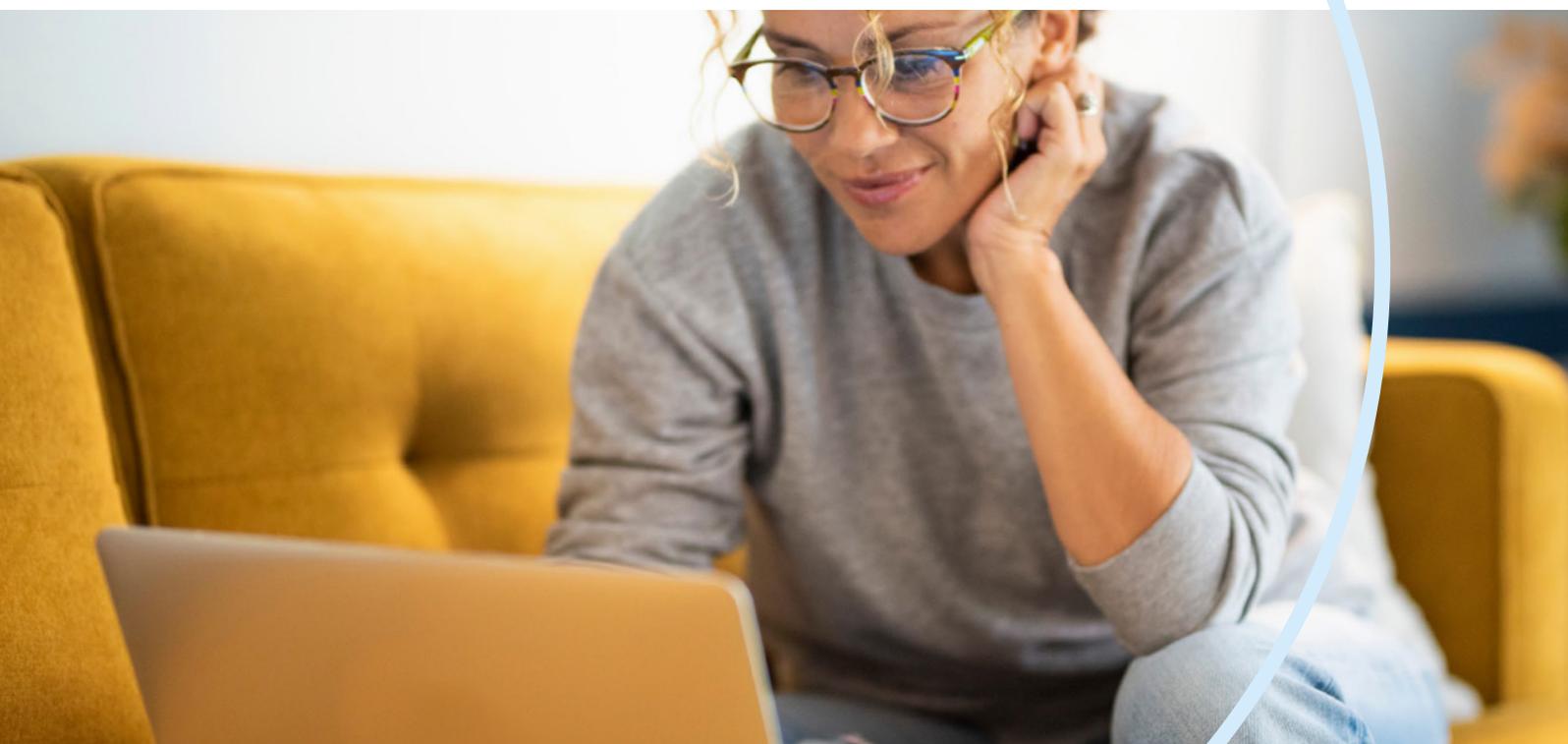
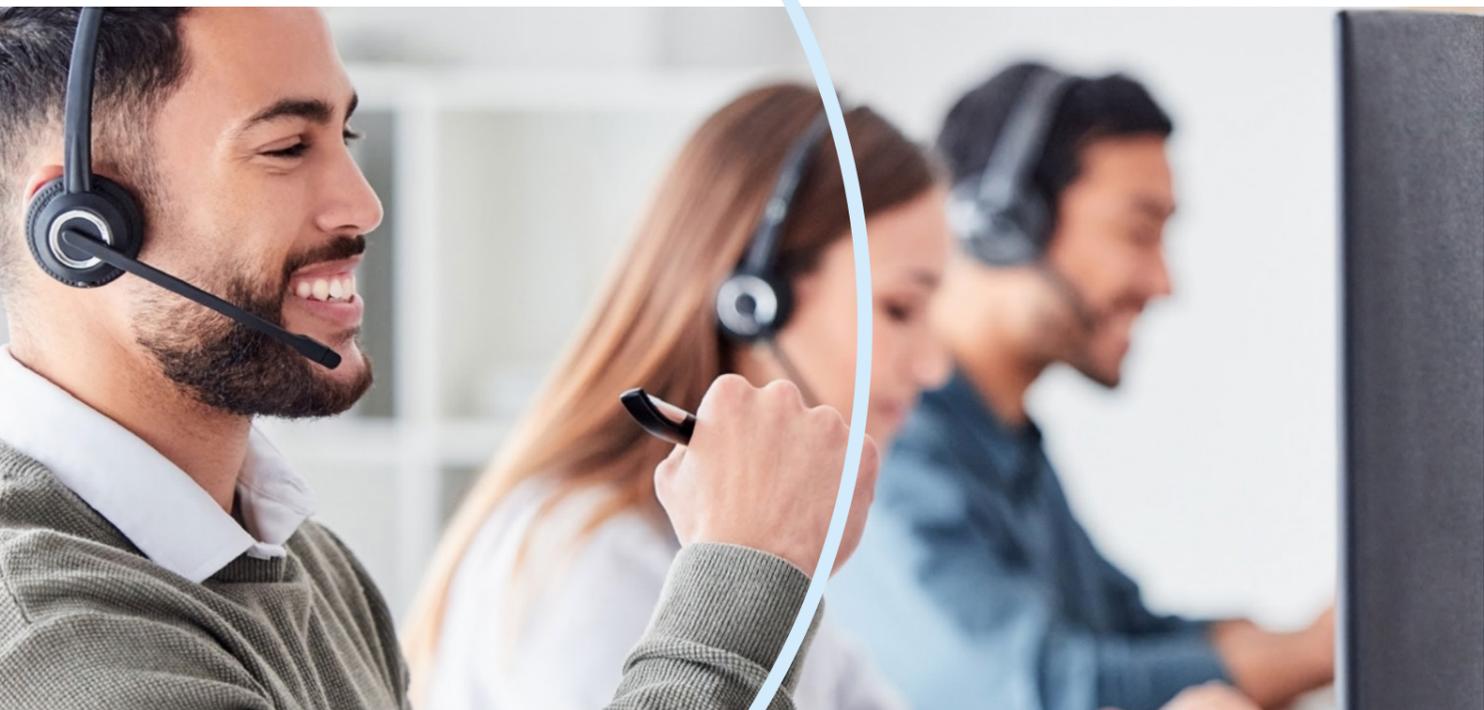


Kent County Council
Digital Strategy
2024 - 2027





Digital - how we use technology to achieve our strategic ambitions

Welcome to our Digital Strategy, which outlines our plans to bring about Digital Transformation within Kent County Council. This strategy serves as an overarching framework that encompasses our current and future digitally focused strategies and policies.

This strategy acts as a cornerstone for future digital initiatives within the council to ensure that our efforts are coordinated and aligned, promoting synergy across our directorates, divisions, and teams, enabling us to drive positive and meaningful change within Kent County Council. It is not the Technology strategy, which focuses on our technical infrastructure and future direction of our technology estate; the Digital strategy is intentionally distinct, focusing instead on how we exploit technology to support and facilitate better digital experiences and deliver our Digital ambitions.

Our vision is to ensure that *"People's digital experiences of KCC are accessible, inclusive, clear, trusted and designed with the user in mind to make their experience as positive as possible. They leave feeling confident, empowered, and respected."*

Our mission is to securely and ethically utilise technology, tools, and information to enhance our services, making them faster, more cost-effective, more environmentally friendly, and ultimately providing our staff with the means to deliver a better, more streamlined experience for our residents and Kent businesses that we support. We will do this by integrating technology, in a user centred way, into our operations, revolutionising the way our staff work and present services to our residents. To do this will require a significant culture shift, everything we do should be guided by the KCC values and our aspirational cultural attributes as set out within the People Strategy (2022-2027).

This strategy directly supports our response within our council strategy, "Framing Kent's Future, 2022-26". Within this, we emphasise the importance of further digitising our services to improve the experiences of both our staff and our residents. We understand the significance of investing in our ICT infrastructure and harnessing digital technologies. We have already made substantial investments in our technology, establishing robust architecture and implementing modern internal tools such as the enterprise-level Microsoft 365 environment.

These advancements have significantly improved our technological foundations, providing a strong basis for the next phase of our digital transformation, which will empower our staff to excel in their roles. This is further demonstrated through our commitment to the *Local Digital Declaration*.

We recognise that Digital Transformation is an ongoing journey, and the technology landscape is ever-evolving, therefore we will actively learn from evidence and feedback, allowing us to quickly adjust our plans to accommodate changes or address service pressures. Our annual delivery plan provides the necessary agility to support these adjustments effectively.

“When digital transformation is done right, it's like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, but when done wrong, all you have is a really fast caterpillar.”



Where do we need to be?

Contributing to the objectives of the council's strategy, and delivering our digital vision, requires both a culture shift and a digital technology shift, and we have established overarching digital design principles that will help us do this.

The application of digital design principles is underpinned by our service expertise.

Digital design principle 1

Start with users needs, design services around the service users,

Digital design principle 2

Buy once, use many times,

Digital design principle 3

Design with data insight & analytics built in,

Digital design principle 4

Keep it simple, share and iterate,

Digital design principle 5

Consistent, not uniform,

Digital design principle 6

Support and upskill staff to embrace digital.

We have identified 4 strategic ambitions.

- **Improve residents' digital experience.**
We will design our services around the residents needs,
- **Simple, secure and shareable.**
We will repeatedly use the technology we have, making full use of capabilities and features,
- **Well used and used well.**
We will support users in getting the most out of our technology,
- **Data led.**
We will make better use of data, to inform better decision making.

○ Improve residents' digital experience

Provide easier digital access to council services that are designed around the resident, taking a user-centred approach and maximising accessibility and inclusion.

Why?

We need our services to meet residents' expectations, target our resources to where they are needed most, and provide services digitally where most appropriate. Whilst many services are already accessible digitally, there is opportunity to widen this and further improve these services. It is not only about providing digitalised services, but ensuring these are as good as they can be so that residents want to use our digital services. We want to ensure consistency in the quality and the look so as not to dilute our brand.

Digital design principle 1

Start with user needs, design services around the service user

Digital design principle 5

Consistent, not uniform

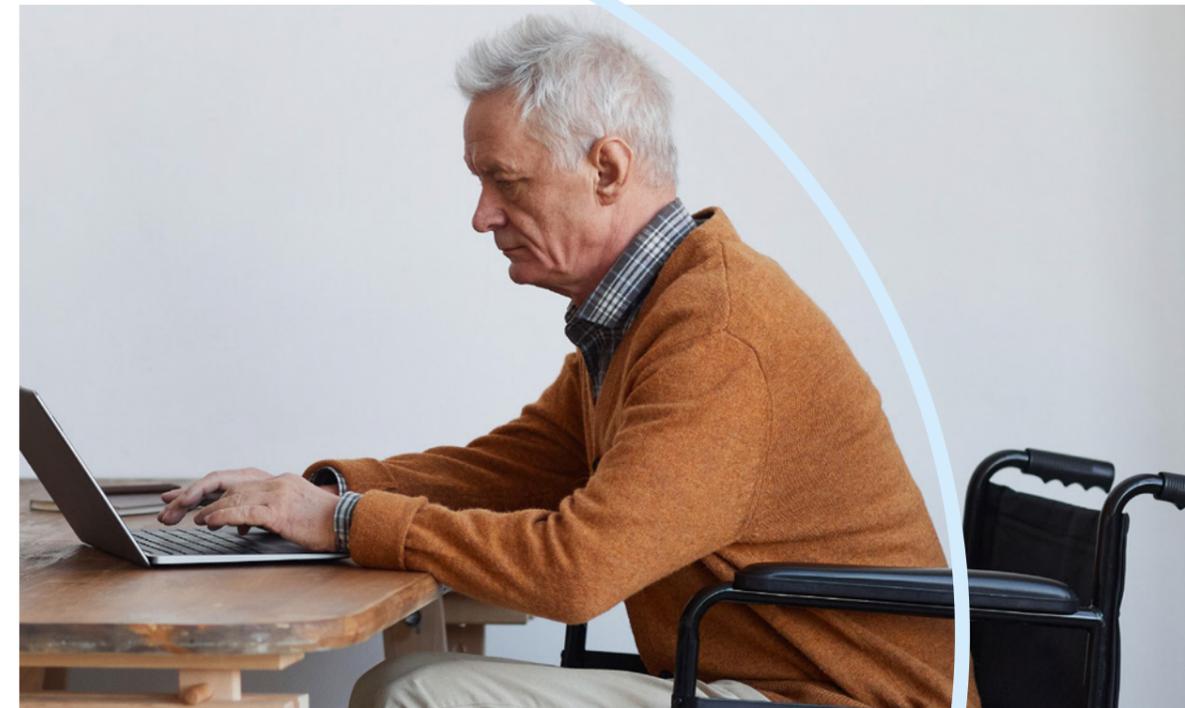
How?

- Through developing our cultural attributes; 'Be compassionate and inclusive', 'Externally focused – residents, families and communities at the heart of decision-making' and 'Flexible/agile – willing to take (calculated) risks,'
- Develop a consistent approach to user research, supporting tool kit (and development offer) to be adopted across the organisation, and supporting framework to share insights making use of the persona archetypes established through the recent large-scale resident research,
- Adopting a product-oriented approach for sustained and continuous improvement of digital products, supported by a development offer and community of practice,
- Developing a more robust approach to enforcing our digital accessibility guidelines so that we can meet and exceed our accessibility standards across both our resident facing platforms and the systems our staff engage with,
- Proactively conducting 'digital discoveries' across the organisation, seeking opportunities for end-to-end digital processes, and improving existing digital experiences for those delivering and accessing our services,
- Creation of a resident experience playbook,

- Explore the use of social media channels as ways for residents to interact and build a different kind of relationship with KCC and to access certain services,
- Making the best use of our Power Platform to build in automation where appropriate and reduce processing time and improve efficiency.

What would success look like?

- 1) User research/user centred design built into all digital service design and an active knowledge sharing forum,
- 2) Digital services have built in feedback tools that are collectively monitored, with lessons learned and continual improvement incorporated into the product/processes,
- 3) Digital services that both consistently meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines dependably,
- 4) An embedded product management approach where 'digital products' are owned by services and are sustained, and continuously improved and digital components are shared across services,
- 5) A rolling cycle of digital discoveries which identify opportunities and feed digital product backlogs,
- 6) Designing end-to-end digital services (including those that connect with our partners), not just digitalising part of the process.



○ Simple, secure and shareable

We want to keep it simple and use one secure tool for the job. We will rationalise our technology and use the technology we have repeatedly.

Why?

We want to buy once and use many times so that we avoid procuring multiple platforms that perform the same function (such as booking, reporting, paying, enquiring) because the benefits are huge. Simplifying our approach and leveraging existing investments makes financial sense. Moreover, it enables us to share and iterate on tried and tested methods for digital delivery, allowing us to expand our offering to residents without duplicating effort. Taking this approach, iterating throughout our journey, means we fail small and continuously improve. This will reduce cyber risk, help us be compliant with information governance and data protection, lower support costs, enhance the compatibility of our systems, and streamline the skillsets we need to deliver Digital. Most importantly, it will ensure simplicity for residents to access our services.

Digital design principle 2

Buy once, use many times

Digital design principle 4

Keep it simple, share and iterate

How?

- Through developing our cultural attribute 'Working together – building and delivering for the best interests of KCC',
- Introduce a streamlined process for commissioning digital products, establish architecture principles, prioritising problem-solving over technical solutions, and enabling faster delivery,
- Implement robust governance measures to prevent independent commissioning of digital services,
- Establish our technology blueprint (including a maintenance process to ensure it is kept up to date and current) for all KCC systems, identifying duplication with a view to rationalise the number of systems (through Enterprise Architecture) considering the scalability of the products we have and reusing existing technologies rather than commissioning additional platforms,
- Establish architecture principles for newly commissioned platforms and in the way we manage and develop these platforms, ensuring they are robustly assessed to meet architecture principles and data protection standards,

- Development of a "Digital toolbox", identifying our preferred digital tools and supporting us to make use of existing and corporately assured technical solutions when implementing directorate digital roadmaps,
- Continuous review of the "Digital toolbox" to ensure that the tools continue to be the best investment and meet our collective needs,
- Creation of new interoperability standards to ensure our systems talk to each other seamlessly and therefore reduce the dependency on suppliers for complex integration and promote automation and data sharing,
- Refine the digital front doors to Kent services, streamlining channels for resident engagement, for example, standalone websites, apps and social media channels.

What would success look like?

- 1) A clear and cohesive commissioning and governance process that is understood by the organisation and underpinned by the digital design principles,
- 2) A complete and thorough catalogue of digital software already commissioned which is effectively used when specifying digital requirements, to avoid duplicate commissioning of technologies,
- 3) Lines of business systems that seamlessly exchange information,
- 4) Reduction in: number of systems/platforms, spend on software and hardware, number of suppliers, shadow IT & training and cyber risk,
- 5) Kent.gov.uk is the single front door to Kent's digital services.



Well used and used well

Support colleagues to make the best, fullest use of the tools and technologies available to them, developing high levels of digitally skilled collaboration.

Why?

Our strategy will only be realised if our culture fully supports it. This entails providing adequate support to colleagues to leverage tools, technology, and applications to their maximum potential. Our aim is to empower and enhance the digital capabilities of our staff, thereby improving adoption. We will collaborate with colleagues responsible for delivering the People Strategy as well as subject matter experts within our services to provide the necessary support and upskilling.

Digital design principle 6 Support and upskill staff to embrace digital

How?

- Through developing our cultural attributes; 'Empowering – our people take accountability for their decisions and actions' and 'Curious – constantly learning and evolving',
- Continue to invest in digital skills, leveraging our existing investments, both for council wide technologies as well as our line of business systems and ensuring that digital skill development is embedded within our complete development offer and existing programmes,
- Sustaining, supporting, and developing the digital champions network and build digital advocacy through engagement,
- Encourage innovation and enthusiasm for digital by showcasing the art of the possible and promoting our technology through digital events and communications,
- Demystifying digital so that staff understand its relevance to their roles and building this into the way we manage performance, so that digital ways of working and innovation are shared, recognised, and rewarded,
- Development of digital protocols to support staff to use tool to ensure consistency in how we use the tools available to get best value from technology,
- Proactively evaluate our usage of core technology platforms (e.g. M365) and use this data to target developmental interventions across the organisation,
- Supporting policies are developed in line with KCC's value to be brave, aiding the adoption of emerging functionality, including but not limited to the use of automated algorithms and AI (Artificial Intelligence).

What would success look like?

- 1) An actively used digital skills learning hub and knowledge sharing forum, where staff feel supported and have digital built into personal development plans,
- 2) Self-reported staff confidence in using digital tools available to them,
- 3) Staff make the best use of M365 (including citizen development using the Power Platform) ,
- 4) Documented application of the digital design principles for new, existing, and decommissioned systems,
- 5) Our leaders and staff are educated in the impact of digital technologies and are ambassadors for technology innovation.



○ Data led

We want our data to be embedded, accessible and reliable so that we can maximise the use of the data we collect to better inform our decision making and efficiency.

Why?

As our technology evolves, we collect and store more data than ever before, and this growth will accelerate as services transform and embrace digital. Data provides the essential insight necessary to address increasing financial and social pressures, understand and improve the efficiency of services, and provide the backbone needed for stable secure digital services, including automation.

Digital design principle 3: Design with data insight and analytics built in

How?

- Learn lessons from the Data Strategy use-cases and use these to inform the implementation plan of the council's data strategy,
- Align the renewed digital commissioning and governance processes with the Data Governance Framework,
- Apply the Governments FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) principles (National Data Strategy),
- Digital services are designed with data protection by default, ensuring we are safely following existing processes from the point of discovery,
- Create a data catalogue to make data assets discoverable and available, including a repository of reference data, ensuring it is regularly updated and readily available for use,
- Develop and implement a data framework (including roles and responsibilities) underpinned by a bespoke training offer based on clearly defined levels of skills and capabilities, and creating a community of practice to support staff to better use data,
- Develop and implement data quality standards and guidelines and data quality assurance processes,
- Continue development of federated data platform(s) capable of providing access to internal business reference and GIS data and external datasets using common software tools which are not tied to proprietary systems.

What would success look like?

- 1) Our Data and GIS Platforms are integral to our ways of working where these are the best tool for the job,
- 2) How we collect, use, share and dispose of data is understood and trusted by staff, residents, and businesses, who are therefore willing to share their personal data,
- 3) A community of staff sharing common and transferable skills which maximise use of the data and GIS platforms who access a robust learning and development offer,
- 4) We use data to create information and generate insights to better inform decision making and are confident in the quality of the data we hold and use,
- 5) Leadership consistently challenges how data has informed our policies, practices and planning and driver a data led culture.

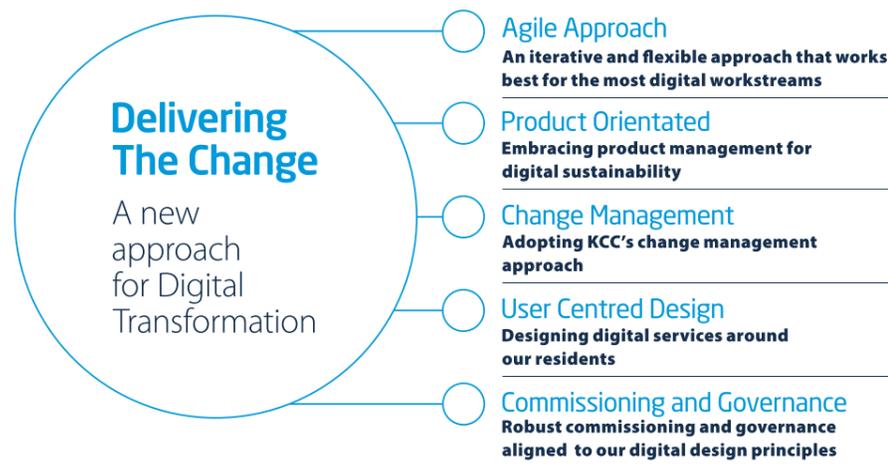


Delivering the change

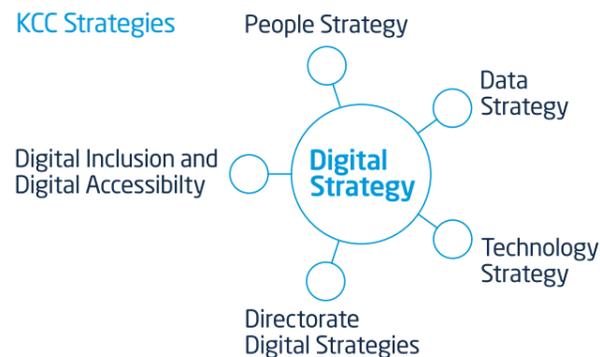
The delivery of this strategy will be co-ordinated and supported by the Digital Transformation Working Group and the Digital Steering Group. The actions identified throughout this strategy will be prioritised within a roadmap covering the Year 1 of implementation, and Years 2 to 3, sequencing the actions we need to take in the right order ensuring alignment. The roadmap will contain details of the accountable owner and target delivery dates. Much of the identified activity will be dependent on collaborative working in delivering the aligning strategies, particularly the People, Data and Technology strategies.

Above we outlined what specific actions would be needed to deliver against each of the 4 strategic ambitions, emphasising activity planned from the supporting strategies, but how we deliver these ambitions collectively will require a shift in the way in the work. In addition to embedding the digital design principles, embedding a consistent approach and methodologies to digital transformation across the organisation is critical to ensure a successful and unified transformation journey. The critical areas for embedding consistency are; Promoting an agile approach to digital projects, Product orientated delivery, Change management, User-centred design and Robust commissioning and governance.

How we will Deliver the Change.



KCC Strategies



Resourcing the delivery

It is acknowledged that resourcing the delivery of a complex Digital Transformation within the challenging financial context could be a concern. However, through the below steps we are committed to delivering the change through existing resource, which is shared across the organisation.

- We have already established a permanent core Digital team to lead the co-ordination of activity and are working with a delivery partner in the short term to build capacity,
- We have established a Digital Steering Group who hold responsibility for prioritising Digital transformation projects and programmes, ensuring they are sufficiently resourced in this process,
- Through adopting an agile approach, focused on product management, we can be flexible and adapt to changing resource requirements and make the most of cross-functional teams can also optimise resource allocation based on the evolving needs, promoting longer term digital sustainability,
- Promoting collaboration across the organisation and building a digital community,
- A phased approach as outlined in the annual roadmap, alongside a more robust commissioning and governance model will also allow us to prioritise our digital activity,
- We will leverage our partnerships and proactively seek the external funding opportunities available for us to access and actively engage with national Digital opportunities,
- Our capacity will be regularly reviewed in line with the Digital roadmap and detailed programme plan.

Monitoring and reporting progress

It is essential that we can monitor progress to ensure that the work we are doing is delivering tangible difference to our staff, members and most importantly, our residents. Our roadmap outlines how key deliverables have been prioritised over the lifetime of this 3-year strategy and what specifically will be delivered within year 1. We will report on key performance indicators on a quarterly basis.

Glossary

Data platform(s)

Data platform(s) refers to software which will enable KCC services to bring together operational data - currently stored in separate systems - to support staff to access the information they need in one safe and secure environment.

Digital discoveries

A 10 week discovery phase using consistent methodology which identifies digital opportunities within services, or organisation wide.

Digital product

A digital product is a service offered (rather than the technology platform or function) designed to meet the needs of users. It will comprise a number of digital components.

Digital product backlogs

A prioritized list of digital developments for a particular product.

End to end digital services

Fully digitised processes, from initial front-end data capture and input, to communication and synchronisation in back-office systems. An end-to-end digital service will successfully handle a task digitally from start to completion.

Federated data platform

A federated data platform means that every whilst different services will have their own platform, they will be able to connect and collaborate with other data platforms across the council, making it easier for us to work together internally and externally.

GIS platforms

A Geographic Information System (GIS) platform is a computer system that analyses and displays geographically referenced information.

Interoperability standards

Standards that ensure different systems and products can seamlessly interact, making use of data and information across system and organisational boundaries.

Product-orientated approach

Taking a product-orientated approach means building self-sufficient and self-sustainable agile teams that have the autonomy to build and run its product or service, along with complete accountability for its performance.

Use case approach

Data Strategy use cases are specific pieces of activity which have the goal of generating evidence to answer specific questions relating to the strategy. Taken together, the use cases provide a comprehensive evidence base which leads to the development of a full implementation plan.

Appendix 1: Strategic context

Key

- Framing Kent's Future: Our Response
- Strategic Reset Ambitions
- Framing Kent's Future: Equality Objectives



Appendix 2: Digital Strategy Roadmap



Year one

Years two to three

<p>Ambition One: Improve residents' digital experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital maturity current state assessment. Create guidance for website best practice include design and maintenance. Create user research toolkit and development offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Resident experience playbook. Pilot Digital transformation approach including Agile, User centred design and Product Management . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a pipeline of Digital Transformations using the approaches that work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardise feedback tools and user research practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and test user research toolkit.
<p>Ambition Two: Simple, secure and shareable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferred website technology agreed. Agree our Digital Architecture principles. Baseline assessment of existing technology. Test digital solutions through Microsoft Sandbox. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decommission redundant and risky websites. Governance process for digital. Agree interoperability principles. Write business case for rationalization of technology infrastructure. Digital post service engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iterative rationalization of technology onboarding services to core solutions. Adoption of principles, processes and preferred tools. Monitoring compliance and impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review our digital toolbox against value for money and business needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline platforms for resident engagement.
<p>Ambition Three: Well used and used well</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment to Digital Champion network. Pilot a Digital Festival to showcase current digital maturity. Reward Digital Champions for engagement with Transformation. Develop L&D offer to target adoption core technology e.g. M365. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-production of Digital Protocols so there are clear ways of digital working. Adopt an Artificial Intelligence (Ai) Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor adoption of M365. Embed expanded digital development offer into core offer, including EBC provider. Iterate and respond to new functionality. Consistent relationship with digital champions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support managers to build digital into recruitment and retention practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress against policy framework.
<p>Ambition Four: Data led</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report findings of use case studies to develop implementation plan. Re-baseline corporate digital experience metrics. Onboard more services to our Data Platform. Utilise existing data to support automation and streamline business processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise data strategy. Pilot a development offer to support data literacy. Digital strategy measurement framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor adoption of centralised Data Platform. Assess effectiveness of our data management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardise data cataloguing and reference within decision making. Embed data framework, training, governance and quality standards that respond to our assessment. 	



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