ICT Digital Strategy 2021-2024

Document History

Version Control

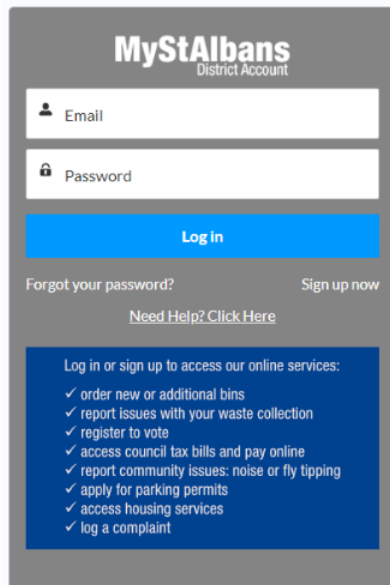| Version	Date	Author	Update
2017	01-Sep-2017	Caroline Croft	Create for years 2017-2020
2021	17-April-2021	Caroline Croft	Update to run from 2021 to 2023
2021	23-July-2021	Caroline Croft	Updated with feedback from Vice Chair of Policy Committee & Head of Corporate Services

Document Approval

Version	Date	Name	Position	Department
2017	01-Sep-2017	Amanda Foley	Head of Service	Corporate Services
2021	23-July-2021	Simonne Devall	Head of Service	Corporate Services

Table of Contents

Background

The council has been on a digital transformation journey since 2017.

Our previous ICT strategy dealt with the need to implement:

- 'MyStalbans' district account for customers, residents, businesses
- On-line booking solution to support the delivery of services to residents
- Redesign our website
- Provide a modern desktop and server infrastructure to support the business.

These ambitions have been achieved.

Our on-line citizen account has now over 30,000 active households signed up as of March 2021.

Around 2000 transactions per month are being handled through the account. We are confident that the uptake of the account indicates a widespread willingness of residents and customers to engage online with the council, with the council being in a strong position to take the next steps towards becoming a more Digital Council.

Introduction

The Council is embarking on a council wide transformation programme to deliver a new operating model for the Council 'An Adaptative Council'.

This strategy supports the delivery of an Adaptative Council by focusing on People, Process, Technology and Place.

In a post COVID_19 era how we work and deliver services to residents and customers has changed.

Many services can be delivered from places other than the office. As we move towards the mid-Twenties – we need to re-evaluate our relationship with place with a more agile mindset. This increased flexibility has the potential to improve both how services are delivered as well as providing a better work life balance for staff.

Place no longer has to be the office. More flexible proven solutions are now available that can offer more choices to how, when and where we work from.

There are of course challenges to working in a more agile manner. Our ICT strategy reflects this and will aim to put in place programmes of work to reduce these barriers.
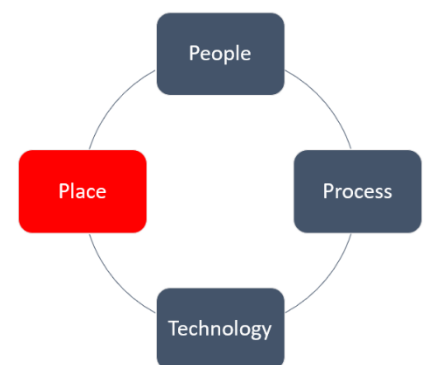
Document Purpose

Our Digital Strategy for the next 3 years will focus on our corporate values of being Trusted, Cost Effective, Confident, We Care and Working Together, with the customer experience being at the heart of what we do.

The aim of this strategy is to align our ICT and Digital goals with the objectives of the new Building Our Future programme.

We are committed to signing up to the Local Digital Declaration which is about us working with central government and other local authorities to:

- design services that best meet the needs of our residents
- challenging the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need
- protect citizens' privacy and security
- deliver better value for money

It is also about making the best use of the technology we have and having the confidence to replace technology which is no longer fit for purpose.

Resources and Project Management

The Digital Strategy is entirely based on business cases and evidence.

Resources for both ICT and Digital the projects, including project management, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

We will:

- Pursue national funding opportunities where available to supplement business cases.
- Seek to share costs with partners and drive return on investment, whilst adhering to procurement standards.

Delivery of these projects alongside staff's day-to-day roles will require flexible, cross-departmental working.

The Councils Building our Future programme will oversee the delivery of projects to ensure outcomes align with our corporate aims & objectives. Team Leaders, Managers and Project Managers will all support the delivery of projects working together.

Managers will need to ensure that annual Business Planning considers our digital ambitions and that resourcing (budget and project capacity) is considered as part of the Business Planning process.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the digital transformation guidelines and resourcing are considered as part of the annual Business Planning and budget investment process for example STAR Chamber.

Our Digital Ambitions

- **Digital by default:** If a transaction can be done digitally then it should be digitally. For both staff and residents, we will invest in our websites and our online channels to meet our customer's needs and then target our resources more effectively to help those who cannot access digital channels.
- **Customer First:** using data we will better understand our customers' needs and design simple and effective services to meet them.
- **Invest in digital:** if the customer experience improves and/or is cost effective then we will invest.
- **Customer Self-Serve:** we will redesign services with a view to achieving 7*24 hours services.
- **Think Digital:** we will create a 'digital mindset' with staff and councillors so they are confident and able to use self-serve systems.
- **Collaboration:** we will work with partners to embrace new technology, making our services more effective and efficient.
- **Pursue funding opportunities:** seeking funding options to improve to transform our services into Digital channels.
- **Cost effective:** We are confident in our service offering to turn off legacy channels.
- **Security:** we will ensure our services are secure and compliant with data protection and other regulations.
- **Sustainable:** working to reduce our carbon footprint across all areas.

Digital Transformation Principles

The following Digital Transformation Principles support delivery of our Digital Ambitions:

1. **Digital by default:** If a process can be digitised it should be with support for users to move to the digitalised channel.
2. **Data Driven Design**: Use the data we are collecting to create customer journeys and feedback to support continuous improvement.
3. **Productivity through Simplicity**: Efficient process redesign will improve both the customer experience and the council's overall efficiency.
4. **Accessibility:** Services will be designed for inclusivity wherever possible, with assisted delivery options put in place for complex user needs and for our non-online citizens
5. **Data Protection:** At the heart of all service redesign is the need to keep our services secure.
6. **Platform Centric:** Front line services should either use or integrate into the CRM platform for seamless customer delivery
7. **Investment:** Our application of digital funds must be pragmatic and see a measurable return on investment.
8. **Develop a Digital Mindset:** We will embed an open culture that values, incentivises and expects digital ways of working from every member of our workforce. This means working in the open wherever we can, sharing our plans and experience, working collaboratively with other organisations, and reusing good practice.
9. **Seeking alternative funding sources**: The council will openly pursue national funding opportunities wherever possible.
10. **Sustainability:** In an always on world, we must play our part in combatting the climate emergency to reduce our energy consumption. We will look to choose technology partners who share this vision and will work with us to seek and implement tangible solutions for energy use.

Customer Driven

Digital First

Most modern citizens and businesses want to transact with us at their convenience, and we will look to fulfil that need via self-service for standard transactions
Our Customer Services Team will provide support for those individuals who cannot access our online services, have complex needs or issues that cannot easily be resolved through online channels.
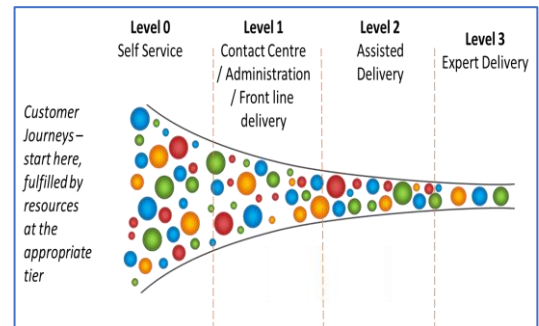
To support citizen self-service, we will be setting up a help programme called **"St Albans Get Online!"**

This programme will involve staff and partner organisations and is designed to move residents who would normally transact at Levels 1 and 2 to move to transacting in the Level 0 wherever possible.

We will also look to develop more service channels such as webchat and social media feeds into our Customer Services Team.

Customer journeys

To ensure that throughout the delivery levels we will need to ensure the customer experience is central to the service offering. To do this we will look to develop our customer relationship management (CRM) offering so the customer moves seamlessly through the different contact levels as appropriate. We will look to have a "single point of truth" about customer transactions. Using CRM across the organisation will also allow us to report accurately on the customer journey, and take data driven decisions on where improvements need to be made.

Service Marketing

Although the take up for the '**MyStAlbans'** district account has been successful, moving more complex transactions on-line will mean that we need to promote the on-line first approach. We still find customers surprised that many council processes are available online.

To increase awareness of our online offering we will:

- Bring in marketing resources either through recruitment or via out-sourcing to help us promote services as they are introduced. Costs for service marketing will be built into future business cases so they are included in the return on investment calculations.

Democracy for Residents

2020 has seen a sea-change in how the democratic process can work. The move to on-line meetings offers not only sustainability benefits in the reduction of travel and power requirements, but also enables accessibility and social inclusion benefits for our citizens.

However, face-to-face service is still a requirement for many to support this we will:

- Develop a hybrid approach to public meetings so that public meetings can be attended both online and in person to maximise accessibility and support resident engagement.

Councillor Services

For councillors we will:

- Simplify the councillor experience by consolidating platforms and implement single-sign on where possible.
- Introduce a paperless first approach to the issuing of committee agendas in line with our Working Paperless approach and sustainability goals.

Security

Cyber Security and Data Protection is at the core of how we build our digital services and is essential in maintaining customer confidence in our services.

True security needs technology, business processes, staff and place to be working in harmony and our approach will be inclusive of these four areas.

Technology

- We will monitor for new threats and adapt our security posture to deter and resist attacks.
- Where necessary and appropriate, we will seek investment in new technology to limit cyber exposure.
- We will continue to improve our asset management processes to ensure unused assets are returned and reused in an appropriate timescale
- Move to a multi-factor authentication process for all services.

Processes

- Maintain compulsory accreditations such as PCI, Public Sector Network (PSN) and Cyber Essentials Plus across the client and infrastructure environments
- Develop and implement an 'Application Charter' to ensure that the application estate remains secure and the necessary funding is in place to maintain compliance
- Work with all departments to ensure that the council's digital processes are technically secure, and Government Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) compliant

People

- Work closely with all users of network services to ensure that they are trained in operating systems in a safe and secure way
- We will actively use resources such as the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) toolkit to build organisational cyber resilience across all staff levels
- Introduction of constructive cyber user-testing to test our organisation cyber capabilities and work with the business areas on improvements

Place

- Ensure that the office space is technically secure
- Support people to working maintain their personal workplace security regardless of location

New ways of working

The workplace and the way we work has changed considerably over the past decade. The council has adapted well to these challenges providing dedicated devices and non-physical voice services to allow for complete flexibility of where to work in the office. COVID-19 has accelerated the need to work with more agility and to remove barriers that limit our flexibility.

Over the next 3 years we will concentrate on reducing the barriers to successful agile working for example by digitisation physical documents and replacing applications that do not support remote working. We will:

Technology

- **Improve the network provision** to support home greater home working efficiency and productivity
- Develop an **Application Charter** which sets out a joint approach between ICT and each business area to ensure applications remain secure and fit for purpose and maximise the use of all available functionality and automation
- **Move services to the cloud**, where appropriate, to improve availability and performance
- Further develop our **Digital Toolset** and expand the use of our existing tools including the Microsoft stack to really work our assets hard. This will include **re-procurement of our digital platform** to ensure continued value for money whilst remaining fit for purpose
- Introduce **Digital Mailroom technology** to support the handling of print and post requirements in an agile workplace, and to support the further reduction of physical printers and printing in our offices
- Use appropriate **automation to increase productivity**

Process
- Digitisation of physical documents/Fiche (subject to Business Case approval)
- Replacement of applications which only offer physical solutions
- Introduce e-signatures
- Actively using the service review function to:
    - Look at process efficiency
    - Elimination of duplication and waste and ensuing value for money
    - Collect data from the service review process to support digital project prioritisation (effort and spend)
    - Using this data to support transformation of services based of need

- Develop our approach to automation solutions to support productivity gains
- Utilise procurement efficiencies wherever possible to maximise return on investment

People

- Encourage staff to constantly challenge how they are working and looking for ways to improve.
- Support staff to develop a Digital Skillset to maximise productivity
- Focus on recruitment of staff who have the necessary Digital Skills.
- Ensuring people have the equipment they need at the right time and in the right location

Place

- Implement tools to manage the office workspace capacity for maximum productivity and support future outbreak management (Covid experience)
- Support the fit out of all meeting rooms with suitable technology to enable collaboration both in and out of the office
- Working closely with staff to set up their home environment for maximum productivity and workplace wellbeing

Technology Enablers

Our technical roadmap underpins our ICT strategy.

Server Estate
- Late 2020 the server infrastructure was completely replaced. Unless a significant change in capacity is needed, we expect no further action to be taken within the scope of this strategy.

Network
- Migrate PSN reliant services away from the PSN network using alternative network access solutions to simplify the solution and reduce costs
- Replace Wide Area Network (WAN) with Software Defined Wide Area Network (SDWAN) to allow for a more flexible approach to capacity management and disaster recovery.
- Review options for the retirement of the on-site computer room
- Complete the remaining Local Area Network (LAN) replacement programme
- Handle the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) retirement notification, working with the business to review their use of PSTN (Alarms etc) and put in place appropriate alternative solutions.

Voice
- Create a Voice strategy covering
  - Review the use of Teams and 8x8 and establish a roadmap for voice and collaboration services post 2023
  - Improved technology to support greater flexibility for telephone payments by introducing PCI-PAL
  - Development of 8x8 services in the contact centre to bring in social medial channels
  - Review our mobile phone offering and looking to achieve savings through centralised re-procurement options. (Re-Evaluate bring your own device (BOYD)

Infrastructure Services
- Move of File Shares to SharePoint, to improve document management control, and revisit archiving solutions.
- Review Archiving solution to increase customer satisfaction

Client Services
- Replace laptop devices as they reach a 4-year life span
- Review Thin Client offering to improve customer satisfaction.

Sustainability

The government has published a paper [Greening Government: ICT and Digital Service strategy 2020-2025.](#)

This paper sets out a range of objectives for ICT to consider than impact on strategy but its primary objective is to:

"*Sustainability is central to the procurement, design and management of digital services and ICT to reduce costs and carbon. Wherever possible, waste is removed from the system, for example redundant services, duplicate files, legacy ICT systems and hardware, promoting shared systems and services across HMG*"

We will:

- Commit to following the guidelines on Greening Government where possible.
- Actively promote the removal of digital litter across our user estate. This will be reflected in projects such as SharePoint take-on and in our approach to archiving and data deletion programmes across the organisation.

High-level indicative timeline for delivery of strategy

	2021	2022	2023

Security (Desktop)
- Office 2013 → Office 2020
- Apply 20H2 update
- 100 Windows Rebuilt 20H3?
- 100 Laptops replaced (20H3?)
- 100 Windows Rebuilt 20H3?
- 100 Laptops replaced (20H3?)

Security (Infrastructure)
- Server 2012 → Server 2016+
- SQL 2012 → SQL 2016+

Security (Application)
- Phishing Toolkit
- User Security Program Development & Impementation
- E-Mail sandbox
- Endpoint Reactive services
- SIEM → SIEM replacement
- Payments 3DS2
- PCI-PAL
- Civica Image Store Move to SQL
- BAU Application Upgrades

Technology Enablers
- Sharepoint for Intranet → Sharepoint for Intranet P2
- ISP Upgrade → 350mb ISP
- Thin Client Replacement
- Retire PSN Network → WAN replacement → Computer Room Retirement
- LAN Replacement
- PSTN Retirement Plan → 2025
- Move To Sharepoint for document control and Archive options
- Voice Strategy → Implementaion of Voice options

New ways of Working
- Garden Waste → GW Intergration
- Develop Marketing Approach
- Market (Phase 1) → Market (Phase 2)
- Hybrid Council Meetings
- CRM – Phase 1 (Front Office)
- CRM Phase 2 (Back Office)
- Parking → Parking Application Replacement
- QR Phase 2 → Planning Application Replacement
- Office Fit out
- Automation → Implementation & Deployment
- Supporting business areas to develop approach & business cases to address physical document/ application constraints → Implementation
- Implementation of Desk Booking Tool
- DVLA replacement → 2025
- Wet signature replacement
- Grounds maintenance asset replacement
- Staci Replacement
- Landlords Portal migration to cloud
- Councillor Paperless
- Review of Citizen Access
- Finance modules
- Housing Application Web Front End → Housing Application Replacement
- Evolve the existing Hybrid Mail solution into Digital Mail Room
- SERVICE Review Process Improvements

Appendix A: Principles of our Application Charter

Our Application estate needs to be fit for purpose and our definition of being fit for purpose covers these 5 areas:

- Functionality
  - Does the Application offer self-serve (either for the internal or external customer)?
  - Are we making full use of all components? If the answer is no is the cost of the components limiting us from using these components?
- Security
  - Does the application meet our security standards?
  - Are the providers of the application keeping the application up to date on the latest or latest -1 version of all components within 3 years of release of a component
- Performance
  - Does the application require considerable infrastructure to perform well?
  - Does the application work well when used remotely?
- Cost Effective
  - Have we bench tested the costs against market in the last 5 years?
  - Have the results of the bench test proven that the product is cost effective?
  - Are upgrades included in the maintenance costs? If not – how expensive are the upgrades and are they off-set by low support costs
  - Are supplier day rates high?
- Account Management.
  - Is the supplier pro-active about coming forward with suggestions on how to reduce costs/increase our usage of the product (for our gain)
  - How quickly can the supplier react the requests for work/upgrades etc

If the application scores poorly against the above criteria, we need to have the confidence to replace it.