

DIGITAL STRATEGY

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OUR AMBITION

Our Digital Strategy sets out the ambition and plans we have for putting technology and information at the forefront of our journey to become a modern, efficient council.

It explains how we will develop and harness new approaches that foster partnership working and excellent customer service, support organisation-wide change and deliver **enabling** technology services to our workforce. The strategy recognises what digital can do for Rotherham; bringing communities together, strengthening relationships between the Council and its customers and, through improved efficiency and customer intelligence, ensuring more money is **focused on front-line services**, in the areas that need it most.

Our strategy also highlights the continuing importance of digital in Rotherham – connectivity, online services, access and skills and describes the opportunities along with our approach to ensure everyone who wants to, is afforded the chance to benefit from what digital has to offer.

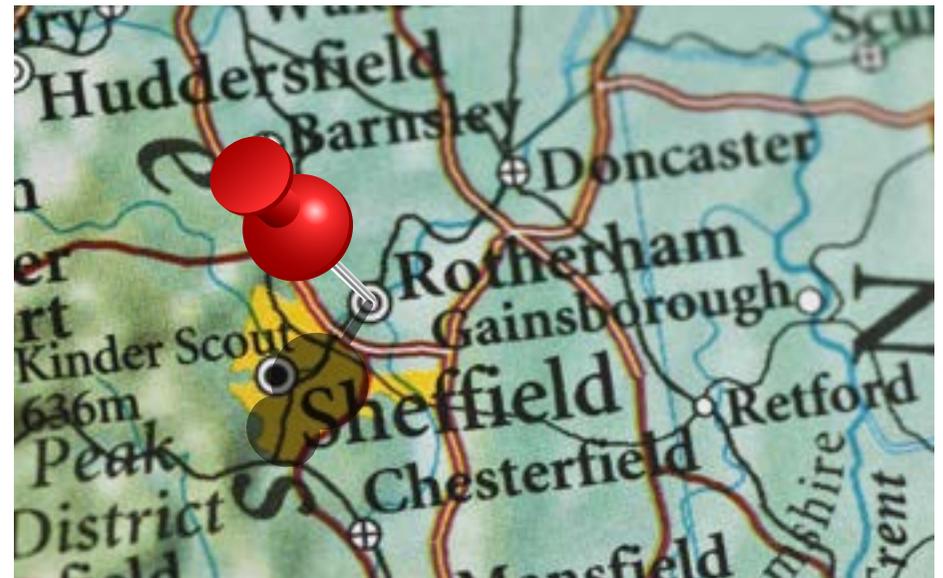
- We will maximise the use of digital technology and continuously innovate to transform the way we work and **improve outcomes and services** for residents, business and visitors.
- Working with our partners and other organisations we will exploit technology to join-up and integrate services and exploit new opportunities to **work collaboratively**.
- We will **increase efficiency** and **improve quality** for everyone through the innovative use of new and emerging technologies.
- We will strive towards becoming a **‘smart city’** to improve the quality of life and experiences of residents, visitors and business.
- We will design our digital services to be **accessible**, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or level of skills and **involve** people in the design and testing of digital services to ensure they meet their expressed needs.



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

We are not starting afresh; we've been developing our digital services and capabilities over several years and have already made good and sustainable progress in several areas, through targeted investment.

- Replacing our core **telephony and contact centre systems**, with an integrated 'cloud-based' system to provide increased capability, flexibility and added resilience.
 - We are helping Council and wider public sector workers to **gain access to systems from anywhere**, through the introduction of the reciprocal GovRoam network.
 - By modernising our office productivity tools through the roll out of Microsoft 365, refresh of devices and upgrade to Windows 10, we are **facilitating staff to work more efficiently** and providing new ways to communicate and collaborate.
 - We have a refreshed, **more accessible website**, which makes it easier for residents to do business with the council, online.
 - Implemented a new **customer experience management system**, to provide a single view of customer contact and an online **citizens portal** for self-service.
 - We are helping to promote **digital inclusion** by providing **free citizen Wi-Fi** in all libraries, customer services centres, the Town Hall and museum.
- We have implemented a single **Social Care** case management system for Adult's and Children's social care
 - Working with health partners we have launched the **Rotherham Health Record**, providing access for health and care professionals to patient data, supporting better co-ordinated outcomes for residents.
 - Streamlined the process for **hospital discharge**, helping to free-up hospital bed spaces in a timely manner.
 - In partnership with other South Yorkshire councils we have delivered **Superfast South Yorkshire**, increasing broadband speed and availability to more areas of Rotherham.



RESPONDING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

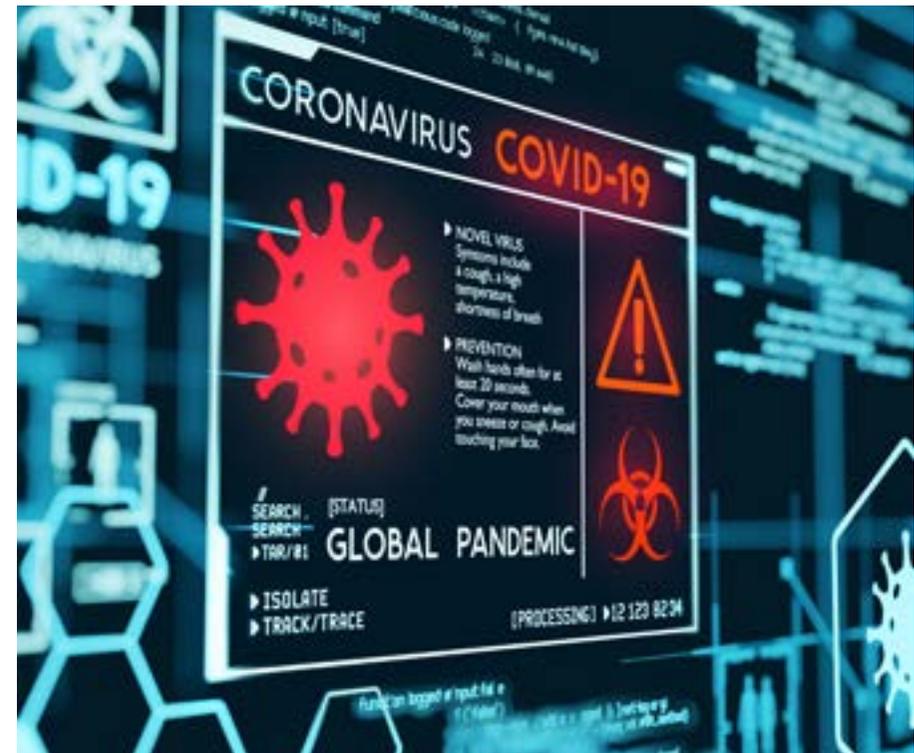
Technology has proved essential in our response to the Coronavirus pandemic and in maintaining service delivery and providing support. Imaginative use and rapid adoption of digital capabilities has really illustrated how, at a time of difficulty, we can still improve services and operate effectively.

- Over 4,000 staff were enabled to work from home and using Microsoft Teams continued to **communicate and collaborate effectively** – over a six month period more than 37,000 meetings took place online.
- Children’s services staff have used video calling and WhatsApp to keep in touch with families and **ensure essential support is maintained.**
- **Democratic decision making went virtual**, supporting Cabinet, Council and other committee meetings to take place, including Overview and Scrutiny.
- The taxi driver vehicle licencing process moved from a paper-based and face to face interaction, to website self-service, supported by ‘how to’ videos, taxi drivers submit their license application and arrange an appointment for a council MOT test from the comfort of their home (or vehicle). **Over 470 applications have been handled.**
- Numerous government support grants have been administered by the council, to support businesses and sole traders impacted by the pandemic. Our fully online and end-to-end process has facilitated **payments in excess of £61m for over 5,000 businesses.**

We utilised our new telephony capability to set-up:

- the Rotherham Community Hub to provide **help and support for vulnerable residents** and those required to shield.
- local track and trace, to support the national effort.

The benefits from this flexibility will continue and serve us well in other times of crisis in the future.



OUR DIGITAL PRIORITIES

A FOUNDATION FOR TRANSFORMATION

We will build upon the things we've already achieved to deliver an excellent ICT infrastructure which is designed to support our **transformation aspirations**.

Continued investment in our hardware and software is essential to ensure we have a strong foundation for delivering better outcomes for residents and to support and re-design the way we deliver services.

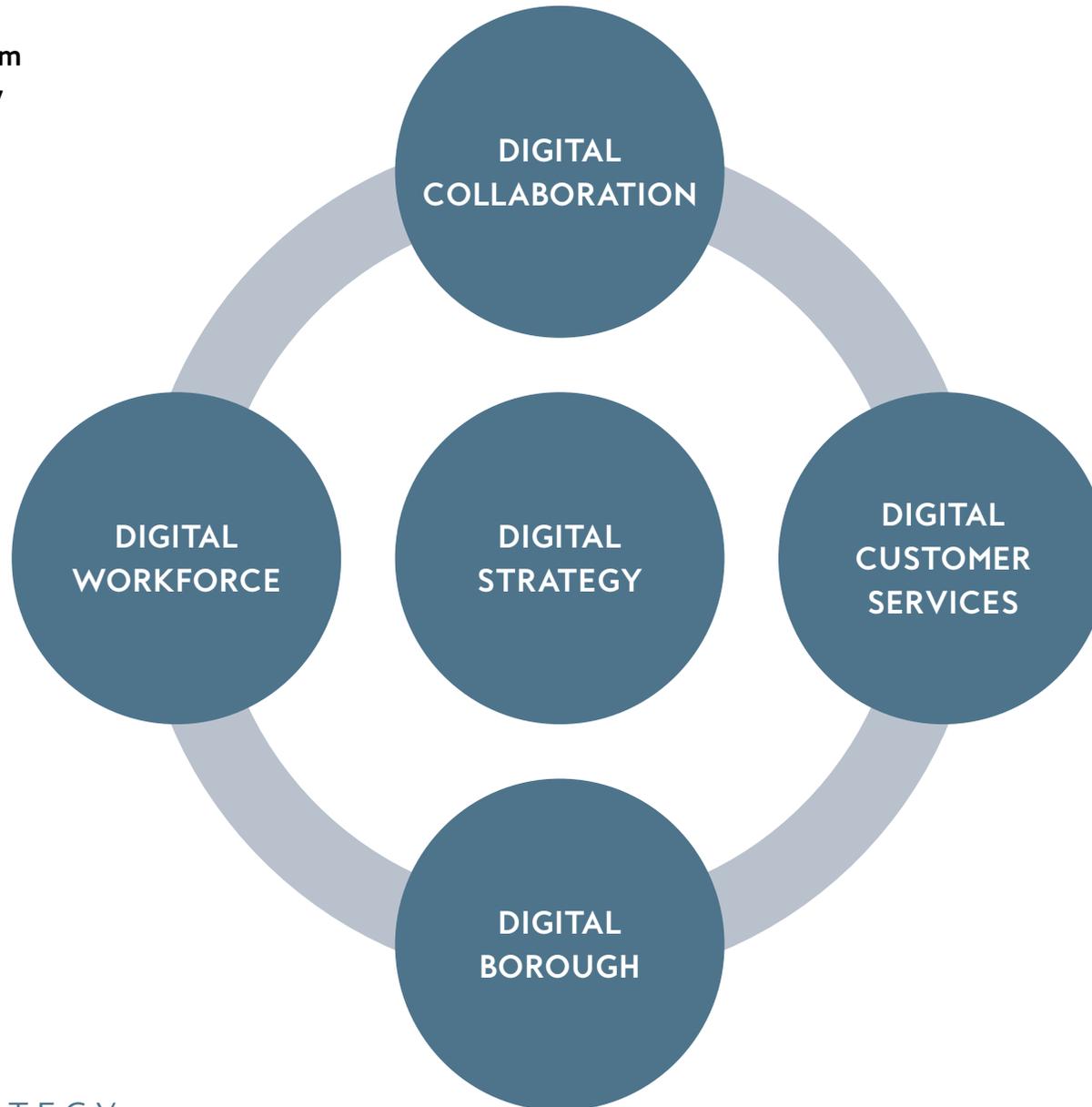


Projects that are scheduled for the early part of this strategy include:

- Introduce automated and speech enabled services to **increase efficient handling of customer contact**.
- Complete the **migration to cloud-based office productivity tools** – for email, word-processing, spreadsheets etc. This will bring efficiency benefits, enable better collaboration and make it easier for staff to work from any device – including those not owned by the Council.
- Delivery of our **‘Customer and Digital’ programme** – re-designing services to create a single digital and end-to-end process that is consistent across all access channels.
- Upgrade our computing platform and wide area network to further strengthen our security compliance and introduce **new approaches** to the management of our infrastructure.
- Upgrade the **‘people’s network’** within our libraries, including new public access computers, library management system and self-lending kiosks.
- **Device Refresh** – we will provide staff and elected members with the appropriate, fit for purpose equipment and tools they need to do their jobs – increasing flexibility and mobility.

OUR DIGITAL PRIORITIES FOR THE YEARS AHEAD

To deliver our longer-term aspirations, the strategy is focussed around four interlinking themes:



DIGITAL COLLABORATION

“Digital technology will enable the Council and its partners to tackle complex issues and work together seamlessly”.

Austerity, shrinking funding, fewer resources and the rising demands of social care, demand an increased focus on partnership working and sharing resources – aiming to **allow citizens to be more self-reliant**, reduce costs, jointly procure services and share expertise.

It is the integration of Health and Social Care which more than any other area will define and shape the future of digital public services. The key challenges do not lie in technology, but in truly placing the individual service user at the heart of service design, dealing with the cultural and governance implications of this.

Integration of health and social care is one of the Government’s major programmes of reform. At its heart, it is about ensuring that everyone can get the right care and support, whatever their needs, at every point in their care journey. It is also about efficient, joined-up and digital services. The demand for a closer integration of health and social care is providing an opportunity for a radical redesign of services.

One important way in which we will collaborate and work in partnership is through our participation and pivotal role in the delivery of the **Rotherham Integrated Care Partnership Digital Strategy** – developed by Health in conjunction with Rotherham Council. It sets out how the partnership will harness digital tools and information to enable the very best health and care for our local people and their families.



The following represents a selection of the initiatives that we will work on together:

- An **infrastructure optimisation** programme to ensure all staff can work in an agile manner across our joint estate.
- Joining up and enhancing our data networks across the Place, ensuring **greater coverage** for our health and care services.
- Development, adoption and expansion of the **Rotherham Health Record**, including the capability to support shared cared plans.
- Implementation of a specialist portal for **recording and sharing** the Education, Health and Care Plan for a child or young person with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- Aggregating citizen-level data (including health, social care, economic and environmental data) and ongoing development of these linked data sets, to support interventions and services to **improve outcomes** for citizens.
- Taking a **partnership-wide** approach to digital inclusion.

In addition to using technology to foster closer working between Health and Social care we will also exploit technology to enhance the provision of care services and related support:

- We will continue to promote **Assistive Technology** to support self-care in the home as part of our agenda to encourage independence and early prevention of health problems.
- Use of speech enabled devices, such as Alexa and Google Assistant, to provide reminders, service information and develop 'smart controls' around the home, for example, lighting, climate and appliances.
- Explore the opportunity for virtual support systems, networks and care circles to help tackle social isolation and loneliness and extend the number of people who can be supported at any one time.
- We will ensure the **engagement of children and young people** through digital solutions to improve a child's involvement in their assessment, reviews, case conferences and have their wishes and feelings heard.

DIGITAL CUSTOMER SERVICES

“Enabling Rotherham’s citizens to get the services and the information they need online”.

Following the revision of our **Customer Access Strategy** in 2018, we have developed a cross-cutting programme of work to extend and improve the range and depth of online and other self-service transactions.

We will promote and encourage **channel shift**, whilst ensuring those who need extra help to access services in this way, receive it through our **assisted digital** arrangements.

Developing and promoting digital access channels will reduce transactional costs and improve service availability.

We will achieve this by:

- Taking a ‘**digital first**’ approach to delivering more **transactional services** available online.
- Develop and promote the take-up of **Your Account** to make it easy for customers to go to one secure place to view their information online 24/7 and with minimum fuss.
- Introduce **voice enabled** services, to help direct calls more cost efficiently.

- Promote customer **self-service** as the preferred channel of choice.
- Explore the opportunity to utilise **artificial intelligence and automation capability** to handle low-level and frequent customer enquiries, across a range of access channels.
- Expand **assisted digital** arrangements for those that need a little more help, for example, offering web chat on our website
- Develop our use of **social media** and other broadcast channels to cascade real-time alerts and notifications, particularly during times of service disruption and inclement weather.
- Optimise our services to be accessed **mobile first** and utilise inbuilt ‘location aware’ capability to improve reporting of and access to, information and services.
- Utilise **customer data**, allowing us to transform it into business intelligence and use it to inform service planning and policy development.

DIGITAL BOROUGH

“Equipping Rotherham’s residents and businesses with the digital skills and technology they need to enhance their lives”.

While we wish to maximise take-up of all self-service access channels, we cannot leave behind those who are unable or choose not to make the change.

We need to help our residents and local businesses to maximise the opportunities that ‘digital’ can bring and help them to gain the skills and confidence needed to do so.

Equally, we need to ensure Rotherham is well placed to access changes in the technology landscape that will facilitate growth in our economy and create new job opportunities. We will achieve this by:

- Strong **Digital Leadership** within the Council to advocate and promote the wider adoption of digital throughout our services and the borough.
- Working with education, our partners and voluntary sectors to facilitate, support and develop a programme of **digital inclusion** initiatives to encourage citizen to gain **digital skills, confidence and motivation** to unlock the benefits of being online and digitally connected.

- Facilitating private sector investment in **fibre and Wi-Fi connectivity** in Rotherham.
- Encouraging small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to make good use of **regional funding** and training opportunities around broadband infrastructure/connectivity and digital skills, which will help further our economic objectives.
- Evaluating the opportunities that **5G** and other emerging technologies will provide, engaging with the commercial sector to help realise these opportunities.
- Taking a ‘smart cities’ approach to the intelligent management and maintenance of our assets, infrastructure and resources to **improve the quality of life** and convenience of residents and visitors.
- Working with the City Region and other local authorities on joint initiatives to leverage **infrastructure funding and investment**, including collaborative procurement activities.



DIGITAL WORKFORCE

“Staff will have the digital tools and skills required to deliver services effectively and efficiently”.

The Council uses a range of technology (infrastructure, hardware and software) to support its wide range of business requirements. We need to ensure these meet our immediate and future needs, as far as possible. Our staff and elected members need appropriate tools and equipment which are reliable and enable them to do their jobs in an efficient and effective way – anytime and anywhere.

- The technology we provide will more closely reflect what is currently being used successfully in private sector organisations and by **consumers**.
- We will maintain a programme of **device refresh** with the aim of ensuring no device is more than three years old.
- We will encourage **piloting of new technologies** at small cost and scale to test new ideas, working with our public sector partners and private sector companies.
- Exploit Software as a Service (SaaS) and cloud options where they can be shown to **enhance resilience and flexibility**, with an aim of ensuring the most cost-effective and secure solution that will also support the principles of maximising availability.

- Develop innovative, lean and efficient **ICT infrastructure** capable of delivering Council and customer requirements.
- We will continue our journey towards becoming a **paper-lite organisation**.
- Continue to support the **Public Sector Network (PSN)** initiative as part of promoting shared infrastructures and networks and sharing information/accessing systems securely.
- Digital technology and the opportunities it provides will become a key consideration in **service planning and policy development** across the Council.
- Exploit our investment in Microsoft 365 and other complementary technologies to change the way we work, facilitating staff to be more **agile and flexible**.
- Take advantage of the emerging **‘Internet of Things’** to redesign smarter public services around Rotherham’s citizens and businesses.
- Ensure our systems are appropriately resilient and that robust arrangements and procedures are in place to ensure **service continuity** in the event of a failure.
- Design and develop the ‘intranet of the future’ to improve staff communication and engagement, facilitate collaboration and support staff to **work smarter**.

- We will engage with council colleagues and Elected Members on digital solutions to best meet their needs and to ensure they have the **digital skills** they need to work effectively.
- We will invest in and deepen our use of data (including spatial) and intelligence to improve services for residents and **better inform decisions** on a local level.
- Increase the range of methods to engage and communicate with the public, each other and our partners in **efficient and modern ways**.
- Enhance **cyber security** within the Authority, including developing wider awareness amongst the workforce.



OUR DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

This Strategy is based upon several key principles which will provide a framework within which the Council will work:

- **Secure by design:** The security of our systems and data is of paramount importance. Security will be designed into our processes, procurements and developments at all levels.
- **Meet user needs:** We will understand and validate user needs and ensure these drive the decisions that we make and the services we provide.
- **Share and reuse:** Most Local Authorities do the same things in very similar ways. We will always seek to join up with others and share. We will learn from others and reuse existing software, processes and ideas.
- **Adopt, not adapt:** Large scale or complex customisations to exactly meet business requirements will be avoided wherever possible, instead business processes will be modified to meet the procured software's approach to a process.
- **Agile:** Regardless of whether we are buying a product or building something ourselves we will adhere to an agile way of working to ensure we prioritise the most important things first, for delivery in the shortest possible time.



CONCLUSION

The ambition we have laid out requires a step-change in approach and culture within the Council and how we exploit digital technology.

It provides enormous potential to transform the way we work and deliver services in Rotherham, but in order to realise this potential, we need to embed a digital way of thinking across the Council.

In the current financial climate this represents a significant challenge, but it is one that we need to overcome in order to deliver a high level of service for Rotherham's residents over the coming years and to ensure we and therefore they are not left behind.



