

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY



ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

This document tells you about the Digital Strategy for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council and what it means for you. In our Corporate Plan, 2023-2027 we set out five core priorities that would support the transformation of services across our people, our place and our future. Working digitally is a key part of the Corporate Plan and overarching Vision. The document has 6 discrete parts as described below.

>> PART 1

We provide context to the strategy, talk about our Corporate Plan and discuss how our Digital Strategy aligns to this.

>> PART 2

Gives you an overview of our Vision to become a more digital authority, creating further value in the delivery of Council services through the adoption of innovative technology.

>> PART 3

We will set out our Ambitions, these are the broad changes that we will make. We also tell you about what enablers we will put in place to help us achieve our goals.

>> PART 4

We have put together five Statements of Intent. These are what we plan to do to achieve our vision. You can read about these in detail in **Part 4**.

>> PART 5

Tells you about our implementation approach and gives you an outline of what will be achieved and when in our Roadmap for Change.

>> PART 6

Looks to our future, where our communities can easily access our services, our staff are benefiting from technological innovation, and where Council leadership are able to design services around the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.



**Working digitally
is a key part of the
Corporate Plan and
overarching Vision**

FOREWORD

The Council plays a vital role in the daily lives of people that live, work and visit the borough of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon. We are all aware of the important role that technology plays in the world today whether it be in our work or personal life. Technology is advancing more rapidly than at any other time in our shared history and the Council aims to be at the forefront of this change.

Why digitalisation and Why Now?

Since merging as one Local Government District in April 2015 we have made progress in standardising our ways of working, rationalising systems and improving the delivery of Council services. We have gained a reputation both locally and regionally for being a highly ambitious, dynamic and progressive local authority, delivering outstanding public services, achieving operational excellence and unlocking the potential of our borough for the benefit of everyone who lives, works or visits here.

However, there is still work to do to ensure that we make Council services inclusive, accessible and easy to use. We have inherited multiple corporate and operational systems following our merger which present us with several challenges:

- 1 Duplication of effort and non-standard processes across departments. This results in fragmented and inefficient service delivery.
- 2 Several out-of-date systems. These are not designed with the customer in mind and do not support smart ways of working in an increasingly digital world.
- 3 Poor quality data. Currently, data requires intensive manipulation and cleansing, hampering the decision-making process regarding delivery of services and innovation.
- 4 An inconsistent and inefficient customer experience. This directly impacts how residents perceive and engage with our organisation.

We now have an opportunity to address the above through investment in innovative technology that will enable us to modernise our service delivery model through digitalisation. This Digital Transformation strategy sets out our ambition to build on what we have already achieved over the last ten years and to use digital, data and technology to deliver customer-led services across our communities.

The digital landscape is evolving rapidly, and we must keep pace to deliver efficient, accessible, and innovative public services. This strategy sets out a vision for how digital, data and technology will enhance the way services are designed and delivered over the next three years.

As we move towards a digital-first approach, we recognise that technology is not just about efficiency, it's about empowering communities, improving accessibility, working in partnership to share insight and solutions, and enabling smarter and more timely decision-making. We will ensure that no one is left behind while creating a modern, sustainable, and secure digital infrastructure that supports the needs of our residents, businesses and our staff.

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CONTEXT

The Digital Transformation Strategy is aligned to our Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 which provides a clear roadmap for Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon to achieve sustainable growth, enhance public services, and foster digital transformation. This will be achieved by leveraging technology, data-driven decision-making, and strong community partnerships. The Council aims to position itself as a modern, efficient, and forward-thinking local authority.

The Corporate Plan balances economic growth with social well-being and environmental responsibility, ensuring long-term prosperity and resilience for the borough and its residents, businesses and staff.

Core Priorities

The **Corporate Plan** focuses on five key priorities to enhance sustainability, well-being, economic growth, service efficiency, and leadership. Our core priorities are summarised below.

-  **ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE** aims to create greener spaces, preserve heritage, and implement a Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap.
-  **COMMUNITY WELL-BEING** seeks to improve quality of life through expanded leisure programs, inclusive projects, and increased citizen engagement.
-  **ECONOMIC GROWTH** prioritises investment, strengthening key industries, and boosting tourism through the £252M Growth Deal.
-  **SERVICE DELIVERY** enhances public services by improving waste management, planning, and digital engagement while ensuring high-quality standards.
-  Lastly, **STAFF, LEADERSHIP & RESOURCES** focuses on workforce development, financial sustainability, and effective governance through an asset review and leadership training.

These priorities work collectively to build a **sustainable, inclusive, and thriving borough**

Digital Modernisation

The Corporate Plan emphasises digital modernisation across various sectors. Key digital initiatives include:

E-Government & Digital Inclusion

- Introduce paperless council meetings and digital case management for efficient governance.
- Ensure 100% of core services are accessible online by 2027.
- Expand digital training programmes for businesses and residents to improve digital literacy.

Data-Driven Public Services

- Implement machine learning in environmental monitoring, predicting trends in waste management and climate change.
- Use predictive analytics for resource allocation, reducing service delivery costs.

The Digital Transformation Strategy **supports the Corporate Plan by:**

- Enhancing service access and quality.
- Improving operational efficiency.
- Enabling real-time monitoring, engagement, and responsiveness.
- Empowering staff and residents through better tools and transparency.
- Driving innovation, sustainability, and economic opportunity.



OUR VISION

The goal of our strategy is to improve the quality of services we deliver to our communities, to make it easier for residents and businesses to interact with us and enable us to become a truly digital Council.

Our Digital Vision is:

“**Digitalising the Council to improve every service, ensuring everyday tasks are intuitive, accessible, simpler and more efficient for residents, businesses, visitors and staff**”

Outcomes

The following outcomes summarise the impacts of digitalisation for our communities, staff , and our Council Leaders.



OUR COMMUNITIES

Improving the user experience of Council services

Making services easy to access, easy to use, transparent and timely



OUR STAFF

Easier ways of working

Opportunities to develop new skills and be supported



OUR COUNCIL

Collect, manage and use data insights to inform how we do things

Embedding a digital culture to improve the way we connect to our communities

Our Strategic Design Principles

As part of the co-design process of our Digital Strategy the Executive Management Team (EMT) together with members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and representatives from services co-designed a set of Strategic Design Principles that create a framework for evaluating all digital outputs, aligned with our strategic objectives in our Corporate Plan.

OUTCOME-BASED		DIGITAL BY DEFAULT Services, where possible, will be available digitally, to promote operational efficiency, so that all those able to use digital services, can choose to do so
		CUSTOMER CENTRIC Resident, business and visitor needs must be at the centre of all designs
		EFFICIENT Designs will be streamlined to ensure operational efficiency and will avoid manual interventions and workarounds to deliver efficient services
		DATA DRIVEN ORGANISATION Systems and processes must generate data that can be used to inform timely decision making
APPROACH-BASED		STAFF SUPPORT Create systems and processes to support staff, giving them the tools they need to execute their roles, building capability, and encouraging greater collaboration and communication
		RESILIENT Technology and systems will be adaptable, scalable, integrated, cyber-secure (by design) and GDPR compliant
		PLANNED CHANGE Planned change initiatives will be simplistic in design, realistically cost effective, achievable, priority-based and will align to the overarching strategy

The design principles translate into our five **Digital Ambitions outlined in Part 3.**



**Ensure that we have
the foundations in
place upon which
to build our digital
service**



DIGITAL AMBITIONS

These ambitions have been developed following extensive collaboration with colleagues across the Council . They are aligned to the Strategic Design Principles. They reflect some of the great work that is underway and our aspirations over the next three years. Alongside our Ambitions, we will continue to get the basics right to ensure that we have the foundations in place upon which to build our digital service offering. These will underpin everything that we do:



Data: We will continue to improve how we collect, manage and use data to inform how we do things.



Skills: We will continue to invest in digital skills for our colleagues and our customers.



Connectivity: We will continue to improve our connectivity and infrastructure across the borough to provide the core capability for a digital Council.



Security: We will make sure that we have the right cyber security capacity, capabilities and practices to protect our data.

The design principles translate into our **5 digital ambition statements**, outlined below.



Ambition 1
ENHANCING OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.
We will provide a great digital experience for customers, encouraging encouraging them to use these services by improving the customer experience through focusing on their needs.



Ambition 2
DIGITAL WORKFORCE
We will give our colleagues the technology, digital tools and skills they need to fully interact in a digital way with customers and continually improve how we deliver services.



Ambition 3
MODERN, DIGITAL SYSTEMS
We will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way we work by making the most of new technologies, innovation and best practice, ensuring the highest level of safety and security.



Ambition 4
INSIGHT-BASED DECISIONS
We will use data insights and artificial intelligence to drive innovation, improve decision making and drive service efficiencies.



Ambition 5
COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS
We will create digital partnerships across the borough to develop skills and talent, improve collaboration and help to increase digital inclusion.



STATEMENTS OF INTENT

To turn our Vision and Ambitions into reality, **we have created five Statements of Intent.** These statements translate strategic intent into actions that will be delivered over the course of the next three years.



Ambition 1

ENHANCING OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- We will make sure that our online services are inclusive, user-friendly and accessible to all at any time on any device.
- We will provide a consistent and comprehensive user experience by enhancing and expanding our online services.
- We will use a people-centred approach to designing our online services.
- We will design digital and online services around customer needs.
- We will make sure that no customer is excluded or left behind in accessing our digital services and that services are also available in person or via telephone.
- We will improve our website and invest in customer portals to make sure that content is accessible, up to date, easy to access and simple to understand.
- We will reduce paper forms for customer referrals and increase self-service online for assessments.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Improved services that are available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, over user-friendly digital channels that are supported on multiple devices and at any time.
- Digital platforms enable the Council to proactively share updates regarding the status of service requests to our communities, eliminating the need for follow-up contact.
- Access to a single consistent source of up-to-date information for people using services. This will eliminate the duplication of information capture.



Ambition 2

DIGITAL WORKFORCE

- We will give our colleagues the training and support they need so they can be confident in providing services and communicating with our customers digitally.
- We will create a culture where all staff embrace technology and innovation, incorporating digital skills into our recruitment and development plans.
- We will provide our colleagues with the tools to maintain data quality and integrity, to drive better insights, decision making and service effectiveness for our communities.
- We will build and grow a Digital Change Champion network to advocate innovative approaches and solutions.
- We will embed a culture of digital leadership, adoption, innovation and continuous improvement to enable our colleagues to respond to technological advancements and changing local and national priorities.
- We will embed digital leadership into service planning by equipping leaders with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively ensure continuous digital improvements.
- We will adopt values that will guide our behaviours and actions to adopt digital, data and technology solutions to achieve better outcomes for our communities.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Staff will be upskilled in using innovative technologies, supported by the Council.
- Better collaboration and communication within and between services across the Council.
- A culture of continuous digital improvement and growth to be adopted and ingrained within the Council.



Ambition 3

MODERN, DIGITAL SYSTEMS

- We will use technology and data to digitise our ways of working from end to end.
- Use Power Platforms and generative AI to reduce the burden of Repetitive, administrative tasks upon staff making services more efficient, solving complex problems and driving better outcomes for our communities.
- We will adopt enterprise architecture and standards-based approaches, embedding the principles and standards into any newly developed systems to ensure we provide quality digital services. We will conduct long-term technology impact assessments to identify and develop opportunities, and to rationalise, finding the most appropriate technologies and tools, to deliver improved outcomes for our communities.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Access to reliable digital services supported by cloud and infrastructure technologies.
- Improved efficiency and staff experience providing services through automation.
- Embed a culture of continuous improvement and innovation with a focus on creating a superior customer experience.

Educate colleagues to understand their role in cyber security





Ambition 4

INSIGHT-BASED DECISIONS

- We will expand the use of our modern data platform to understand our customers and their needs, make user-based informed decisions, use consistent data standards and governance, improve our decision-making processes and our service provision.
- We will inform and educate colleagues to understand their role in cyber security and have the necessary skills to comply with security protocols, continuously reviewing and complying with security requirements through regular testing of a service plan.
- We will explore opportunities to use data science and predictive AI tools to improve service delivery.
- We will introduce clear governance for the management and use of data, to enable informed decision making to deliver better outcomes for our communities.
- We will develop and implement a data framework based on clearly defined levels of skills and capabilities, creating communities of practice to support colleagues.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Improved data intelligence and decision-making to drive quality service delivery.
- Data driven planning and improvement of services.
- Assurance is provided so that people have confidence that personal data is being managed appropriately.
- Access to open data that facilitates transparency and innovation.
- The ability for all colleagues to analyse and interpret data.



Ambition 5

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- We will collaborate and cooperate across the borough, with wider local government, the private sector, and the third sector to share insight, and workable solutions, and support the digital skills that expand digital inclusion, drive economic development, and benefit our communities.
- We will establish a Digital Forum to explore challenges and opportunities presented by new technologies, fostering knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving across service units.
- We will collaborate with other local government districts and public bodies to share public content across our different websites, improve signposting services and information provision through AI.
- We will share information about local organisations who provide digital support, local funding opportunities, and digital skills, training, and safety resources.

WHAT THIS MEANS

- Utilisation of best practice, research and innovation to improve outcomes for our communities.
- Stronger digital inclusion across the borough.
- Digital inclusion challenges are addressed collaboratively by bringing together organisations across the borough.
- Greater opportunities for our residents to build their digital skills.
- An attractive business community in the borough in which to invest and thrive.





DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

We have **prioritised 17 strategic projects** that will help us achieve our digital ambitions over the coming years. These projects will be **delivered via our digital transformation programme** that has five workstreams:

- 1. Enabling activities:** the building blocks to ensure that we can successfully deliver our programme of work and achieve our digital ambitions. This activity will focus on ensuring that we have the correct programme governance and delivery approach in place to deliver against our ambitious timescales. Additional activity in this area will be to define the appropriate ICT infrastructure required to support new ways of working.
- 2. Customer Service Transformation:** the customer experience and how residents, businesses and visitors to the borough will interact with us in a digital world. These activities will focus on the design of digital and online services around customer needs, ensuring that our services are easily accessible, easy to use and fulfil customer requirements in a timely manner.
- 3. Quick Wins:** activity that focuses on delivering achievable, small-scale, and tactical improvements that demonstrate immediate value and build momentum early in the programme. These will typically require minimal effort and resources and will demonstrate the benefits of digitalisation, helping secure commitment and enthusiasm from all our stakeholders to continue to deliver against our digital ambitions.
- 4. Corporate Digitalisation:** activity that focuses on the staff journey internally within the Council in terms of how we collaborate across teams and departments using digital platforms. A priority activity in this area will be the introduction of Employee Self-Service (ESS) and Manager Self Service (MSS) to manage quality and performance, record our time, book leave through automated and streamlined processes and workflow.
- 5. Operational Digitalisation:** further systems rationalisation, integration and process automation. This is to achieve optimal process performance through further enhancement of our digital platforms over time.

Overview of our digital initiatives

Phase 1			Phase 2	
ENABLING ACTIVITIES	CUSTOMER SERVICE TRANSFORMATION	QUICK WINS	CORPORATE DIGITALISATION	OPERATIONAL DIGITALISATION
Programme delivery approach	Customer experience	Essential AI	Employee self-service	Systems rationalisation
Solution architecture	Self-service	Data analytics	Manager self-service	Real-time customer service updates
Change approach	Customer account			Automation
	Process automation			
	Structured data collection			
	Customer account			

Our Immediate Priorities

Carefully planned and managed business change will be imperative to achieving the Council’s digital ambitions. Our immediate priorities will be to:

- 1. Agree the delivery approach and governance protocols that will ensure that we successfully deliver our digital agenda, reduce business risk and optimise the customer experience.
- 2. Identify and invest in the resources with the relevant skills and experience required to support delivery of this large-scale transformation programme.

Our world is constantly evolving, and Local Government is undergoing transformation as part of ongoing Local Government Reform. Similarly, technology continues to evolve, and new opportunities are identified continually. To remain relevant in the years ahead, our strategy needs to be flexible and to adapt in line with changes. We will review our Action Plan annually and will add and amend projects and activities when needed.

We will measure the impact of those actions to make sure that we are succeeding. We will also ask for feedback from members of the public, businesses and colleagues and analyse feedback to use to inform our annual review. This will help us to make the changes we need to reach our goals.



LOOKING FORWARD

Connecting Communities outlines our ambitions for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon over the next three years. In the coming years, digital and ICT will be used to deliver services that put the people the Council serves at the centre of its digital transformation, with future services designed around residents, businesses and visitors. This has been articulated in our Digital Vision.

In five years, we aim to have achieved a significant change in the way that our communities interact with us. Our residents, businesses and visitors will experience easier interactions with the Council, using online portals to make applications, requests, or queries at a time convenient to them. This will increase the uptake and usage of our services and improve the end-to-end experience for our communities.

We also want our staff at the Council to play a central role in this journey. We want them to promote digital innovation and positive change, continuously learning, and developing our service offerings.

By **2031**, the way we work in the Council will be modernised and transformed by the digitalisation programme.

- Standardised processes and system integrations will ensure clean, accurate data is collected and used in strategic and operational planning.
- AI will remove the need for burdensome administrative tasks, liberating staff (to do more for our communities) to operate more efficiently, making better use of time carrying out higher value tasks. Staff will be provided with access to new technologies that enable them to carry out their work safely and securely.
- Staff will be supported in their journey, provided with the tools required to build capability, with greater collaboration and communication both within and between services.

The Council will see the following benefits in three years:

- Key Council services will be available digitally for our communities, so that all are able to use digital services if they choose to do so.
- Our communities will be supported to take part in a digital society.
- Our staff will be provided with the tools to enact modern, digital ways of working.





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