

Digital First
Teignbridge District Council's
Digital Strategy

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Making us fit for future

Our vision for customer access is to be a ‘next generation’ council that meets the challenges of the future by designing streamlined, cost-effective digital processes that are easy to use.

“Teignbridge has created a reputation for being a forward thinking council, and as such we continuously look ahead to find innovative ways to meet the needs and expectations of our customers.

Our Council Strategy 2016-2025 sets the direction for the work we do, but with ever reducing public sector funding, we must look at the most efficient way of delivering all that we set out to achieve.

Delivery of services online and making self-serve the secure ‘go to’ choice for our customers, means that not only can we meet the growing public demand for online interactions and transactions, we can boost efficiency and save on vital resources. By doing this we have more time to focus on those customers with more complex needs, and the business critical challenges that we need to meet on a daily basis.”

- Cllr Jeremy Christophers, Leader of the Council:

“This Teignbridge digital strategy more than meets the government’s digital aspirations for local public services, at the same time it focuses on what we can best do to meet our customer needs.

Gaining customer trust is critical. Having the systems, resourcing, training and support in place – our staff are well placed to listen to and assist our customers and at the same time deliver the outcomes we’re setting out to achieve.

This is not a finite piece of work, but an ongoing, flexible programme, assisted by our technical partners Strata Service Solutions. By adopting a pro-active approach and adapting as technology and trends move forward, we will be ahead of the game and prepared for what comes next.”

- Cllr John Goodey, Portfolio Holder for Community Neighbourhoods

Our digital strategy -Making us fit for future

Introduction

Like all public sector organisations we need to balance increasing demand on our services with reduced resources and a finite budget. Rapid technological advancement is changing how we do things, and this, coupled with the swift uptake of mobile devices, high speed broadband and the use of social media, highlights that we can't continue to operate in traditional ways.

Our objectives

- Building a future digital service delivery that enables us to work smarter
- Supporting the workforce to become digitally enabled through upskilling and providing them with the robust technology to do their job
- Providing robust technology that is resilient, secure and enables streamlined business processes
- Providing data that will enable us to continually review our strategic direction and be fit for the future
- Direct our limited resources to where we need them most

This digital strategy provides an overarching view of how we will work in the future to provide access to our services. It will bring smarter tools to help deliver the aims and actions set out in the Teignbridge ten year Council Strategy (2016-2025).

We're setting a model for new ways of work that exploit the right kind of technology which makes online contact the first choice for customers.

Round the clock services

Our research demonstrates that there is a growing appetite to access our services round the clock, and customers want to receive regular updates when reporting or applying for services. In order to meet these challenges we are required to think creatively about how we deliver services in the future so that we can continue to support our customers and ensure we meet their increased expectations.

We're already making change

We have already made significant progress by creating an effective website that is 'mobile friendly', and reducing expensive payment methods. Other successes include no longer

taking cash at our offices (a very costly administration process.) We are the top Devon council for receiving council tax payments by direct debit, and our ongoing promotions over the years have resulted in many of our customers switching to accessing our services online.

The bigger picture –Teignbridge Council Strategy 2016-2025

This digital strategy provides an overarching view of how we will work in the future to provide access to our services. This will bring smarter tools to help deliver the aims and actions set out in the projects within the Teignbridge ten year Council Strategy

To support the ten major objectives set out in the council strategy, a series of underlying themes have been set out, these are:

- Make sure we spend money effectively on priorities and areas of need
- Increase our income
- Be customer focused
- Work in new and smarter ways, and together with our partners and others
- Make sure the council and community get the best use of our land and buildings
- Continuously improve efficiency
- Welcome innovation
- Deliver services fairly according to the Teignbridge Vision and Values

Two projects already under way within the council strategy demonstrate the way we are moving forward:

The ‘Investing in prosperity’ project aims to roll out a significantly improved broadband programme across the Teignbridge district by 2020 through the ‘Connecting Devon and Somerset’ partnership. This will achieve better communication and success for business and local communities.

Under the ‘Strong communities’ project we are working with other Devon local authorities and the police to provide an online crowdfunding platform to raise funds for a variety of community initiatives.

Locally, 88% of Teignbridge residents surveyed said they could use a search engine to look for information online (2016). 90% of the adult population in Teignbridge have used the internet before.

Nationally, it is expected that by 2023, smartphone ownership will be above 90% for all adults and 85% for adults between the ages of 55-75.

84% of people said they could complete an online application form, which includes personal details, if asked to.

Customer access - Making online the first choice for interacting with council services

We are continually developing systems that will allow customers to access our services wherever and whenever they wish. Investment in technology that works across different departments will place the customer at the centre of service delivery.

Processes will be re-designed in the way we want customers to interact with us. It will enable us to strip out any unnecessary, unproductive steps without diminishing quality of service, and at the same time improve the customer experience.

‘My account’

By developing the opportunity for customers to register for their own accounts it will be possible for them to manage all transactions in one place and track progress of requests without having to chase the council for updates. This will lead to a seamless end-to end experience that is more efficient for the council and provide better service to the customer.

Safe and secure

Customer trust is key to the transition process. Safe, secure and reliable processes will give customers confidence in our new ways of working and make the digital offering the platform of choice over conventional communication channels.

Getting the customer view

Through regular consultation and engagement with our residents we will ensure that they recognise the benefits of accessing our services digitally. This will form part of a focused plan to move customers from face to face and telephone contact to digitally enabled channels.

We will regularly involve customers in focus groups and user testing to ensure our new processes meet their needs and that the technology is fit for purpose.

By continually monitoring and measuring demand, and seeking customer experience, we will be well placed to meet future needs.

Access for all

Knowing our customers

We do know who our customers are, and recognise that not everyone will have the necessary skills to digitally access our services. They may not have the technology they need, or they may not have the skills, or ability, to use it.

We promote all the different ways that customers can obtain the support they need to help them self-serve through our Customer Support team, both in-house and on the phone, and by providing up to date information on our website of where people can go to get online and to get help.

By moving those customers who can self-serve to online services we can ensure that we direct our remaining resources to vulnerable customers, or those with complex queries that are better dealt with by more traditional methods.

Digitally assisting customers through partner organisations

In order to help as many customers as possible to get online, we are working closely with our partners, including Citizens Advice, the CVS and Library Services, in a variety of ways to ensure digital inclusion.

Projects have included:

- Funding CAB Newton Abbot to purchase a range of i-pads for a year-long customer assistance programme.
- Working with the CVS through council grants to enable a number of outreach workers in the community to assist less able, or more rural, customers to access council and other services online.

Both these projects are sustainable and ongoing initiatives.

Customer benefits

- Speeds up process
- Use of assistive technology
- Instant data submission
- Available on desktop, web and mobile
- Easy to complete

Teignbridge Council Strategy customer survey 2017

94% of those asked had access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.

88% said they could confidently use a computer to access council services.

76% of respondents have used the council's website.

More than a third of all respondents were aged 65 and over.

Digitally empowered workforce

Making sure we have the skills to get the job done.

We will continue the move to paperless ways of working by using technology that allows our staff to update their cases whilst out and about. This will reduce the need to enter information into conventional systems when they return to the office, and make better use of their time. It will also save money on printing, paper and travel costs.

Mobile technology

By using mobile technology (smartphones, tablets) we can focus on outcomes instead of process, and this means empowering our staff with the right technology and necessary support to work more flexibly and cost-effectively.

Throughout the public sector 'agile' working practices (less office-desk-based) have been found to save on operating costs, improve productivity and empower staff to deliver better results. This leads to better service delivery to our customers and highlights the benefits of being digital first.

A digitally capable organisation

Capability impacts on all areas of its business: services to customers, internal support services, and how it communicates and works together. Growing the skills and capability of individuals is critical; digital communication makes it easier for people to work together without barriers, allows for innovation and collaboration.

For some staff the use of new technology may be a daunting prospect, and it is vital that they not only have the right equipment to work in new ways, but also have the confidence to use the technology to its full advantage.

To ensure our workforce has the appropriate level of digital skills we are implementing a digital skills framework that enables all staff to have the right tools to do their job and to support our customers with digital access wherever practicable.

Acquiring the skills to engage with customers through popular social media channels gives staff the ability to communicate in a less formal way; they can relay information, signpost and respond to enquiries quickly, and identify trends and individual issues for fast resolution.

Supporting staff through culture change

Changing the way we work means the culture of the organisation has to develop to meet new expectations. With powerful communication messages and appropriate support, we will ensure that everyone recognises the opportunities for improvement that this will bring.

This investment in both technology and staff will result in providing the capability to meet the requirements of our customers.

Supporting framework -Making informed decisions using robust technology

Resilient technology

Our technical infrastructure plays a key role in enabling our workforce to deliver a better service. To ensure customers are confident accessing our services through a digital platform it is essential that the technology works every time.

A resilient infrastructure that is secure and stable is fundamental to successful channel shift.

Many arguments against using digital methods highlight fears over data sharing and security; if customers have a poor experience they may revert to more traditional methods.

Technical expertise

Technology underpins everything that we do and is the means to achieve efficient ways of working. Intuitive, mobile, customer friendly technology is key to this success. However, it is important that the development of new technologies is approached in a programmed way.

Investing in 'point solutions' in isolation of each other can only provide minimal benefits. We will continue to work in collaboration with our IT partners, Strata Service Solutions Ltd, to

balance where the business wants to be with finding the appropriate technology to support it, and create a workable plan, a roadmap for future technical solutions.

Keeping up with digital trends

Developing a strategy in isolation of I.T trends will lead to increasing inefficiencies and a lack of effectiveness in dealing with customer demand. It is important to continually horizon scan for new and innovative ways of providing easily accessible services through digital means that fit with our direction of travel.

Skilled people and proper investment

Recruitment and retention of staff with the skills to support and develop technology, along with ongoing investment to keep us abreast of technological advancements, is essential to maintain a digital platform that meets the needs of future customers.

Data is the key to quality performance and progress

Coupled with robust technology, the effective management and interpretation of data plays a fundamental role in supporting the new digital framework.

Collecting and analysing the right data will drive performance, and inform the design and delivery of services. Predictive analytics based on previous customer interactions can give a tailored service that leads customers to feel valued and informed about things that matter to them.

Continuous monitoring

Progress will be monitored closely to ensure the council continues to perform well. Key metrics will help demonstrate what success looks like. Using local and national business intelligence and an evidence based approach to decision making will help to future proof the council, and determine our future strategic direction.

Council benefits

- Improves accuracy of data
- Quicker response
- Reduce printing cost
- Easy to distribute to customers
- Repurposing of data

Supporting information and references

[Teignbridge District Council Strategy](#)

[Government Digital inclusion Strategy](#)

[Office for National Statistics – internet users in the UK 2017](#)

[Government Digital Strategy](#)

[Office for National Statistics Internet users, UK Statistical bulletins](#)