

# COUNCIL OF THE FUTURE

## A DIGITAL GUIDE FOR COUNCILLORS



AS A DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE AND A DRIVER OF CHANGE, YOU HAVE THE UNIQUE POSITION AND THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES, EFFECTING REAL CHANGE AND CREATING PLACES WHERE CITIZENS WANT TO LIVE, WORK AND THRIVE.

THE GUIDE INCLUDES PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW DIGITAL CAN IMPROVE OUTCOMES OF YOUR RESIDENTS AND A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO ASK YOUR TEAM, OFFICERS AND OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS TO ENGENDER CHANGE AND BUILD CAPACITY ACROSS YOUR LOCAL AREA AND PLACE.

## THE COUNCIL OF THE FUTURE

*A truly digital council will be more connected and integrated with citizens, communities and businesses reaping the benefits. Using digital to reimagine service delivery that is user-centric and meets users' needs.*

*In adopting a smarter, more holistic, vision of the citizen and place, communities are motivated to come together with shared values and skills, and to drive a better quality of life for all. Citizens are at the heart of local problem-solving and decision-making to deliver better outcomes.*

*As a Councillor, you are able to build strong relationships with your communities and see high levels of engagement.*

*Local data is utilised confidently breaking down silos and creating new pathways for delivery of priority services and economic growth. Data is at the heart of decision-making, enabling predictive services and a shift to early intervention to manage demand better. Tackling cross-cutting challenges in a cost-effective and productive way.*

## THE SITUATION

Councils are faced with a range of challenges: from demographic change, environmental crime, housing and adult social care, to improvement of employment opportunities. Local government is unique in the number of lines of services it operates. Set against a backdrop of rising citizen expectations and budget cuts, this poses a significant public policy challenge. Managing demand and rising expectations at a continued time of financial constraints is no easy feat. As such, some councils are embracing and seeing digital as an enabler to doing things differently and deliver more efficient services and improve outcomes for citizens.

## THE CASE FOR DIGITAL

Digital is more than just technology. It is about the collaborative and user-centric approach that digital allows and the opportunity it brings to do things both smarter and differently.

The role of Councillor is a tough one, balancing multiple demands and roles whilst actively meeting the needs of your citizens.

By placing digital at the heart of what you do, you can:

- Increase the efficiency of public service delivery, making funding and resource go further
- Meet the key challenges facing your local area
- Create new sources of revenue for the city region by investing in digital platforms and services which the private sector can use to innovate within your local area
- Renew local democracy and trust by enhancing engagement levels via multiple digital channels
- Engender a culture change in your organisation by leading by example how digital can transform ways of working
- Improve satisfaction by enabling residents to engage with the council how they would with other services.

## A COUNCILLOR IN A DIGITAL COUNCIL

By grasping the digital agenda and having a digital-first mindset, you can play a crucial role in spearheading the transformation of the area into a 'smart community' where citizens are empowered to shape services and create the places where they want to live.

Technology has a facilitating role, helping elected officials and officers to deliver statutory services more efficiently and effectively, shifting processes from service delivery to public service outcomes.

## TECHNOLOGY CAN ENABLE:

- **SEAMLESS INTEGRATION OF SERVICES** to improve quality of processes and outcomes, enabling greater self-service and empowering citizens to manage their own situation. This is particularly relevant in transforming health and social care services to deal with an ageing population.
- **UTILISATION OF ALTERNATIVE FINANCE MODELS** such as civic crowd-funding for community projects, building a greater sense of belonging and ownership of local areas.
- **GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS** through a more engaged approach to decision-making.
- **OPENING UP OF DATA TO UNLOCK INSIGHTS** for service design, enabling integrated and innovative solutions.
- **HAPPIER AND MORE ATTRACTIVE WORKPLACES** by enabling flexible working and generate savings through estate rationalisation as a result of remote working.
- **THE COUNCIL BEING SEEN AS MODERN AND RELEVANT**, as well as inclusive to your residents because in a more digitised society citizens want to have the choice to engage as they would any other consumer service.

# CASE STUDY

## COUNCILLOR AS A USER | NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

As part of Newcastle City Council's transformation, Councillors were equipped with the digital tools to enable them to fulfil their job more effectively and work more collaboratively with colleagues. In 2015, the council removed completely their paper courier service (which was twice weekly delivery of papers to Councillor addresses) resulting in a £14k saving per year. All 78 Councillors were provided with a secure tablet device with the necessary collaborative tools and apps to access committee papers and collaborate on documents with each other.

The council has also recently undertaken Facebook Live Q&A sessions with Councillors and are trialling use of the Poll Everywhere voting app for council committee meetings to avoid a significant capital investment in voting equipment, and providing all Councillor payslips using their online portal. In addition to the cost saving associated with this new ways of working, it helped to create a more dynamic and productive environment for them to work together and create a culture that embraces collaboration and innovation.

*"We've set up a Microsoft O365 Group so that the three Councillors for our Ward and our Community Coordinator can share documents quickly and effectively. This has really helped us to plan meetings more effectively, spark ideas from each other's contribution and reduce the number of reply all emails with attachments. We also trialled an e-voting app in Planning Committee to test how this might be used for our Council meetings to reduce costs and administration – this was an ambitious step but showed how new technology can support the democratic process."*

**Cllr Marion Talbot,  
Newcastle Council**

*"I'd certainly encourage other Authorities to embrace more modern ways of working with Councillors. Moving away from the Courier in 2015 was a brave step as the majority of other Authorities hadn't done so, but being able to access and share papers electronically has been a real step forward. We're supporting citizens to develop their digital skills, and similarly we have support networks in place for Councillors who don't feel confident in their digital skills. Overall, encouraging Members to become more digital has helped support the broader digital ambitions we have for the Council and the City."*

**Cllr Joyce McCarty, Deputy Leader,  
Newcastle Council**

## DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

A key component in creating the environment to enable successful transformation is culture and leadership. Councils need to build an understanding of digital into their organisation at the executive level, so that the leadership can recognise how and where council services can be transformed by new technologies. Digital leadership must be formalised in terms of its authority to instigate change within the organisation. The structure of formalised Digital Leadership could take the form of Digital Champions, Chief Digital Officer (CDO), or through the establishment of a Digital Board.

## DIGITAL CABINET PORTFOLIO

Digital is more than just ICT and websites. Digital needs to sit at the boardroom level as it underpins and works across all services. This should be recognised at Cabinet level with a dedicated digital portfolio which many councils, such as Essex, Camden, Hull and more already have. By putting in place an empowered champion at Cabinet level, it shows a clear signal of the Councils' commitment that digital and collaborative working are the new norm.

The benefits that digital presents cut across all the portfolios and Councillors can work together with the portfolio holder and officers to articulate the digital vision for their area. They can also show how they can better utilise digital to transform the way they work and deliver improved outcomes for their areas of responsibilities as well as the residents in their ward.

Elected officials can also be at the forefront of the council transformation by asking who is in place at officer level tasked with driving the digital agenda, is there a council CDO or a regional CDO or a Digital Board?

If the CDO has capacity and sits at board level, they will be able to:

- Work collaboratively with council heads of services and senior management team to ensure a coherent digital strategy is in place, aligned and services integrated.
- Champion smarter procurement. Working together with finance and procurement leaders to bring them on the digital journey, sharing best practice on transformation projects to avoid duplication and unnecessary waste.
- Act as a main point of contact for industry. Develop early and meaningful engagement with the tech industry through innovation days and pitch tests, encouraging collaboration and experimentation of new innovations to deliver improved outcomes.

## DATA-POWERED COUNCIL AND PLACE

A clear commitment from elected officials to open up data and make decisions based on data is key to enabling resources to be more targeted effectively. This will help to reduce costs as well as allow the design of more predictive services that lead to better outcomes.

Opening up data also affords local businesses and start-ups the opportunity to interpret the problem and become suppliers of innovative local solutions. It is a great way to add value to the area, connecting the community and allowing citizens to use data to crowdsource insights and solve their own issues.

## CASE STUDY

### DATA POWERED PLACE | DATA MILL NORTH

Data Mill North, which was originally started by Leeds City Council, is a platform to which anyone can publish open data to create the core infrastructure for open innovation in the region.

Leeds has created a culture of collaboration to solve challenges and prompted developers and companies to drive competition in the market and create apps/products needed by citizens.

It has also improved efficiency and built new tools for the public sector. This has helped solve challenges from analysis of road traffic accidents to making information about empty homes or sports provision more accessible to the general public.<sup>1</sup>

## INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE

To build relationships with residents, it is important that citizens can engage in the way they prefer, this could be both face-to-face or digital. Digital can offer a seamless and practical alternative when face-to-face is not possible but it must be an inclusive approach.

Furthermore, as part of the digital portfolio and council digital strategy, elected officials can work with officers and community partners, from schools to libraries to the voluntary sector, to tackle digital exclusion and give residents more choice in how they engage with their public services.

## CASE STUDY

### UTILISING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Aylesbury Vale District Council, has introduced chatbots to boost customer service. The service learns from previous council residents' conversations and can improve council response time to resident queries on services, such as council tax, benefit and bin collection. The adoption of new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) does not mean displacing a team or service but complementing it to truly be user-centric. We live in a more digitised society and citizens will expect to interact with their local public services as they do in their social lives. Chatbots, for example, can help provide a good customer experience by enabling citizens to engage with a local public service out of hours.

## CASE STUDY

### INCLUSIVE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Folkestone and Hythe, is a seaside borough in Kent with a higher proportion of retirement age residents than the average for the South East. You would think that this would mean that the council would be less willing to embrace digital transformation, but the opposite is true. In 2017 the council began using an online event application process (EventApp) used by many councils in the UK. To gain efficiencies from the move online, the decision was taken to stop accepting manual applications entirely. After using the system for one year, Lisa Farrell, the events officer, was asked if applicants found the system easy to use. This was her response:

“I would say that probably 10 per cent of my applicants struggled the first time that they used it. A majority of my applicants/event organisers are of the older generation and working with new technology is difficult for them. But as an authority going through digital transformation, this is the way forward.”

## RENEWING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Turnout in council elections tends to be around a third of registered voters, apart from when there is a general election, when it is around two-thirds.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally local elections have a lower turnout but digital has an important role to play in helping to renew local democracy and build engagement. This could be through effective use of social media to be transparent about problems and achievements of the council or elected officials engaging directly with residents to get their feedback in service design. Furthermore, we are seeing more councils build user-centric design into their service delivery to really understand what the need is in the first place.

## ART OF THE POSSIBLE

The fast pace of technological change often makes it difficult for local government to be on top of what the latest innovations are that can help them reimagine the delivery of local public services. Councils are under continued pressure to deliver more for less whilst meeting rising expectations of citizens.

The digital opportunity goes far beyond websites and transactions. The real reward is how councils can do things differently and better for their citizens. From empowering citizens to self-help, renewing local trust and democracy, collaborating effectively and improving social outcomes.

By engaging with the technology market early, councils will be able to access the latest innovations and workshop through with partners what the art of the possible is. techUK provides a neutral environment and enables local government to access the breadth and depth of the market, from small to large players. It may be for a procurement exercise to ensure you get the best value or simply if have a concept you want to test.



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT MARKET ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Tools	What is it?	Format	Benefits
<p><b>Industry Briefing</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for the public sector to engage with the whole of the tech market in a neutral environment</li> <li>• Providing the market with more information or an update on the public sector body's strategic objectives or direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtable, workshop, seminar or a briefing to a large audience</li> <li>• Informal networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with a diverse mix of tech suppliers, large and small</li> <li>• Engage in a genuine two-way dialogue with the tech market as part of an early market engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concept Viability</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth pre-procurement market engagement with the whole of the tech market in a neutral environment</li> <li>• Shape the design and roadmap for the transformation of specific procurement opportunities or projects in the pipeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation from the procuring authority followed by Q&amp;A and informal networking</li> <li>• Breakout sessions with suppliers discussing a set of questions</li> <li>• Industry feedback, compiled into a neutral report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with a diverse mix of tech suppliers, large and small</li> <li>• Get feedback, ideas, and better visibility of risks from the market on all aspects of the project, from tech to commercial, as part of the pre-procurement process</li> </ul>

Tools	What is it?	Format	Benefits
<p><b>Innovation Den</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for the public sector (and/or primes) to seek innovative solutions and address real business challenges</li> <li>• Access to UK based SMEs and better understanding of the innovative technologies available on the market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitches from SMEs to a panel of public sector buyers (and/or primes) on a predetermined topic or a set of challenges</li> <li>• Informal networking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access a range of innovative SMEs</li> <li>• Test new ideas in a risk-free environment</li> <li>• Identify potential innovative cost-effective solutions to business challenges</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnering &amp; Networking</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted networking opportunity that offers councils and tech companies large and small the chance to pitch and identify business partners with innovative solutions for transforming local public services</li> <li>• Pitching is compulsory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two minute pitches from participants on what they can offer</li> <li>• Informal networking with snacks and sips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and connect with a range of potential partners in the public sector market (companies large and small, and civil servants)</li> </ul>

# CASE STUDY

## HARROW COUNCIL – COUNCIL OF THE FUTURE: PREPARING FOR THE SMART COMMUNITIES PROJECT

In 2017 Harrow Council started a short-term project designed to create a culture within local government that incubates innovation. This was in response to continued financial pressures as well as the desire to-do things differently. This was a project championed internally by Councillor Niraj Dattani, and working with techUK identified the nine steps to get there:

- 1** De-risk the concept of innovation
- 2** Demonstrate the relevance of technology to local authority service delivery
- 3** Seek innovations which respond to our challenges, rather than the other way around
- 4** Raise awareness around potential of innovation that could be applied across services
- 5** Prove theory of technology being able to play a role in addressing our biggest challenges
- 6** Keep councillors and officers aligned throughout the process
- 7** Work with the tech sector to demystify engaging with local authorities
- 8** Demonstrate scale and potential of local government as a market
- 9** Provide forum and pathway to implement technology innovations in Harrow Council

A key part of this was taking a challenge-led and user-centric approach. Harrow identified six services where technology had the greatest potential to transform outcomes. Working with the service leads and partners across industry, the Council articulated a series of challenge statements they were looking to solve. This was then used for a half-day workshop session at techUK that brought together the leader of the Council, elected members, officers and industry to workshop through ideas to reimagine what the service could look like.

## **WORKSHOP OUTCOME**

Getting the right people in the room, and having an honest conversation around issues that mattered, with expertise on both sides, had made a big difference.

The council realised that each of the potential solutions could not be treated in isolation and a more joined-up way of working was needed. An Innovation Board was set-up comprising of key stakeholders and decision makers from across the council, including councillors, with the remit to encourage innovation in all areas of service delivery; bring together resource - internal and external - to support the development of ideas; and ensure ideas have a robust business case and are future-proof.

## QUESTIONS

This guide includes a series of questions for councillors to ask officers and colleagues to help them to engender change and build capacity across the organisation whilst also delivering the best possible service and outcomes to residents.

## VISION

- **What do you want digital to achieve for your local area and organisation?**

Digital can often be a source of confusion and something just seen as relevant for 'ICT.' A successful digital organisation has digital embedded throughout all services; with heads of services working collaboratively with digital leaders to develop user-centric services that improve outcomes.

A first step will be to see what existing digital groups and digital strategies already exist within the council as well as activities that are already underway. For the activities underway, ask the relevant officer/portfolio holder 'who else has done this, and what can we learn from them' to avoid needless duplication and cost.

Technology can also transform the workplace, improve employee engagement and attract new talent.

Ask your technical lead "is the councils infrastructure fit for purpose?" By creating a digitally-enabled council, you are able to bring all employees on the transformation journey and creating a culture that fosters innovation, which can spillover to service delivery in every area.

## KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- **Is the council embracing technology, such as cloud computing, for organisational transformation? Is there a council cloud adoption policy?**

## WHAT IS CLOUD COMPUTING?

Cloud computing is an approach to computing which enables on-demand access to computing power and resources as and when required. Computing resources such as software applications, development platforms and IT infrastructures are all delivered as a service on-demand and charged as they are consumed.

This flexibility increases innovation, productivity and operational effectiveness. A recent Eduserv survey on local government cloud adoption found that 40 per cent of participants said they have a formal cloud adoption strategy in place,<sup>3</sup> Aylesbury Vale District Council were one of the first councils to move to the cloud and have attributed savings of £14 million after modernising its services and moving to the cloud.<sup>4</sup>

techUK has also produced a guide 'Building Local Government Trust in the Security of the Cloud'<sup>5</sup> to help councils deliver real benefits as well overcome any security questions they have by including a practical 'Cloud ABC' guide that outlines the questions to ask potential cloud providers and what the answers should be.

- **How can data transform services whilst manage demand?**

Data should be at the heart of each organisation but often data projects at the local level are peripheral. That is why strong digital leadership is needed to champion the value that data can bring to the council and citizen.

Having an elected official that acts as a data champion can be very powerful and influential. Working together with the data officers to bring service leads on the digital journey and explore how effective use of data can reshape services and manage demand. For example, the new Homelessness Reduction Act places a new duty on councils to prevent homelessness and by unlocking the potential of their existing data, local authorities can begin working more strategically to predict and prevent homelessness by identifying households at risk of losing their home.

The Local Government Association (LGA) also has plenty of practical tools to guide you.<sup>6</sup>

## DATA

- **How can local data assets support economic growth?**

In opening up regional data, you will also be opening up opportunities for local suppliers to deliver innovative solutions whilst growing the local start-up community.

Transport for London (TfL) is a fantastic example of an organisation releasing data to spur the development of apps to grow innovation and improve user journeys. TfL's data, which included real-time feeds and transparency-oriented datasets, stimulated an app economy that is making a real contribution to London, saving between £15m-£42m through opening raw data to the app market, rather than developing all its apps in-house.<sup>7</sup>

There is also best practice from other regions. The MK Data Hub has been used in the Milton Keynes MK:Smart project to bring together datasets including local and national open data, data streams from both key infrastructure networks and other relevant sensor networks to support intelligent planning and usage of resources across city systems.<sup>8</sup>

- **Who is currently in place to oversee data regulation, such as the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)?**

The GDPR came into effect on 25 May 2018 and is a wide-ranging regulation that aims to strengthen consumer protection, enhancing trust and confidence in how personal data is used and managed. The GDPR includes provisions that promote accountability and transparency, and organisations will be expected to put in place comprehensive (but proportionate) governance measures, covering all forms of personal data. Consult the Information Commissioners Office for further guidance and best practice, where there is specific advice for local government. The implications of GDPR are widespread and all public authorities, including local government, are required to appoint an independent Data Protection Officer who can inform and advise your GDPR compliance.

- **What cyber security policies are in place? What training is available to build cyber resilience within the council?**

Cyber security is essential in ensuring the delivery of local public services and the security of data in maintaining the public's trust. Local authorities must therefore have the capabilities, tools and resources in place to maintain their cyber resilience. The LGA has produced 'A Councillor's Guide to Cyber Security'<sup>9</sup> which clearly outlines the various cyber threats and the questions to ask in an event of a cyber attack. The National Cyber Security Centre website offers useful guidance too.

## PARTNERSHIPS

- **What mechanisms are in place to exchange thinking, best practice and innovation between the council internally as well as with other partners across local public service delivery and private sector?**

It is essential that partnerships are dynamic, factoring in the evolving nature of innovation and the differing speeds at which private and public sector respond.

To ensure continued improvement, it will be fundamental that mechanisms exist to regularly share thinking and best practice, opening up channels for new solutions to address local challenges and council-wide ones.

The Industrial Strategy highlights the Government's commitment to innovation. Public sector can use its demand to drive innovation from industry, stimulating and accelerating the development of new and transformational products and services.

- **What shared platforms are currently in place and is a digital ecosystem mapped out?**

If a comprehensive digital map does not exist, this should be a top priority for the councils' digital leads as it will underpin the transformation that will happen across the local area.

- **How would you like to procure digital services? How do you intend to run procurement to meet ever-changing technological trends and meet residents' needs?**

Procurement should be strategic and problem-led. Working with the tech industry, you should seek to effectively articulate the problem, adopting meaningful pre-procurement engagement with the breadth of tech industry to understand what innovations are available as well as what the art of the possible is. See pages 14-15 for the full techUK local government market engagement tools available.

- **Is the Council making the most of centralised procurement frameworks such as the Digital Marketplace?**

Local Government can use the Digital Marketplace to find people and technology for digital projects. The Digital Marketplace is the online platform that all public sector organisations can use to buy what it needs to deliver great digital services.

## SKILLS

- **What policies are in place to embed strong digital skills, and a culture of digital, across the council and local area?**

The Council can utilise the Apprenticeship Levy, which came in to force last year, to upskill existing staff as well as attract new talent into the organisation.

Another national training opportunity is applying for a course on the Government Digital Service Digital Academy, which provides public sector with the skills needed to transform public services.<sup>10</sup>

## STRATEGY

- **What are the key outcomes you are looking to achieve?**

Put in place timeframes for a discovery phase, including user research events with the community, public sector partners and the tech industry to understand and articulate local outcomes. Identify key goals and indicators based on key outcomes which can then inform a realistic timeframe for when these should be achieved.

By setting clear timeframes and milestones and publishing them you are being transparent with progress and evidencing that decisions are being made based on quality data.

## LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

- **What skills do you need around you to succeed in your vision? Can these skills already be found in the council and how do you maximise and bring this together?**

A lot of the skills will already exist across departments and, as an elected official, you can unify this.

You can also work with the council Chief Executive and digital leads to understand what skills and leadership must be put in place.

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