Digital Services Strategic Plan

October 2017

Author: Simon Putnam

Table of Contents

1.0 Foreword

The rapid growth in the use of technologies such as smart phones, tablets, social media and internet accessibility has presented Local Authorities with a unique opportunity to completely redesign how services are delivered and consumed.

In addition to these devices, we have also seen great strides taken in developing AI (artificial intelligence), RPA (robotic process automation) chatbots ("chat" functions using machine learning to mimic human responses) and augmented reality.

Developments such as Apple's "Siri" and Microsoft's "Cortana" as intelligent assistants or Amazon's "Alexa" devices make the future of Digital Services very exciting. It seems quite possible that within 5 years, we could well be asking (by voice) "Alexa, what is the process for getting a parking permit in Newham?" Alexa would respond with the information, we could then ask "Alexa, please access my bank account and pay the required amount". This is no longer science fiction, the quality and effectiveness of the AI is increasing every day.

When we couple these technological strides forward with residents increased expectation to access goods and services electronically, it becomes clear that the Council requires a clear and progressive roadmap to building a true digital service offer. One that can grow and mature overtime as the technology becomes more stable and accessible and allows us to remain ahead of the technology curve.

So, to move forward, the Residents view on how they access and consume council services is paramount to this offer. Our Digital Services will be designed with their direct input. There is little value in offering Digital Services nobody uses.

We also need them to be **able** to use them. This means building a Digital Service Inclusion Programme. We will develop and run workshops and other events to support this.

In addition to building and delivering a digital capability, this plan will seek to influence and drive the wider organisational and operational strategies at all levels within the Council.   Each service area will need to create a digitisation plan, supported by Digital Services and built in to the detailed plan.

Digital Services are also uniquely qualified to work with internal service areas to provide data for research, evaluation of service, and the development of predictive models and performance reports to enable others to define meaningful change to their operation.

Supported by ICT, Digital Services will proactively engage with all services to support the creation of their digitisation plans. Digital Services will work with ICT and other third parties to design and build a suite of services, utilising the current ICT infrastructure backed by "best of breed" third party "cloud" services.

2.0 Our Planned Strategic Outcomes

This plan sets out how we will deliver our key desired strategic outcomes. These outcomes have been set with the express purpose of delivering a truly 21st century service and in a way that our residents, visitors and businesses will want to access.

Outcomes:

- Develop and deploy digital solutions that proactively and reactively use a resident's "life event" to trigger an integrated and coherent response from the Council.

- Create a "Digital by Default" culture that ensures Newham tracks and drives digital innovations for our residents, whilst reducing costs (and producing revenue opportunities) across the Council

- Eliminate the use of e-mail, by utilising social communication tools and allowing account access via Facebook or Google logins.

- Using AI (artificial intelligence) to eliminate completely any unnecessary person-to-person contact by providing digitally delivered and individually tailored information, advice and guidance – linked to partner organisations such as Money Works and Workplace

- Use RPA (robotic process automation) to reduce or eliminate the need for a CRM or other "Line of Business" applications by managing work and data flow

- Promote digital inclusion by providing appropriate help and guidance

- Build an integrated assessment ability that capitalises on the new digital technologies and our vast data knowledge

These outcomes will need to be reflected in the Service Delivery Plan for each service area. Digital Services will provide support and guidance for this.

3.0 What is a "Digital Service"

According to Wiki, the term "Digital Services" refers to the delivery of information including data and content across multiple platforms and devices such as tablets, laptops and smartphones; giving people what they want, when they want it, how they want it.

Information is presented in a way that is easy to use and understand and typically involves transactional services such as submitting forms to allow the transfer and update of information.

However, when it comes to new digital services we are not just thinking about technology. We want to use digital services to drive cultural change - we need to **"Think Digital"**. For example, the way we design services should be driven by the needs and wants of our residents, businesses and visitors.

We will use digital to try to eliminate the silos inherent in local authorities and their business systems. We will advocate paperless processes and highlight areas of waste where paper has been traditionally predominant.

We are starting to build services with residents needs at the forefront of our designs. If we want people to use our online services and most importantly **choose** to use them over all other channels, we need to find out what features will encourage them to do that and design and build services accordingly.

We will use The Agile Methodology, which means we can build quickly, test what we've built and make changes based on regular, focussed feedback.

4.0 What We Will Do

The Digital Services team will **spearhead the design and delivery of digital solutions that deliver modern, easy to use and effective services to the public fit for the digital age**.

We will build mobile-first, flexible, services designed to make accessing and using council services as easy as possible for our residents, businesses, visitors and staff. The services will also meet the strategic need around internal efficiencies and cost-reductions or avoidance. By developing council-wide workflow and taking advantage of the powerful Data Hub, we can cut inefficiencies from our processes.

Not all Digital Services will manifest themselves as an "application". For example, we will use the data hub to provide analysis for children's early intervention strategies or to support a service re-design. We will look to update and improve the underlying technology of the Data Warehouse to provide real-time performance metrics and enable more innovative digital solutions.

We will develop and use the Data Warehouse to build predictive models that will help shape policy and also underpin advances in artificial intelligence – allowing more sophisticated digital services that are proactive and targeted (i.e. developing preventive measures as opposed to post-event fixes).

We will leverage our expertise across Data, Solution Design and New Media to provide truly cross-functional efficiencies across all areas of the Council.

We recognise that both technology and the needs and duties of the Council will change over time. Digital Services will be at the forefront of these changes, proactively proposing new and exciting methods of operation and customer service. This document should therefore be considered as the beginning of an ever-evolving strategy.

Our work will be underpinned by the guiding principles that govern our approach to the development and deployment of digital services. We will use data to establish a values-based approach to the prioritisation of solutions and the use of resources.

Our interactions with stakeholders will be honest, open, frank and fair. We will work extensively with residents to inform and build well-thought-out, simple, compelling digital applications. This is summed up in one of our guiding principles:

- **Do the hard work to make it simple**

Making something look simple is easy. Making something simple to use is much harder — especially when the underlying systems are complex — but that's what we will be doing. We will not take "it's always been that way" for an answer. It's harder work to make things simple, but it's the right thing to do.

Digital Inclusion:

The Government Digital Service (GDS) has developed a **Digital Inclusion Plan** that looks to ensure that, by 2020, 100% of people who are able to access digital services do so. The GDS believe that just under 10% of the population may never be able gain basic digital capabilities, because of disabilities or literacy skills.

Within Newham, our plan is assess these statistics and develop a local inclusion plan that looks at ability, literacy and affordability. We will do this using our Data Warehouse and by engaging with local residents via the Community Hubs. This investment is deemed valid as helping people to go online can also help tackle wider social issues, support economic growth and close equality gaps.

The GDS has identified 4 main challenges that people have highlighted to accessing digital services or even going online:

- access - the ability to actually go online and connect to the internet
- skills - to be able to use the internet
- motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing
- trust - a fear of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online

The Digital Inclusion plan will look to expand and refine this list and devise strategies to deal with each challenge.

Cultural Change and New Ways of Working

With the growth of mobile technology, all organisations are looking to streamline processes with a view to improving direct services and reducing internal costs. Councils are no different. Developing new ways of working utilising touch sensitive tablets and laptops as well as smart phones is driving process change and could drive culture change – **Think Digital**.

The Digital Services team will look to promote and encourage new ways of working, by, for example:

- Using our data to create more intelligent processing across service areas

- Developing repeatable solutions that "feel" the same and utilise common data elements reducing the "silo" effect so prevalent in local authorities

- Taking advantage of group working communication tools such as Slack™ or even using WhatsApp™ rather than e-mail

New digital solutions will highlight the need for changes in work practices. Access to the data will provide solid evidence of this requirement, and, with careful analysis, give indications of how these changes may manifest themselves.

The Data Hub

The Data Hub will provide expert knowledge of the services and will ensure their data needs are understood and met. The team will develop a data management plan including standards, protocols and procedures so that others can find and use data and self-service arrangements can be developed using front ends where possible.

We will focus on the acquisition, cleaning and preparation of data, build and maintaining council systems and small systems to support the CSSB programme and developing data-marts such as that in adult social care. Staff in the data hub will need to work across commissioning services to understand business needs and develop reports to extract complex data from frameworks to meet statutory and key business requirements in Adults' Social Care, Children's Services and other Commissioning Services.

The team will develop automated reports for the monthly and quarterly PIs with read access to the performance analysis team who will need to add commentary and provide analysis. Where possible working together some areas of analysis such as trends and comparisons can also be automated. They will also be required to develop automated reports for service specific reporting directly to commissioners.

They will provide data reports directly into services as well as providing data for the performance analysis team and the research function.

The team will also lead on data quality and ensure compliance with the agreed corporate data quality standards and develop systemised ways of assessing and improving data quality linked to the inputting of each source system. They will work alongside the data warehouse programme and use NOMAD for automating data quality compliance and validity. The team will embed data quality policy and procedures across the business and ensure SLT agreed data quality owners and managers for each service system take ownership for embedding data quality in the business, starting with training for those entering data into the systems.

As the council develops its digital offer increasingly this team will need to adapt to collect new forms of data and extract it for analysis teams. We will also be responsible for extract / transform / load tasks and links across to the data warehouse via the data warehouse staging area.

This team will also provide services with data directly where Information Governance allows to track progress and enable reporting on activity such as troubled families.

This team would also lead on the statutory returns.

New Media

The monitoring and innovative use of the new media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter will form a key part of our communications and interactions with our residents, businesses and visitors.

We will use social media tools to increase access to information about digital services and increase participation in user testing which will in turn help residents feel more informed about the organisation. We will use them to encourage and enable residents to provide feedback to improve services.

Social media can also help to target residents and build a relationship with those who are not interested in receiving information through more traditional channels.
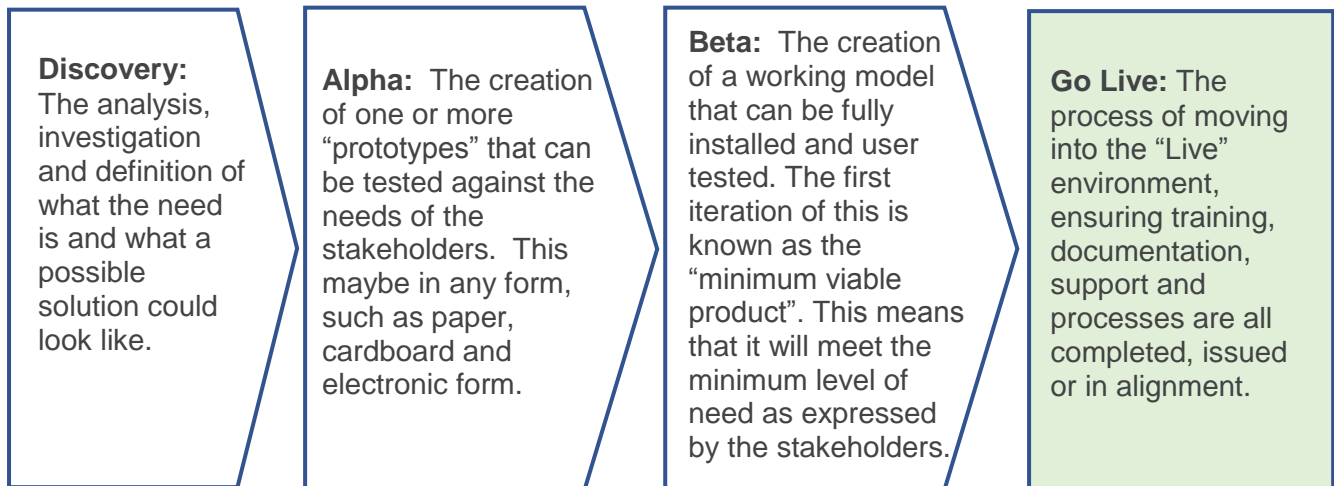
Just as importantly, as we grow the number and breadth of our digital platforms, we will need class leading content to ensure that we are giving a consistent message and advice to our users - both residents and colleagues around the Council. The New Media team play a crucial role in ensuring this consistency across all of our digital channels and platforms.

5.0 Digital Delivery

We will introduce industry-leading ways of working to ensure transparency in all that we do, and will set this expectation with our stakeholders. This includes methodologies that sit within the "Agile" framework.

We will create a data-driven innovation culture that allows fast responses to be trialled against key objectives. The approach will follow a defined route (also baked into governance):

Discovery: The analysis, investigation and definition of what the need is and what a possible solution could look like.

Alpha: The creation of one or more "prototypes" that can be tested against the needs of the stakeholders. This maybe in any form, such as paper, cardboard and electronic form.

Beta: The creation of a working model that can be fully installed and user tested. The first iteration of this is known as the "minimum viable product". This means that it will meet the minimum level of need as expressed by the stakeholders.

Go Live: The process of moving into the "Live" environment, ensuring training, documentation, support and processes are all completed, issued or in alignment.

The "Agile" method allows the digital "product" to be iterated at pace and for the **Minimum Viable Product (MVP)** to be released as early as possible. The product is then built on actual user need and feedback driven from the experience of using the new service, adding value-led, prioritised improvements into new releases over time.

The platforms and services that underpin modern technology and data have evolved in the last decade and so has the role of ICT departments. A significant number of the capabilities that Newham Council needs are now commodity purchases that can be operated without The Council needing to own the whole solution. In a "digital-by-default" and "cloud-first" age, IT operations are taking on a far greater "service management" function, but with a much increased reliability on systems architecture, APIs and integrations to ensure all the pieces "fit" and work collaboratively.

As a result, we expect the relationship between ICT and Digital will be different from how it may be with other areas of Newham. This relationship will need time to form and evolve, but for us IT will be a complementary partner that adds the right value at the right times to enable our strategy.

6.0 Vision for Success

Our Vision:

What does a digital organisation look like? The Government's "Digital Service Standard" lists 18 criteria to run "good" digital services but does this go far enough?

Our vision is Develop a digital culture and technology to deliver two key outcomes:

Empower customers to self-serve as a default
Which, in turn, will allow us to
Restructure service delivery to reduce cost and target key resources

We should accept that digital is not a list of tasks but more a way of thinking, a behaviour and a driver for decision making. We can then apply Tom Loosemore's* definition of digital as "applying the culture, practices, processes & technologies of the Internet-era to respond to people's raised expectations"

*Tom Loosemore, founder of the UK Government Digital Service and author of the Government Digital Strategy

We are successful when:

- We are able to provide on demand, authoritative and accurate data about administrative, transactional and resident facing activities across all areas of the Council via the Data Hub.

- The Digital Services team is consulted and involved in digital, data driven projects, decision support, and process improvement initiatives across all areas of the Council.

- The Digital Services team is seen as a centre of excellence that is accessible to all areas of the Council and can be relied upon to provide timely, accurate answers to all digital related queries and issues.

- We use our skills in User Research, Service Design and Digital Technology to create solutions that are well reviewed and well-liked by our Newham residents.

- We can demonstrate the value, both in financial and user satisfaction terms, of everything that we're delivering.

- We will place users (be they our people, suppliers, visitors or residents) at the core of why, what, when and how we work. We will not shy away from continually adapting at pace to the changing expectations of all those who use our solutions and services.

- We create a sustainable, cost effective supplier and partner base that we manage to deliver solutions that meet user needs, taking into account industry best practice and trends, putting Newham to the top of the list of digitally capable councils.

- Our solutions, whilst leveraging all of the Digital Service team's experience and expertise, are fully integrated into the wider council technology ecosystem.

- There is a single view of all data across the Council that is agreed and recognised by all areas.

- We use our data creatively to promote the 'open by default' approach and keep our residents and businesses informed and updated with the latest, accurate data.

7.0 Guiding Principles

Principles that underpin everything we do

Principles shall be used as a point of reference for all activity - from designing a service to going live, integrating existing platforms to sharing data with suppliers, engaging our people to growing business capability.

We understand and accept that these principles are meaningless unless Newham Council works in a collaborative way (all people under the Newham Council banner, at all levels of the organisation) to create operational practices and behaviours to ensure each of them is demonstrable on the ground.

Our design principles have been based on the **Government Digital Service's** published approach:

1. **Start with customer needs:**

Service design starts with identifying the user or customer's need (by which we mean residents, local businesses and visitors). We will do research, we will analyse data and we will talk to users and customers. We will not make assumptions. We will have empathy for users and customers, and remember that what they ask for isn't always what they need.

Where Digital is being used to support and improve internal services, we will engage with the service area Officers to gain detailed insight into the requirements. Where these requirements can be met by standard ICT delivery and updates to existing line-of-business systems, we will hand off to ICT OneSource.

2. **Design with data:**

We can learn from real world behaviour by looking at how existing services are used. Let data drive decision-making, not hunches or guesswork. We will keep doing that after taking the service live, prototyping and testing with users then iterating in response. Analytics should be built-in, always on and easy to read. They're an essential tool.

3. **Do the hard work to make it simple:**

Making something look simple is easy. Making something simple to use is much harder — especially when the underlying systems are complex — but that's what we will be doing. We will not take "it's always been that way" for an answer. It's usually more and harder work to make things simple, but it's the right thing to do.

4. **Iterate, then iterate again:**

The best way to build good services is to start small and iterate wildly. Release what are known as "Minimum Viable Products" early, test them with actual users, move through the development process from Alpha to Beta to Live adding features, deleting things that don't work and making refinements based on feedback. Iteration reduces risk. It makes big failures unlikely and turns small failures into lessons. If a prototype isn't working, we will not be afraid to scrap it and start again.

5. This is for everyone

Accessible design is good design. Everything we build should be as inclusive, legible and readable as possible. If we have to sacrifice elegance — so be it. We will be building for needs, not audiences. We're designing for the whole community, not just the ones who are used to using the web. The people who most need our services are often the people who find them hardest to use. We will think about those people from the start.

6. We will build digital services not websites

A service is something that helps people to do something. Our job is to uncover user needs, and build the service that meets those needs. Of course much of that will be pages on the web, but we're not here to build websites. The digital world has to connect to the real world, so we have to think about all aspects of a service, and make sure they add up to something that meets user needs.

7. We will validate data and ensure integrity and quality

The Data Hub will provide the nexus for data acquisition, quality and extraction. Accurate data will form the central core for the development of digital services, performance reporting and analytics. It will provide data-based evidence to support and direct service redesigns.

8. We will advocate the use of social media, responsibly and productively

New media communications will build a long term reciprocal relationship with an online community of residents to keep them informed about our digital services and encourage participation in their development. Social media will be an enabler for feedback to ensure digital services continue to meet the needs of our users in the future.

8.0 Constraints, risks and opportunities for Digital Services

There are 5 core areas of constraints or risks that we must help the Council to overcome through collaboration and knowledge sharing in the coming months and years. There are also 5 core areas where we can differentiate ourselves and deliver significant value across the Council.

Some we are already actively working on or living through our day-to-day interactions and ways of working, and some will require more thought, design and hands-on work to mitigate or bring to life.

1.0 GROWING USER NEEDS & SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

Users (internal and external) expect easier access to services on their chosen device, at their chosen time, from their chosen location

Users (internal and external) expect the full end-to-end journey to have been considered, making the interaction as seamless, intuitive and quick as possible whether online or offline

Residents expect all data to be secure, always available and never lost

Residents expect the Council to know about their individual circumstance and tailor the experience to accommodate

Residents expect us to find the right balance between transparency and protection of information so we are fair and open but do not compromise safety and security

Residents are continually changing and the Council's view of them needs constant updating

WE CAN BEGIN TO RESOLVE THIS BY:

Leading up-front user research that addresses the end-to-end journey from both resident and council user perspectives (conducted before investment decisions are made)

Creating mobile, digital first services that are tested across devices

Embedding security throughout our technology, not shying away from open data and interfaces

Putting Data Hub and data analytics at the heart of our capabilities

Making decisions based on projected key changes to residents

2.0 CURRENT ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Relationship and contractual arrangements with ICT OneSource as a shared service with Havering. Newham's Digital needs and strategic direction may not align with Havering.

Speed of delivery may be impacted by reliance on OneSource development resources and engineering capacity

Confusion over lines of responsibility can create conflict or set unachievable expectations

The strategic direction of Digital Services may not be reflected by OneSource

Disputes over technology choice may also prove to be a constraint and is clearly a risk to future delivery

WE CAN BEGIN TO RESOLVE THIS BY:

Aligning the strategies of OneSource ICT with Digital Services by creating joint work groups, panels or Boards.

Working with OneSource ICT as a "supplier" as part of a wider "eco-system" including third party solution developers, cloud partners etc.

Define a Newham lead Governance Framework that clearly shows lines of responsibility and the decision process

3.0. EVOLVING GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, LEGAL, ETHICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & FINANCIAL EXPECTATIONS

We must conform to government and regulatory policies, strategies and standards, which are often outside of our direct control

We will be held to a high standard by residents and businesses and must evidence why we have done what we have done

We need to demonstrate value for money for the Council

We have hard financial benefits to meet against the baseline costs of services as well as soft, non-tangible benefits

Cost profiles of new technology can be significant, or higher than needed, if not managed in a joined-up way with the right people providing insight, at the right time and at the right level

We have committed to sharing our expertise across Newham and beyond as a revenue generating opportunity

The responsibility and accountability for the above must flow through to our partners and suppliers

WE CAN BEGIN TO RESOLVE THIS BY:

Understanding where, when and how the Council will be supported or constrained by policies, standards and strategies and how Digital Services can work to support or mitigate the effects

Working to the standards we would aspire to of a taxpayer funded service

Making smart technology decisions based on sound business sense, utilising the expertise in ICT, around Newham Council and its partners and other local authorities

Finding and exploiting opportunities to support the growth of digital technologies in the areas we work with, both within Newham Council and outside

4.0. FLEXING CAPACITY & CAPABILITY

The capabilities that digital can support today are different from those of only a few years ago and will not be the same in the future

The pace and amount of change is growing and this can lead to resourcing challenges

We compete against the open market for talent

We have permanent headcount limits, but we want to retain knowledge of core council technologies and innovation

WE CAN BEGIN TO RESOLVE THIS BY:

Encouraging the use of flexible resourcing models that make best use of disaggregated partnerships

Collaborating on decision making at all levels and sharing expertise

Inducting staff consistently, recording why and how decisions are reached

Develop cross functional capabilities in Digital Services and the wider council

5.0 LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY & DATA

We manage data on a scale and complexity the likes of which presents significant challenges to presentation, security and analysis

We must provide confidence in the accuracy and security of data to/from many sources, exploited by a large number of people simultaneously, to meet evolving needs, at the right time, place and channel

We will need to be flexible to exploit digital technologies that have not yet been created, or are yet to reach a level of maturity that is suitable for the digital ecosystem

We will need to support business owners to change ways of working to maximise the benefits of digital

We need to procure new digital technologies and services based on business cases that demonstrate true user need, strong requirements, informed by experts in the field and with a full understanding of pre-existing technical options and constraints

WE CAN BEGIN TO RESOLVE THIS BY:

Working in an open and collaborative manner with all areas of the Council and key suppliers

Recognising that Digital Services is about the capture, manipulation, transfer and storage of data that can be leveraged by the business. Technology, tools, software, hardware are all enablers of this

Building flexibility and interfaces in to data sources and tools so that we can make use of different technologies

Using and supporting existing procurement expertise and principles to ensure that we can secure best of breed partners

Tomorrow's Service Delivery - Today