

Digital transformation 2017-2020



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

November 2017

Our vision for digital transformation 2017-2020

“As a developing digital council we will use technology to provide our customers with the best possible service which adapts to their changing needs.”

Digital by choice, not default

Digital transformation will mean putting our customers at the centre of service design, and this will mean making sure that we also provide non-digital channels for those customers who are not digitally able.

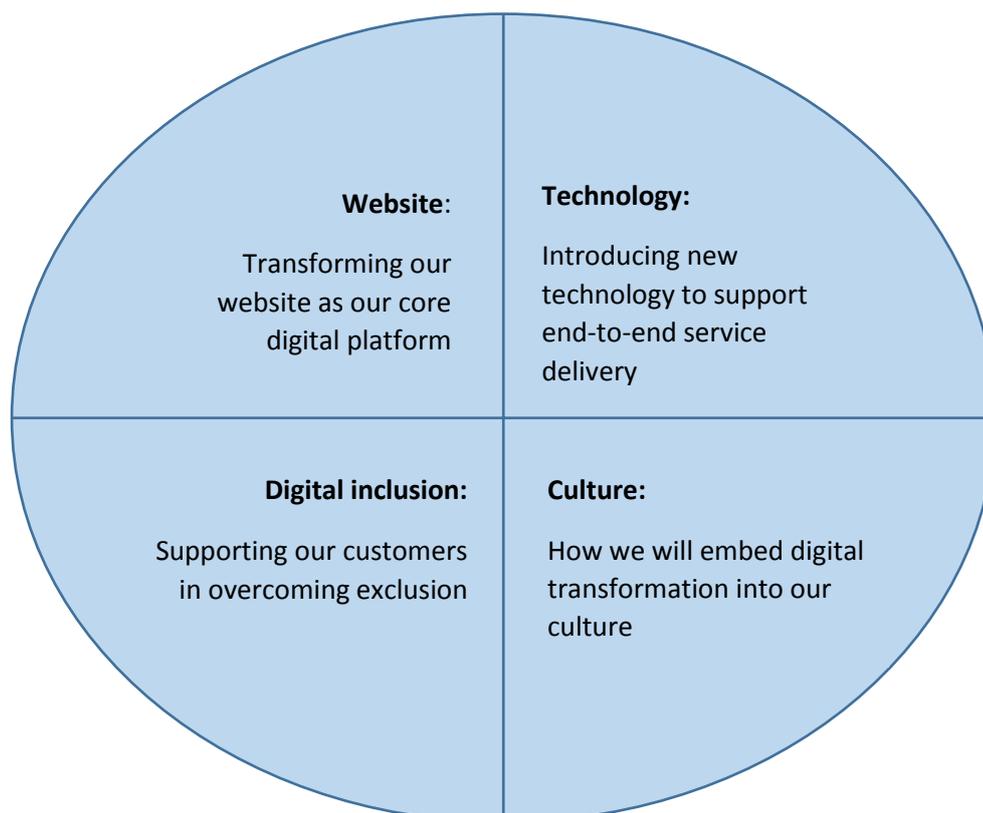
Physical and virtual technology are important enablers and tools to achieve digital transformation, however digital transformation is more about developing a culture internally and externally that puts digital service design at the heart of how we deliver.

By introducing improved and increased digital services, our customers will have greater choice about when and how they access our services. This is particularly important as our customers become more ‘digital savvy’ and have expectations that they should be able to transact with us on-line at a time and place that suits them.

This will ultimately need a fundamental shift in mind-set away from a more traditional service-centric model we currently use at Ashford Borough Council

The challenges to achieving this vision will include how we develop and update business applications to support modern on-line services and maintaining momentum to make this transformation a success.

This document sets out four strands that will guide us in addressing these challenges and focus our priority actions.



Our Priority Areas

1.0 Website

The website is the core digital platform our customers use and must be at the centre of our digital focus. We have recently updated the back-office system that manages our website, this will help us to improve the reporting and data we get from the existing website so we can get a greater understanding of user experiences, journeys and interactions. We can then use this intelligence to change the structure of our website to make it more user friendly.

Our website in numbers:	
845,333	page views in 2016
58.7%	returning visitors
41.2%	of contacts is via our website
48.5%	website views via mobile/tablet

1.1 What will we do?

a) Accessible and user friendly

We will create a fresh looking, quicker and easier user journey online for customers making sure that the website is accessible to everyone. In turn helping officers to streamline processes and work in a smarter way.

This will be achieved through redesigning and modernising the Ashford.gov website, following the principles and standards set by the Government Digital Services. We recognise that the design and structure of our current website can be confusing, this is exacerbated by having duplicated pages, sometimes containing out of date information.

We will create a website that is both well designed and functional and will use analytical data to help us do this. The redesign will entail reviewing the language we use so that we use the same terminology that our customers use as well as structuring the site more logically.

b) Technology led

Central to our vision is that customers will be able to transact with us when they want and where they want, 48.5% of our customers used a mobile or tablet device to access our website, so it will be important that we are fully mobile and tablet enabled on all our pages and that our self-service and web-forms are quick and easy to use however they are accessed.

We will also look at software and tools that support digital inclusion, examples may include web-chat and video content.

Our staff will be provided with the tools to help them work as efficiently and flexibly as possible whether they are office based, or out and about.

c) Customer accounts

We will invest in the functionality of the 'My Ashford' secure personalised customer accounts that are accessed via ashford.gov. Customers will be able to view accounts held with the Council and be able to report issues and keep track of their progress. The account will also enable outward communication to customers.

d) Better use of analytics and data

Using data from the website, we will monitor customer journeys to continuously improve our services, both digital and face-to-face. Customers visit our website to find information and we will be able to see whether this has been successful, investigate if it has failed and take steps to prevent it happening again.

Priority 1 : Website**Draft website transformation plan 2017- 2020**

	What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
Website	<p>We will redesign our website (ashford.gov.uk):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring we follow the best practice guidance issued by GDS on digitally inclusive language• ensure the content is written in plain English• introduce options for web-chat, skype and other digital assistance tools• building on the success of the Benefits video and, where possible produce video content to help people with low literacy skills• regularly ensuring the website meets required accessibility standards using tools such as site improve etc• refresh content regularly• seek feedback from user testing at all stages of the process• hold service workshops to disseminate and interpret feedback and analytics.• ensure that our pages are mobile enabled.	Web team/ IT/ Communications / Customer Services	Y Some additional resource may be required, to assist on this project further details to follow with a project plan	July 2017 - December 2018
	<p>Customer accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance the MyAshford functionality.• Better use of email address data to communicate with our customers.	Web team/ IT/ Communications / Customer Services		December 2019
Analytics	We will use analytics and feedback to improve and inform our service design, whether those services are digital or face-to-face.	Web team/ services		Ongoing from April 2018

2.0 Technology

The success of any digital transformation project will focus on integrating new and existing technologies such as social media, mobile, Skype and cloud computing with digitally reimagined business and service processes.

Simply introducing individual devices and digital technologies to solve discrete service or business problems will not lead us to successfully transform our business offering, these are the tools that will enable change, and therefore should not dictate how the change is achieved.

The culture and technology strands of this digital strategy are closely linked, new technologies will require a new way of working, behaving and thinking by the organisation to be a success.

2.1 Digital Technologies

The strength of digital technologies does not lie in each one individually, instead it stems from how we integrate them to transform how we work and do business with our customers.

2.2 What will we do?

a) Digital Customer Platform

A new 'Digital Customer Platform' solution will be purchased to help us to integrate digital services and new ways of working with existing back office solutions. This will help drive more efficient and effective processes, addressing customer needs quickly and enabling staff to spend time on more complex enquiries and 'value adding' work instead.

b) Social

The use of the various existing and new social media platforms continues to grow amongst both customers, staff and members. This presents us with opportunities to integrate the data from it with business systems and engage with people on a virtual platform. This might be as simple as exploring options to 'sign-up' for new services using social media sign-ins or using social media accounts to provide service updates and news.

c) Mobile and flexible working

As the most popular devices used to access our website are mobile devices it makes sense that any new digital service, software system or process will need to be compatible with all types of mobile devices. Ensuring the main website and the services offered are 'responsive' on all devices makes the user experience better, easier and encourages return visits.

Mobile technology has revolutionised the possibilities for flexible working. We have introduced the use of tablets to improve the efficiency of management meetings and this will be rolled-out to members in due course. Site based staff increasingly use mobile devices as a core tool of their work, completing records and updating back office systems whilst on site. We will review the success of our mobile working to-date, ascertain the lessons learned, and prioritise areas to develop and focus on in the future.

To facilitate mobile working it is important that the infrastructure supporting flexible and mobile working is reliable and accessible to all, so greater emphasis will be given to the availability of the Public Sector roaming service "Govroam" and public/guest Wi-Fi in ABC buildings.

d) Internet of things

The Internet of Things (IoT) such as internet connected boilers and heater systems, smart meters etc. has many possibilities for the council to explore. Initially we will look to use these technologies internally where we can make efficiency savings however as we become more familiar with this technology and the possibilities we will look to explore how our customers, partners and other stakeholders could benefit from greater use of IoT.

e) Communications

Adoption of Unified Communications (UC) for the integration of communication services such as instant messaging (chat), presence, voice, audio and web conferencing, desktop sharing etc. This can aid a better, more flexible and efficient work practices.

We have introduced Skype for Business (SfB) as the corporate tool for UC, and as it is used we will develop new working practices around this with officers using it offsite to interact with the back office function, customers and clients in a more flexible manner.

f) Cloud computing

A significant benefit of cloud computing is resilience and responsiveness, however with this comes a revenue cost without necessarily a commensurate back office saving. Currently we are adopting a hybrid cloud-computing model to aid resilience and free up internal resourcing for other more important projects.

We need to develop a better understanding of how a cloud computing strategy can help us deliver our services more efficiently and effectively and develop a cloud strategy that will guide our decision making when starting out on technology and systems projects. Making sure that it is easier to scale the services as our digital transformation processes mature and improve.

g) Online collaboration

Cross service, projects often require many officers to input into reports, project plans and other documents. This can result in multiple version and significant editing and multiple versions to review. We will consider online collaboration tools to help make this process more efficient and improve communication when managing processes such as these.

Priority 2: Technology**Draft technology transformation plan 2017- 2020**

	What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
Digital Customer Service Platform	Procurement of a “Digital Customer Platform” (DCP) to help integrate new ways of working digitally and process improvements with back office systems.	IT/Customer Services/Digital team	Y Circa £100k, level to be confirmed on conclusion of procurement process	August 2017 – August 2019
	Develop a priority list of services / process to be delivered in a Phase1 development of the DCP. Priority will be given to any service being run from a similar solution as part of any trials depending on final decision. We will implement a digital group that will help shape the priority list for approval from the newly formed IT and Digital Transformation (ITDT) Advisory Committee.	Digital team and ITDT Committee		August 2017 – December 2017
Collaboration	We will explore online collaboration tools that will improve cross service working.	IT/Digital team		Ongoing

Communications	Complete rollout of Skype for Business (SfB) Unified communications platform across the authority and communicate the functionality and benefits to the organisation	IT/ Communications	Y £10k for replacement handsets from existing hardware budgets	April 2018
Cloud	Develop a “Cloud Strategy” to formalise our strategy for making decisions around what services and solutions will be provisioned in “the Cloud”.	IT	Y From existing software revenue budgets	March 2018
Mobile and Flexible	<p>We will ensure that mobile friendly is the starting point of all system developments and new software.</p> <p>We will ensure ABC buildings (e.g. Civic Centre, Sheltered Schemes) have public/guest Wi-Fi connectivity where appropriate using the Govroam service.</p> <p>We develop a programme to rollout hardware upgrades to mobile workers that will support flexible working.</p>	IT		Ongoing
Social media	We maintain a review of the functionality presented by social media accounts to simplify customer log-ins to help remove barriers to use of digital channels.	IT/Digital team		Ongoing

3.0 Digital Inclusion

Like most authorities, Ashford Borough Council (ABC) has already experienced a significant level of channel shift in recent years encouraging our residents and businesses to transact with us online. As technology develops, and customer requirements grow, further transformation work is planned and it is important that no one is left behind and unable to access services.

While we are focusing our efforts towards digital an element of our customer service model is still designed to accommodate customers who cannot access online services by offering assisted self-help, telephone contact as well as face-to-face appointments; and by enabling those people who are able to transact with us online it further frees up resource to support customers affected by exclusion.

Very often the reasons for customers not accessing digital services is not through choice but due to a number of challenges to getting online and there is no single approach to solving the problem. Appendix 1 provides more information about the barriers to digital inclusion, but the four main challenges can be categorised as:

- Access - the ability to actually connect to the internet
- Skills - to be able to use the internet
- Motivation - knowing the reasons why using the internet is advantageous
- Trust - a fear of crime, to not knowing where to start to go online

Helping more people go online can help to tackle wider social issues, support economic growth and close equality gaps as well as provide our customers with a wider choice of how they interact with us and other organisations they deal with.

3.1 Rates of Exclusion in Ashford

Appendix 2 shows an excerpt from a heat-map produced by the Tech Partnership in association with the Local Government Association and Lloyds Banking Group. This shows the likelihood of inclusion, or exclusion in Ashford.

The borough of Ashford has medium overall likelihood of digital exclusion, with infrastructure (i.e. Broadband and 4G speed and availability) being a significant challenge together with skills and education.

Income and health are less likely reasons for exclusion in Ashford, but they are still a factor. All data can be viewed at <http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com>.

3.2 The impact of being digitally included

Being digitally capable can make a significant difference to individuals and organisations day to day. Broader benefits can include addressing wider social and economic issues, like reducing isolation and supporting economic growth, which is the No.1 priority in the Council's corporate plan.

a) Individuals and Families

Accessing services online is becoming the default option for many people, these services range from public services, information, education, entertainment and each other. Those who are offline and not capable of using the internet risk missing the benefits that the internet can offer.

For individuals this can mean reduced costs of living by being able to shop, compare prices and pay bills online. Similarly, being digitally excluded decreases a person's employment opportunities as increasingly application processes are online and basic ICT skills are required. A 2009 Price Waterhouse Coopers report 'Champion for Digital Inclusion' highlighted that people with good ICT skills earned between 3-10% more than people without.

For families the inability to get online due to one or more barrier impacts on children, preventing them from fully engaging with their education as schools are using online tools and resources to support learning both in school and as part of the homework curriculum.

b) Older people

In situations where people already feel excluded, the impact of isolation is exacerbated by being digitally excluded; this typically affects groups such as the elderly or disabled. In Ashford 19% of the population are over 65. The stereotype is that older people are not motivated to go online but increasingly this group have been introduced to different devices by their families. The challenge that older people have is knowing what the technology can do, and being confident using it in different ways.

Technology advances have the potential to change the way older people interact with others and receive healthcare support. Building confidence in digital skills will help older people access help through assisted technologies, social media, and provide greater awareness of community support, events and facilities local to them.

c) Businesses, Voluntary/Community and Charitable organisations

As well as reducing some operating costs through efficient working methods, etc. digital reach is vital for these groups too. A business without a website cannot share their opening times and may lose custom to a business that does have a website; a charity who does not accept online donations is missing-out on a potential donor base that can make all the difference to a small charity.

3.3 Who is doing what?

The Government Digital Service (GDS): The GDS have been implementing one of the largest digital transformation programmes in Europe. The result has been significant investment in government digital services (online passports, tax returns, benefits claims etc.) as well as a well-developed set of guidance and standards for organisations embarking on their digital journey.

There has been a range of government funded digital support services. The Tech Partnership is one of the most recent, this is a network of employers who want to create skills for a digital economy. The Tech Partnership have a programme that aims to ensure everyone has at least basic level of digital skills needed for life. Their website provides information and resources for employers, teachers, students and trainers.

There are many private sector initiatives, some companies have a digital inclusion focus as part of their corporate social responsibility programmes, others have them more explicitly linked to their own digital strategies. Perhaps one of the most well-known digital programme is the Barclays Digital Eagles programme where their staff are supporting in providing support to access digital skills to members of the local community through workshops and events. There are many other private sector initiatives.

Housing providers: many social landlords have digital programmes aimed at supporting their tenants in developing digital skills and digital confidence. They recognise that tenants with digital skills are more likely to be able to find employment (and sustain their tenancy). There are also advantages to the provider of investing in these schemes because of the savings that can be made through on-line tenancy administration (paying rent, reporting repairs etc.)

The voluntary and community sector: organisations such as Age UK have digital inclusion programmes aimed at supporting older people to gain confidence when using technology to help them reap the social and financial benefits of being online.

Local councils: Kent County Council also have inclusion strategies such as ‘borrow an iPad’ run through libraries, and have open access computers so that people can use library equipment and internet connection for personal use as well as more typical library services such as genealogy. These initiatives are designed to help people get to grips with technology.

3.4 What will we do?

Given the complexity of the barriers and the number of organisations already working to tackle digital exclusion we will aim to focus our efforts in the most effective way possible to avoid duplication of effort.

We will:

- a) ensure that the council’s services are designed appropriately to ensure digital inclusion; we will do this by putting our customers at the centre of our service design, making sure our staff have the skills and knowledge to be able to consider how they deliver services in a digitally inclusive way.
- b) promote, advertise and signpost to sources of information, resources and activities designed to help individuals, local businesses, charities, voluntary and community organisations overcome digital barriers.

- c) undertake specific projects (where we are best placed) to address the barriers to digital inclusion in the borough of Ashford.

Priority 3: Inclusion

Draft Digital Inclusion action plan 2017- 2020

What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
<p>ABC will adopt a new planning policy within the local plan for all new developments to install fibre to the premises to ensure inhabitants are able to access superfast broadband within these developments in the future.</p> <p>ABC will work with Kent County Council to maximise the impact of the roll out of the BDUK project and other grant schemes to bring superfast broadband to existing residents and businesses through the delivery of fibre to the cabinet in existing residential and business areas.</p> <p>In addition, ABC will work with other telecoms providers to maximise private investment in telecommunications networks within the borough.</p>	Economic Development/Planning		Linked to Local Plan approvals
<p>We will explore the feasibility of creating a database of Wi-Fi hotspots across the borough so that people with connectivity barriers have options for getting on-line (e.g. pubs, cafes, shops, community centres etc.)</p> <p>We will publicise where local access points are available through Gateways/libraries etc. so that people without the equipment to go online know where they can get access to equipment.</p>	Communications and Digital team Communications		2019 post completion of phase II of website

<p>We will allow a public Wi-Fi access point in ABC buildings (e.g. Civic Centre, Sheltered Schemes) using the Govroam service.</p>	<p>IT</p>		
<p>We will redesign our website (ashford.gov.uk):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring we follow the best practice guidance issued by GDS on digitally inclusive language • ensure the content is written in plain English • introduce options for web-chat, skype and other digital assistance tools • building on the success of the Benefits video and, where possible produce video content to help people with low literacy skills • regularly ensuring the website meets required accessibility standards using tools such as Site Improve 	<p>Web team IT Communications Customer service</p>		<p>Late 2018/19</p>
<p>We will review the conditions applied to the community grants scheme to ensure that the conditions for funding for digital projects are simple for the voluntary and community sector to navigate and access.</p>	<p>Cultural Services</p>		<p>Post web project</p>
<p>ABC will investigate developing a volunteer programme to help individuals gain digital confidence; the intention will be that the volunteers can take these skills into their communities beyond any organised events.</p> <p>Partner organisations could be schools, the local college, community & voluntary sector partners and local branches of private sector organisations who are signed up to the UK's Digital Inclusion Charter (e.g. Argos, Asda, Barclays, BT, EE, Lloyds Banking Group, Remploy, Three).</p>	<p>Digital team</p>		<p>Post web project</p>

<p>We will signpost and publicise services and information that help with Digital skills (e.g. The tech partnership, Age UK, Housing Associations, etc.)</p>	<p>Communications and Digital teams</p>		
<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will remind people of the benefits of using ABC's digital services • remind our customers of the assistance that is available from ABC (assisted self-help customer services model) • signpost customers to economic and social reasons for accessing online services (e.g. genealogy, staying in contact with distance family, money comparison sites for saving money, accessing online weight loss or healthy option services) • link into national campaigns that support digital inclusion such as Get Online Week (2 – 8 October 2017) 	<p>Communications</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signpost and highlight how to spot secure sites and how not be to be caught out by fraud • Use our website to notify the public of any scams we are made aware of (in conjunction with Kent Police and the wider community safety partnership) • We will use a range of tools including social media/text/website to assure our customers that communication from the council is genuine 	<p>Communications, IT and digital team</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>

4.0 Culture

Delivering good quality digital services with the customer at the heart of the processes will rely on the organisation as a whole getting behind the vision. In the same way that customers have different expectations of, and barriers to, digital services staff (and members) will have views that will affect the way digital delivery is received.

If we are serious about taking the next step, then we need to take everyone on the journey with us. It is crucial that people at **all levels** of the council are engaged as it takes everyone to make our digital vision a reality.

4.1 Common internal challenges

Lack of digital skills:

Staff can lack confidence and struggle to keep up with technology developments and are intimidated by new software and equipment. Very often, 'on the job' systems training covers the process in-hand is not refreshed, or is delivered in a narrow way (potentially training bad habits too).

This is particularly true of older generations; in Ashford 8.5% of staff are over 60 years, and almost 22% are aged between 51-60 years. Approximately 14% of staff are aged 30 or under; this group typically have greater confidence with technology and have grown up using digital tools.

This different experience base can manifest itself as a steep learning curve (both skills and understanding), leading to possible resistance from older employees, and frustrations from more digitally savvy staff when the pace of change is slow.

This is damaging not only for the pace of digital change but also for productivity, turnover and reputation of the council as an employer making talent attraction and retention difficult.

Leadership:

Linked to the generational divide, as senior staff tend to be older, it can be that senior staff are less digitally savvy which can influence the pace and attitude to change as they can feel out of their depth in understanding what technology can do. It is important that senior staff are able to be role models that support and encourage change as they are setting the expectations for the rest of the council.

Fear of change:

Often digital services are seen as a way for organisations to cut costs (jobs), and like many authorities, Ashford Borough Council has undertaken a significant level of channel shift in recent years to deliver savings. The primary driver for Ashford is a greater choice of access channels for customers and reducing transactional processes to allow a better focus on value adding, and better quality face-to-face services for those customers who need support with needs that are more complex.

4.2 What will we do?

To be able to take the next steps on the digital journey it will be important to ensure that the common challenges highlighted above are addressed. Embedding digital into a workplace is more than simply introducing a new software system, a new way of working or a new piece of kit. There needs to be a consistent message and behaviours lead from the top that underpin 'the way we do things'.

Leadership on the digital agenda is about articulating the value of digital to the council and consistently reinforcing and challenging the organisation to consider services in innovative ways as well as supporting teams and individuals in taking risks.

The competency framework and corporate values (Ambitious, Creative and Trustworthy) reinforce these behaviours and day-to-day ways of working highlights the importance of digital, for example:



- We are fortunate that we already have approaches that are designed to support new ways of working; cross-service SPACE sessions are a pre-requisite for all projects to encourage collaboration and effective idea sharing and contribution.
- Services have web-editors who have responsibility for making sure their service has a comprehensive presence on the ABC website.
- Our customer services model is designed to maximise customers' ability to self-help either at home or with assistance in the civic centre.
- Key HR activities affecting all staff such as payroll, training and appraisals are provided through software solutions.

In addition to internal role modelling, we are also a role model externally and it is important that our behaviours and messages both internally and externally are consistent.

There will be external signs that we are taking digital services seriously, the use of systems such as Report-It and Modern Gov and the changes in working practices that this Modern Gov will lead to. It is important that our Elected Members have the confidence in these tools as well as to use these tools as they will be key ways in which our customers will transact with us and find out about the issues that matter to them.

Staff have expectations that they should be able to work flexibly being able to complete processes on-site. Having the ability to work in different locations on a range of devices. It will be important to review our successes to date and translate the lessons learnt into future mobile and flexible working priorities.

Priority 4: Culture

Draft Digital Staff Culture plan 2017- 2020

	What we will do	Who	Budget required	When
Skills	Skills Audit: We will conduct a skills audit of all staff to ascertain whether there are basic skills gaps that need addressing and also to identify more capable staff to share their knowledge with others.	HR	Possible training budget requirement TBD	Nov 17
	Introduce digital champions: Having highlighted the more digitally skilled staff we will approach this group to become service digital champions that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide support to less digitally capable people (internally and externally),• contribute to digital projects• contribute to drop-in sessions designed to help build confidence with technology as well as social media and other on-line tools• help to develop how to guides and videos.	HR/Digital Team		Jan 18
	Introduce digital member champions: These members will lead the way and support how new technologies and systems will be rolled out and used by members.	Member Services/Digital Team/IT		TBD, following Modern Gov test launch

	<p>Recruitment:</p> <p>To attract and test digital capabilities of potential new recruits we will introduce greater use of digital tools in recruitment and selection, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of social media such as Twitter/Facebook/Glass Door • Use of on-line testing and better assessment of digital skills during recruitment. • Update competency based questions database to include digital competence questions 	HR		<p>Q4 2017/18</p> <p>April 2019</p> <p>Q1 2018/19</p>
	<p>Appraisals:</p> <p>We will include digital objectives in annual appraisals; these will be to develop either a digital capability or skill, to support someone else in becoming proficient, or to take part in a digital project.</p>	All managers		<p>Q4 2017/18</p>
	<p>Service Plan:</p> <p>Services will be required to include at least one digital objective/project in their annual service plan.</p>	Policy team		<p>2017/18 Service planning</p>
Leadership	<p>Digital channels to communicate key corporate messages:</p> <p>The Chief Executive and other senior managers will consider the use of video messages and Blogs to complement face-to-face communication methods.</p>	Communications		<p>Q1 2018/19</p>
	<p>Corporate Twitter accounts for leaders:</p> <p>We will consider how we can support senior leaders in communicating externally through social media channels.</p>	Communications /Digital Team		<p>Q1 2018/19</p>
	<p>Digital skills:</p>	HR		

	<p>It is important that the leadership of digital transformation is seen as authentic and managers will be encouraged to undertake training to use digital tools in-order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to role model • understand the potential benefits • gain insight into how easy it is to overcome challenges 			During 2017 and 2018
	<p>A range of digital tools are available managers will be required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistently apply good practice principles of using tools such as Skype, email and other online tools • use and promote the use of technology as a tool for efficient working 	All Manager/Digital Team/ IT		During 2017 and 2018
	<p>Promote a customer centric approach to problem solving as well as collaborative working (using SPACE) to review services and processes.</p>	Digital Team	Budget required for training TBD	Q1 2018/19
Change management	<p>Agile working methods: Agile working enables problem solving to be achieved in a swift and iterative way, this is important in IT development projects where low-level prototyping and testing are often easier in a live environment. We will provide staff with training on how to use agile working techniques to problem solving.</p>	Digital Team/HR	Budget required for training TBD	Q2 2018/19
	<p>Customer centric service design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop a range of persona's that can be referred to when reviewing a service or process to encourage services to focus on the service from a customer perspective rather than the council's perspective. • We will provide training on how user based service design. 	Digital Team/HR/ Communications	Budget required for training TBD	Q1 2018/19

	We will include a field on the PID template where digital transformation and implications can be highlighted.	Policy team		Q3 2017/18
	Corporate values: Newly articulated corporate values to be launched as part of the communications we will ensure that the link with digital services is explicit.	HR/ Communications		Q3 2017/18
	Include standard digital operational competency in all new JDs as a tangible indicator to all existing and potential staff that digital services are intrinsic to our way of working.	HR		Q4 2017/18
	We will carry out workshops with services to establish staff ideas on service improvements on the top areas of focus for digital transformation (build into 2019/20 service plans).	Digital team/HR		Spring/ Summer 2018
	Digital project communications through Root & Branch: We will ensure that the progress, successes, and learning from failures of digital projects are regularly shared through the council's on-line staff magazine.	Communications /Digital Team		From Autumn 2017
	Communications: We have a range of electronic communication methods including the intranet; we will review these to ensure they remain relevant, responsive, up to date and easy to use. The staff benefit platform My Ashford Rewards has capability to become an internal communications hub that supports blogs, video content, online polling, recognition schemes and discussions we	Communications /HR		Ongoing from Q4 2017/18

	<p>will review this capability with a view to launching an enhanced offer.</p> <p>Social media: There is an expectation that we will use social media channels to communicate with our customers. We will ensure that we include social media in all communications plans and on literature and publicity where possible include social media logos and QR codes that direct customers to the appropriate URL.</p> <p>We will also work with services to support them in developing their own social media feeds and campaigns as a communication channel.</p>			
	<p>Annual Staff awards: A new category that reflects the priority of digital transformation will be created to recognise and celebrate good work and outcomes.</p>	<p>HR/ Communications</p>		<p>2018 Awards</p>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The barriers to digital inclusion

Typically, there is one or more barriers that work together to prevent digital inclusion.

The four main challenges are:

1. Access the ability to actually connect to the internet	2. Skills to be able to use the internet	3. Motivation knowing the reasons why using the internet is a good thing	4. Trust a fear of crime, to not knowing where to start to go online
Accessibility	Literacy skills	Risks	Identity
Location	Digital Skills	Necessity	Security
Cost	Security skills	Financial benefits	Reputation
Infrastructure	Confidence	Social benefits	
Language	Technology	Health and wellbeing benefits	

Access:

Some organisations have limited regard to **accessibility** i.e. ensuring their digital services are compatible with the tools some disabled people use such as screen readers or braille software, as well as making their sites capable of being read with lower tech solutions such as coloured screen filters. There is an obvious impact on the individual looking to access the online service, but equally lack of understanding of this issue reduces the potential customer base of businesses and other organisations with poor digital services accessibility.

Location and infrastructure issues are a significant factor in Ashford due to the large spread of rural areas in the borough. Some people cannot get broadband or it is slow and the mobile network coverage can be poor.

- 9% of households in Ashford cannot get broadband speeds of at least 10Mbps
- almost 71% households cannot get 4G coverage from all providers.

There are many reasons for lack of availability of broadband speed, but usually it is due to commercial viability in rural communities that require significant investment in physical infrastructure. ABC has been working with DCLG and DCMS to influence national planning policy to allow the planning authority to adopt a policy for all new developments to install fibre to the premises to ensure inhabitants are able to access superfast broadband within these developments in the future.

Government recently announced in the Housing White paper that all local authorities should be adopting such a policy, following the inclusion of a policy in the draft Ashford Local Plan.

ABC is also working with Kent County Council to maximise the impact of the roll out of the BDUK project and other grant schemes to bring Superfast broadband to existing residents and businesses through the delivery of fibre to the cabinet in existing residential and business areas. In addition, ABC has been working with other telecoms providers to maximise private investment in telecommunications networks within the Borough.

Cost is a barrier to people going online due to the price of equipment, installation, connection and ongoing fees, often requiring credit checks. This means people on low income, with poor credit history or frequent address changes are excluded. The cost of equipment is falling however the connectivity costs continue to be a barrier, very often the cheapest option for people unable to obtain credit is Pay-As-You-Go 4G mobile packages, but these are often poor value for money in comparison with other deals and this adversely affect lower income households.

Very often, the **language** and terminology used on line can be intimidating and confusing leading to inability to access the information or services the individual requires. This has a knock-on impact in that trust and motivation to use digital services is eroded even if the individual has some, or all of the basic digital skills.

Skills:

As well as language and terminology, low **literacy** skills can be the reason that people are not online, being faced with pages of text can be intimidating and service providers need to consider other ways to support this group of people with accessible digital services.

People need basic **digital skills** to get online and stay safe online. Basic skills include browsing, using a search engine and filling out forms. The heat map data shows that, in Ashford 77% of residents have basic skills, but only 37% have used all five basic skills. Not regularly using these skills can lead to 'learning decay' where people forget "how to", which in turn affects confidence going online.

People can lack **confidence** and struggle to keep up with **technology** developments and are intimidated by being able to set up devices as well as use to them. This is particularly true of older generations, in Ashford almost a fifth of residents are over 65.

Motivation:

People are afraid of the **risk** of making mistakes, and worried the technology will let them down. This can be overcome by assistance, practice and reminding (and showing) people how easy it is, and of the **social, financial and wellbeing benefits** of using digital tools.

Trust:

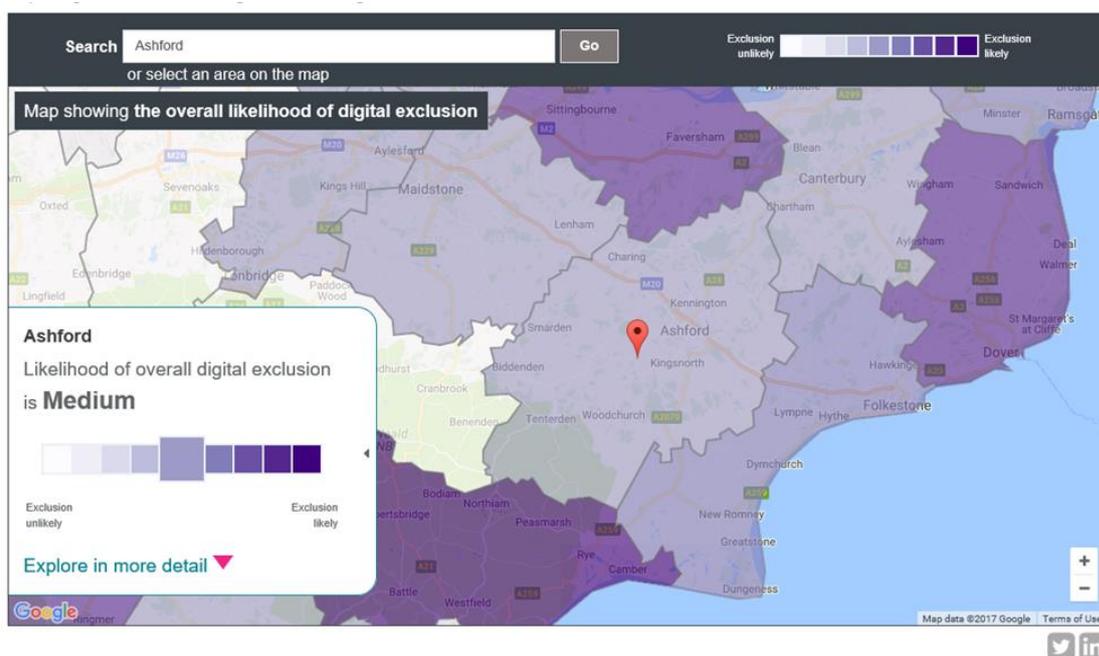
Some people are worried about **identity theft** and scams. When individuals have better digital skills, they are more confident in evaluating which websites to trust. Similarly, better digital skills and knowledge help people identify secure websites and **reputable sites** they can trust and avoid other **security risks**.

Rates of Exclusion in Ashford

The following heat-map produced by the Tech Partnership in association with the Local Government Association and Lloyds Banking Group, shows the likelihood of inclusion, or exclusion in Ashford. The borough of Ashford has medium overall likelihood of digital exclusion, with infrastructure (i.e. Broadband and 4G speed and availability) being a significant challenge together with skills and education.

Income and health are less likely reasons for exclusion in Ashford, but they are still a factor.

All data can be viewed at: <http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com/>



Explore indicators in more detail

Digital Indicators

The combined digital indicator is made up of four metrics that indicate digital exclusion. These are [infrastructure](#), [the number of people who have never been online](#), [Basic Digital Skills](#) and [Basic Digital Skills used](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE (COMBINED)

[View infrastructure \(combined\) on map](#) 



The combined infrastructure metric is made up of two sets of data: household broadband speeds; and the household availability of 4G mobile data.

INFRASTRUCTURE - BROADBAND 10MBPS



9.00% of households in Ashford **do not receive broadband speeds of at least 10 megabits per second (Mbps)**. [Learn more](#)

You can also view the percentage of households not receiving speeds of at least 2Mbps. [Show](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE - 4G MOBILE DATA



70.98% of households in Ashford **do not receive 4G mobile data from all providers**. [Learn more](#)

OFFLINE

[View offline on map](#) 



10.6% of adults in Ashford have **never been online**. [Learn more](#)

BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS

[View Basic Digital Skills on map](#) 



77% of adults in Ashford have **all five Basic Digital Skills**. [Learn more](#)

BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS USED

[View Basic Digital Skills used on map](#) 



37% of adults in Ashford have **used all five Basic Digital Skills in the last three months**. [Learn more](#)

Social Indicators

The combined social indicator is made up of four social metrics that indicate digital exclusion. These are [age](#), [education](#), [income](#) and [health](#).

AGE

[View age on map](#) 



19.0% of adults in Ashford are **over 65**. [Learn more](#)

EDUCATION

[View education on map](#) 



36.80% of adults in Ashford have **no qualifications and/or no Level 1 qualifications**. [Learn more](#)

INCOME

[View income on map](#) 



£22,200 is the **average income per taxpayer** in Ashford. [Learn more](#)

HEALTH

[View health on map](#) 



16.2% of adults in Ashford have **long-term illness or disability**. [Learn more](#)

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.

7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.

- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Michelle Pecci
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	To adopt the Digital Transformation Strategy and associated actions plans that aim to improve the level of service provision, and business processes that are delivered by digital means.
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	9 November 2017
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>The aim is to improve the council's ability to deliver services digital that will improve customer choice in how and when they access our services, as well as improve back office processes to improve efficiency.</p> <p>Key actions will be to redesign the website, introduce a common corporate customer service system to help deliver inline services and process improvements and to develop the digital skills of staff to be able to implement this project and support our customers.</p> <p>All staff and all customers will be able to access more digital services and ways of working.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	This strategy has been informed by review of good practice across the public and private sector and key information has been sought from the Government Digital Service, one of the leading governmental digital service providers in the world.
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<p>No detailed consultation has been undertaken as this strategy is concerned with a direction of travel.</p> <p>When the website is redesigned accessibility, and accessibility tools, will be a key consideration and consultation will be undertaken with representative groups to ensure there are able to access our services.</p> <p>In addition to this as business processes are reviewed customer profiles, based on ACORN data, will take into account the range of protected characteristics when considering customer needs.</p>

Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Negative: Some Elderly customers may not have access, skills or motivation to access services on line.
Middle age	Medium	Neutral: Some middle age customers may not have access, skills or motivation to access services on line
Young adult	Medium	Positive: Young Adults expect to be able to access services on line
Children	None	
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Positive: Digital service provision can be a positive step for many with disabilities, we will need to ensure our accessibility tools are suitable for a range of disabilities.
Mental	Medium	
Sensory	Medium	
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	None	
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	None	
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	None	
<u>RACE</u>	None	
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	None	
<u>SEX</u> Men	None	
Women	None	
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	None	

<p>Mitigating negative impact: Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>There is no intention to remove face to face or telephone customer service. The time saved by staff due to reduced demand and more efficient processes will support a better level of service to those who cannot, or do not wish to, access services on line.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty? Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	N/A
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	N/A

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified. How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>The fundamental basis of this strategy is that no-one is left behind. We will not be removing face to face or telephone customer service and this project is about improving choice of access to services for our customers.</p> <p>A significant strand of this strategy is Digital inclusion and this theme runs throughout the project. Digital exclusion can be caused by a number of challenges but from an EIA point of view usually due to disability or age (lack of skills). We will be making provision to ensure that disabled and low skilled customers are supported either through accessibility tools or through traditional methods of contact with the council. It is not recommended that any adjustments need to be made other than ensuring the principles of equity duty and accessibility to services are applied when designing service provision and the website.</p> <p>Management team and the IT & Digital Transformation Board will monitor delivery of this strategy.</p> <p>Particular customers feedback will be considered through the customer services team to ensure that negative impacts are identified swiftly and rectified where necessary.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>08/09/17</p>