellbeing benefits	

Access:

Some organisations have limited regard to **accessibility** i.e. ensuring their digital services are compatible with the tools some disabled people use such as screen readers or braille software, as well as making their sites capable of being read with lower tech solutions such as coloured screen filters. There is an obvious impact on the individual looking to access the online service, but equally lack of understanding of this issue reduces the potential customer base of businesses and other organisations with poor digital services accessibility.

Location and infrastructure issues are a significant factor in Ashford due to the large spread of rural areas in the borough. Some people cannot get broadband or it is slow and the mobile network coverage can be poor.

- 9% of households in Ashford cannot get broadband speeds of at least 10Mbps
- almost 71% households cannot get 4G coverage from all providers.

There are many reasons for lack of availability of broadband speed, but usually it is due to commercial viability in rural communities that require significant investment in physical infrastructure. ABC has been working with DCLG and DCMS to influence national planning policy to allow the planning authority to adopt a policy for all new developments to install fibre to the premises to ensure inhabitants are able to access superfast broadband within these developments in the future.

Government recently announced in the Housing White paper that all local authorities should be adopting such a policy, following the inclusion of a policy in the draft Ashford Local Plan.

ABC is also working with Kent County Council to maximise the impact of the role out of the BDUK project and other grant schemes to bring Superfast broadband to existing residents and businesses through the delivery of fibre to the cabinet in existing residential and business areas. In addition, ABC has been working with other telecoms providers to maximise private investment in telecommunications networks within the Borough.

Cost is a barrier to people going online due to the price of equipment, installation, connection and ongoing fees, often requiring credit checks. This means people on low income, with poor credit history or frequent address changes are excluded. The cost of equipment is falling however the connectivity costs continue to be a barrier, very often the cheapest option for people unable to obtain credit is Pay-As-You-Go 4G mobile packages, but these are often poor value for money in comparison with other deals and this adversely affect lower income households.

Very often, the **language** and terminology used on line can be intimidating and confusing leading to inability to access the information or services the individual requires. This has a knock-on impact in that trust and motivation to use digital services is eroded even if the individual has some, or all of the basic digital skills.

Skills:

As well as language and terminology, low **literacy** skills can be the reason that people are not online, being faced with pages of text can be intimidating and service providers need to consider other ways to support this group of people with accessible digital services.

People need basic **digital skills** to get online and stay safe online. Basic skills include browsing, using a search engine and filling out forms. The heat map data shows that, in Ashford 77% of residents have basic skills, but only 37% have used all five basic skills. Not regularly using these skills can lead to 'learning decay' where people forget "how to", which in turn affects confidence going online.

People can lack **confidence** and struggle to keep up with **technology** developments and are intimidated by being able to set up devices as well as use to them. This is particularly true of older generations, in Ashford almost a fifth of residents are over 65.

Motivation:

People are afraid of the **risk** of making mistakes, and worried the technology will let them down. This can be overcome by assistance, practice and reminding (and showing) people how easy it is, and of the **social, financial and wellbeing benefits** of using digital tools.

Trust:

Some people are worried about **identity theft** and scams. When individuals have better digital skills, they are more confident in evaluating which websites to trust. Similarly, better digital skills and knowledge help people identify secure websites and **reputable sites** they can trust and avoid other **security risks**.

Rates of Exclusion in Ashford

The following heat-map produced by the Tech Partnership in association with the Local Government Association and Lloyds Banking Group, shows the likelihood of inclusion, or exclusion in Ashford. The borough of Ashford has medium overall likelihood of digital exclusion, with infrastructure (i.e. Broadband and 4G speed and availability) being a significant challenge together with skills and education.

Income and heath are less likely reasons for exclusion in Ashford, but they are still a factor.

All data can be viewed at:http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com/
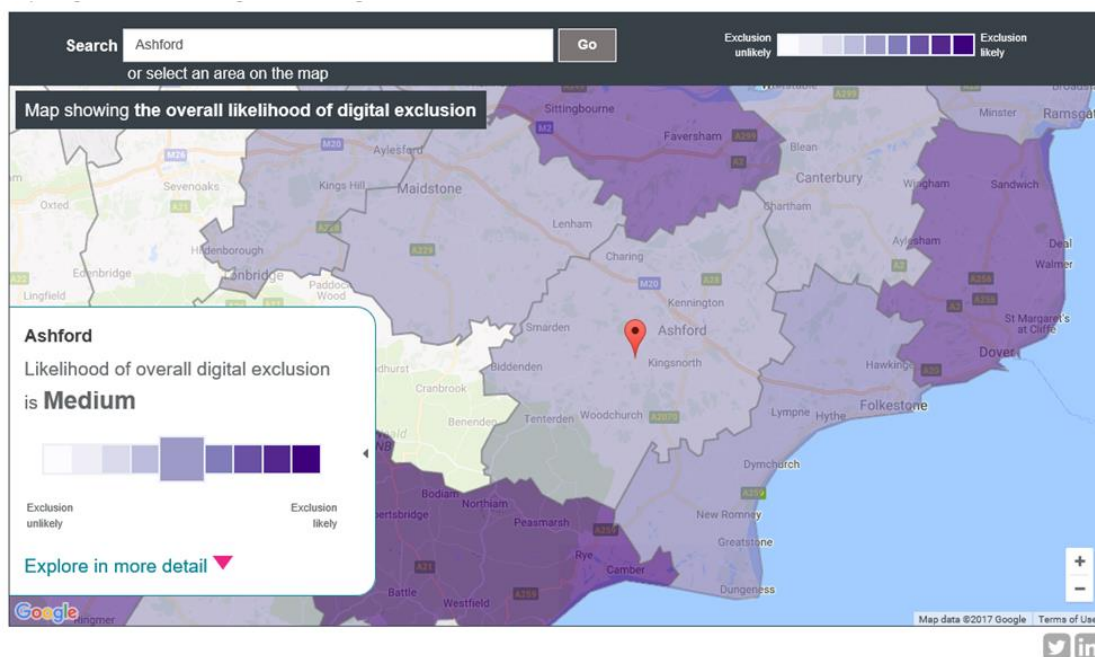
Explore indicators in more detail

Digital Indicators

The combined digital indicator is made up of four metrics that indicate digital exclusion. These are infrastructure, the number of people who have never been online, Basic Digital Skills and Basic Digital Skills used.

INFRASTRUCTURE (COMBINED)

View infrastructure (combined) on map

The combined infrastructure metric is made up of two sets of data: household broadband speeds; and the household availability of 4G mobile data.

INFRASTRUCTURE - BROADBAND 10MBPS

9.00% of households in Ashford **do not receive broadband speeds of at least 10 megabits per second (Mbps)**. Learn more

You can also view the percentage of households not receiving speeds of at least 2Mbps. Show

INFRASTRUCTURE - 4G MOBILE DATA

70.98% of households in Ashford **do not receive 4G mobile data from all providers**. Learn more

OFFLINE

View offline on map

10.6% of adults in Ashford have **never been online**. Learn more

BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS

View Basic Digital Skills on map

77% of adults in Ashford have **all five Basic Digital Skills**. Learn more

BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS USED

View Basic Digital Skills used on map

37% of adults in Ashford have **used all five Basic Digital Skills in the last three months**. Learn more

Social Indicators

The combined social indicator is made up of four social metrics that indicate digital exclusion. These are age, education, income and health.

AGE

View age on map

19.0% of adults in Ashford are **over 65**. Learn more

EDUCATION

View education on map

36.80% of adults in Ashford have **no qualifications and/or no Level 1 qualifications**. Learn more

INCOME

View income on map

£22,200 is the **average income per taxpayer** in Ashford. Learn more

HEALTH

View health on map

16.2% of adults in Ashford have **long-term illness or disability**. Learn more

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

   (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;

   (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;

   (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;

   (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

   (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

   (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

   (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

   - Age
   - Disability
   - Gender reassignment
   - Marriage and civil partnership*
   - Pregnancy and maternity
   - Race
   - Religion or belief
   - Sex
   - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.

6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:

   - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
   - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
   - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

   - Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.

   - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.

   - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

   - Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.

   - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.

- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.

- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.

- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.

- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.

- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.

- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

> The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. *Equality Duty in decision-making*

Lead officer:	Michelle Pecci
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop	To adopt the **Digital Transformation Strategy** and associated actions plans that aim to improve the level of service provision, and business processes that are delivered by digital means.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	9 November 2017
Summary of the proposed decision: • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected?	The aim is to improve the council's ability to deliver services digital that will improve customer choice in how and when they access our services, as well as improve back office processes to improve efficiency. Key actions will be to redesign the website, introduce a common corporate customer service system to help deliver inline services and process improvements and to develop the digital skills of staff to be able to implement this project and support our customers. All staff and all customers will be able to access more digital services and ways of working.
Information and research: • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings.	This strategy has been informed by review of good practice across the public and private sector and key information has been sought from the Government Digital Service, one of the leading governmental digital service providers in the world.
Consultation: • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?	No detailed consultation has been undertaken as this strategy is concerned with a direction of travel. When the website is redesigned accessibility, and accessibility tools, will be a key consideration and consultation will be undertaken with representative groups to ensure there are able to access our services. In addition to this as buisness processes are reviewed customer profiles, based on ACORN data, will take into account the range of protected characteristics when considering customer needs.

Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision **Positive** (Major/Minor) **Negative** (Major/Minor) **Neutral**
AGE Elderly	Medium	**Negative:** Some Elderly customers may not have access, skills or motivation to access services on line.
Middle age	Medium	**Neutral:** Some middle age customers may not have access, skills or motivation to access services on line
Young adult	Medium	**Positive:** Young Adults expect to be able to access services on line
Children	None	
DISABILITY Physical	Medium	**Positive:** Digital service provision can be a positive step for many with disabilities, we will need to ensure our accessibility tools are suitable for a range of disabilities.
Mental	Medium	
Sensory	Medium	
GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT	None	
MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	None	
PREGNANCY/MATERNITY	None	
RACE	None	
RELIGION OR BELIEF	None	
SEX Men	None	
Women	None	
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	None	

Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	There is no intention to remove face to face or telephone customer service. The time saved by staff due to reduced demand and more efficient processes will support a better level of service to those who cannot, or do not wish to, access services on line.

Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's *Essential Guide*, alongside fuller *PSED Technical Guidance*.

Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

Conclusion: • Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. • There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). • Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?	The fundamental basis of this strategy is that no-one is left behind. We will not be removing face to face or telephone customer service and this project is about improving choice of access to services for our customers. A significant strand of this strategy is Digital inclusion and this theme runs throughout the project. Digital exclusion can be caused by a number of challenges but from an EIA point of view usually due to disability or age (lack of skills). We will be making provision to ensure that disabled and low skilled customers are supported either through accessibility tools or through traditional methods of contact with the council. It is not recommended that any adjustments need to be made other than ensuring the principles of equity duty and accessibility to services are applied when designing service provision and the website. Management team and the IT & Digital Transformation Board will monitor delivery of this strategy. Particular customers feedback will be considered through the customer services team to ensure that negative impacts are identified swiftly and rectified where necessary.
EIA completion date:	08/09/17