

DIGITAL STRATEGY

Woking Borough Council
Digital Strategy 2022-2025

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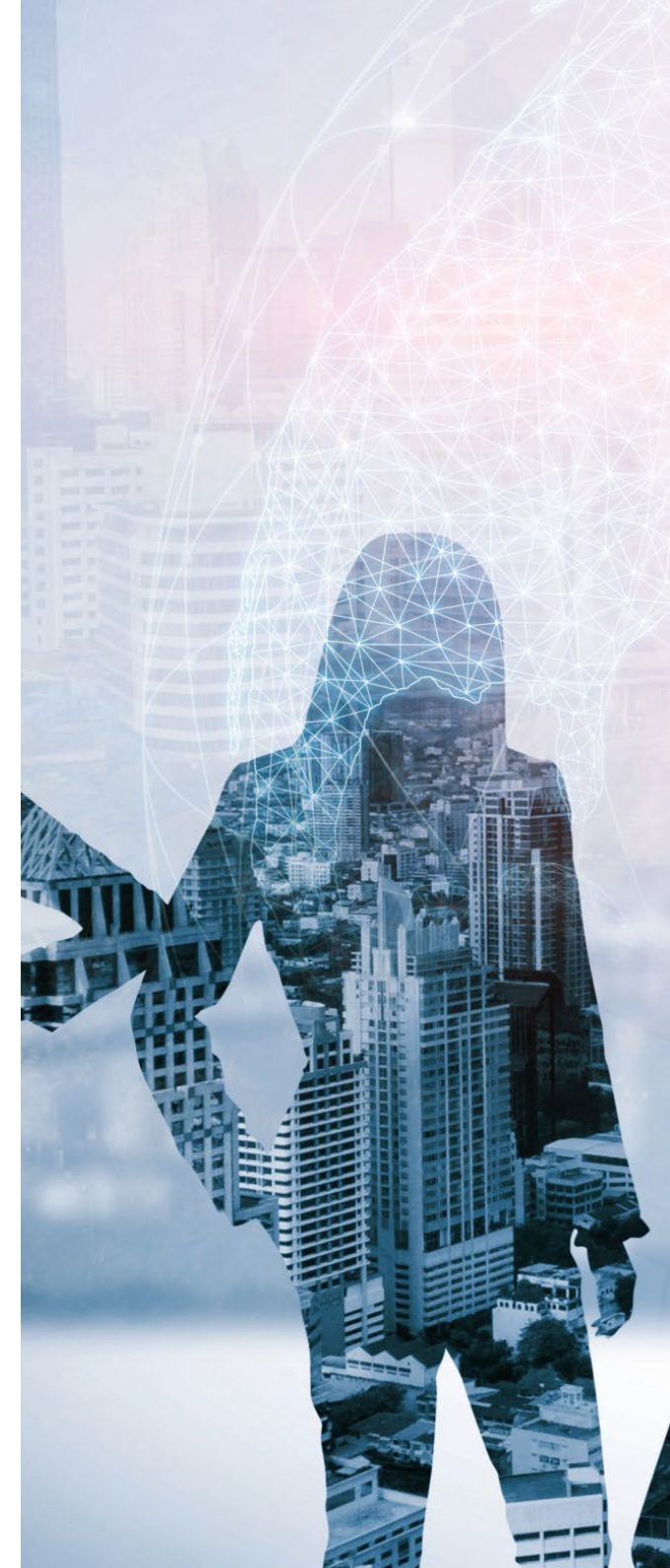
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FOREWORD: COUNCILLOR KEVIN DAVIS



Councillor Kevin Davis

I am delighted to introduce Woking Borough Council's new digital strategy.

It sets out the Council's vision that outlines how we will use technology to continue to provide high quality, high priority, and highly valued services for our residents, businesses and visitors.

New expectations from our residents, the challenges of working more collaboratively and the availability of technology to improve the way we work means that a digital strategy is required to set out how this Council will respond to these opportunities and challenges.

To protect and grow the local economy in the future, we must do all we can to ensure our businesses can thrive in the digital age, and attract new enterprises to base themselves in the Borough. This means ensuring businesses have access to gigabit speed broadband; the equipment, systems and skills to make use of it; and easy, simple access to the Council services they need.

We know digital technologies are rapidly transforming our lives – how we shop, travel, eat, work, communicate and

generally live our day-to-day lives. The world is becoming 'Smart'; from the phones in our hand that can access encyclopaedias of information within seconds, to automatic lightbulbs and utilities in our homes that reduce bills and carbon emissions, to entire cities that detect and respond to events, such as pollution levels, transport disruption and environmental changes.

Every organisation, public or private, must adopt digitalisation or they will be left behind.

Our aim is for the Borough to continue to be recognised as a forward-thinking, innovative and entrepreneurial place that has adopted digitalisation to improve and enhance the lives of its residents, to enable growth of its businesses and maintain its ambitions. Recognising the need for change, the Council has appointed a Head of Digital and Transformation who will lead on the implementation of this strategy.

This strategy also sets out how the Council has evolved, how it underpins and complements our existing strategies and vision.

November 2021

INTRODUCTION: JULIE FISHER

For most of us, digital technology is an essential part of daily life.

We can shop, bank, and transact with public services when and where it is convenient to us, and we can share our thoughts, opinions and photographs with the world instantly via social media.

This has changed the way people expect to be able to interact with the Council in order to request, access and receive our services. To meet these changing expectations, we need to enhance and expand our digital offer across all dimensions, from social media and web applications to tech-enabled services and facilitating a flexible and mobile workforce.

This means getting the most out of technology to increase choice and improve quality, finding innovative solutions that allow us to work in better and smarter ways and helping our communities to thrive in a digital world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted even more the need for a new and innovative digital agenda, one that can better accommodate mobile workforces and enable people working in industries hard hit by the pandemic to skill-up in other areas.

We have already started on our digital transformation and our digital infrastructure is getting stronger every day. We currently offer many services online but we need to expand and redefine our online services to make them as simple and use-friendly as possible.

Our Borough is digitally well connected, however there are pockets that are less connected and, while many of our residents regularly use digital services and technology in their day-to-day lives, there are also people who do not feel confident in using digital technology. We must ensure these groups are not left behind.

Woking Borough Council will adopt a digital first approach to all its new projects and

services and this methodology underpins other strategies, for example using digital services to improve residents' health and wellbeing, support independent living and reducing social isolation.

This strategy provides a high level framework, it does not sit still – while digital technologies are created we shall adapt our strategy to meet future demands, to continue to evolve as we deliver and learn.

Julie Fisher, Chief Executive



This strategy is about recognising that technology has changed our lives, and being able to adapt to new technologies in the future that provides better outcomes for our residents, visitors and businesses alike.

KEY STATISTICS

A SMART PLACE



2.5M FT² OF
OFFICE SPACE



7000+ METRES OF FIBRE
DUCTING IN THE TOWN CENTRE



96% OF BUSINESSES HAVE
ACCESS TO SUPERFAST
BROADBAND (>30MBPS)



34,000 UNIQUE VISITORS
TO THE WOKING WORKS
WEBSITE PER YEAR



50,000+ LOGINS TO THE PUBLIC
REALM WI-FI PER YEAR



850+ TECH
BUSINESSES

SMART PEOPLE



20+ LANGUAGES
SPOKEN IN THE
BOROUGH



740K UNIQUE VISITORS
TO WWW.WOKING.GOV.UK
PER YEAR

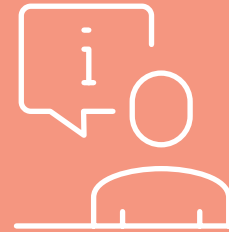


100,000+
RESIDENTS IN
THE BOROUGH



50,000+ EMPLOYED IN
THE BOROUGH

SMART COUNCIL



1000+ TECH SUPPORT
REQUESTS PER YEAR



100+ LIVE
APPLICATIONS



400+ DEVICES
USED BY STAFF



320+ STAFF EMPLOYED
AT WOKING BOROUGH
COUNCIL



VISION

We will do this by focussing on three main themes:

THEME 1: SMART PEOPLE

We will help the people of Woking get the most out of digital technologies in their homes and communities, helping to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors and enrich their lives.

THEME 2: SMART PLACE

We will unlock the Borough using smart technologies and give the Borough's businesses and residents a competitive edge through digital infrastructure and advanced connectivity, promoting the Borough as an enterprising, vibrant and sustainable Borough with a strong, growing digital economy.

THEME 3: SMART COUNCIL

We will optimise how the Council uses digital to work smarter: more efficiently, more productively, to innovate and collaborate, to adapt and make informed decisions quickly.

“

Our vision is to create a digital Borough where our residents will be digitally empowered, our businesses will be more competitive, driving prosperity and success. We will lead the way on smart, sustainable growth to create an even greater place for people to live, work, play, learn and do business.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This Digital Strategy does not stand alone, it has been created to sit among a number of national, regional and local strategies as well as cross-cutting through the Council's own strategies, plans and policies. A full list and summary details of the relevant strategies are listed in Appendix A. The graphic below summarises the context of how this Digital Strategy fits within the National, Regional and Local strategies.



WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S REGIONAL STRATEGIES



ABOUT THIS STRATEGY

Digital is about much more than technology, it's about making people's lives richer and easier.

“

“Digital transformation is the strategic adoption of digital technologies. It's used to improve processes and productivity, deliver better customer and employee experiences, manage risk, and control costs.”

Citrix, United Kingdom

This strategy, therefore, is about how we will deliver and enable the services and infrastructure our residents, businesses, visitors and the wider community need in order to thrive in the Borough, now and in years to come.

As a consequence of delivering this strategy:

- Woking Borough residents, visitors and businesses will enjoy faster broadband connectivity and a wider digitally enhanced public realm through our existing Wi-Fi network, collaborating with stakeholders to increase connectivity, digital wayfinding information in the town centre, third-party platforms that will bring the community together and smart technology solutions that will help reduce energy consumption, lower emissions and improve health and safety.
- Woking Borough residents will also have access to an enhanced digital skills offer through our Woking Works

brand, and partner providers helping them build their confidence in areas from basic computer literacy through to the professional skills they need to access jobs of the future.

- The Borough will have a thriving technology sector, with start-ups, scale-ups and established businesses creating growth and prosperity.
- Woking Borough Council staff will have access to continuously improving technology and be supported by having the skills and confidence to use it efficiently and productively.
- Partners and stakeholders will enjoy a more collaborative approach working with the Council, sharing of data and more open communication and making use of digital platforms to enable a more joined up approach to delivering positive change in the Borough.

THEME 1: SMART PEOPLE

We will help residents of the Borough get the most out of digital technologies in their homes and communities, helping to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and visitors and enrich their lives.

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES

Empower the Borough's residents:

- To access all Council services ensuring that digital is the preferred method of access.
- To ensure all Council services that could be online, are available online supported by alternative channels for those who require them.
- To ensure that the vast majority of interaction between residents and the Council takes place in the form of an online service.
- Empower residents to use digital technologies such as the Internet of Things, to transform the way they manage their health, safety and wellbeing.

Work with stakeholders to help excluded parts of society become digitally included.

Consider the implementation of digital platforms to make it easier to link up with partners and stakeholders as well as provide access to Council services in one place.

Work with partners and stakeholders to increase ultrafast, gigabit broadband to the home

WHERE ARE WE NOW

Woking Borough residents already have a significantly improved experience when accessing the Council's services and information, with an easy-to-use website that works on any device, and with our Community Forum, our new engagement platform, that informs and consults residents on the issues they care about.

As the commercial sector continue to innovate and improve their digital platforms, our connected residents now expect similar levels of innovation within the public sector. The Council must therefore continue to embrace new technologies to provide a better experience for our residents and businesses alike. We must work to redefine our relationship with our residents, responding to their increasing expectations and experiences of public sector services.

There is considerable potential to improve the quality and further reduce the costs of services by providing more of them online and by applying user-centric design methods, it will ensure more people use them successfully.

A significant proportion of contact between residents and the Council takes place via online services. We want this to be "most" contact, making all Council services digital by default, yet always ensuring we cater for those who cannot access these services digitally.

It is the Council's intention to sign up to the [Local Digital Declaration](#), a public pledge to deliver digital services in accordance with the methods set out in the [Government](#)



[Service Manual](#) and to ensure all new and updated services going forwards meet the high quality standards set out in the [Government Service Standard](#).

DESIRED OUTCOMES

To move forward in this area:

EMPOWER RESIDENTS

The recent introduction of the Council's digital Community Forum, has enabled a more efficient, transparent and engaging platform to communicate with residents.

It enables residents to have the opportunity to express their views on all things "Borough", from strategies, to plans, or subjects such as zero-carbon initiatives or green spaces.

Empowerment makes people feel valued. We need our residents to know that they matter to us. Enabling residents to have a voice and feeling listened to results in change and choice, which in turn contributes to a greater sense of place. Using the Community Forum platform, the Council will include residents in service design to ensure they meet user needs.

However there are many more services that our residents need. The Council currently provide many, a lot of them digitally delivered, however they are



not all necessarily smart or convenient. In order for our residents to be empowered to be included, to report, or to comment, the Council is determined to make the process simple, efficient and effective.

Simplicity is fundamental – there is little point in having a complicated or complex, cumbersome digital process which will only lead to

disenfranchising residents. Digital should benefit everybody and present no barriers. Digital solutions should provide a better alternative solution to existing ones.

Digital solutions should be the preferred solution but we shall also offer alternative methods of engagement where technology is not appropriate.

PERSONALISED DIGITAL PLATFORMS

The Council's current website provides the ability to report issues, such as potholes and fly-tipping; pay for services or fines, such as council tax or Penalty Charge Notices; or apply for services such as housing or garden waste collection.

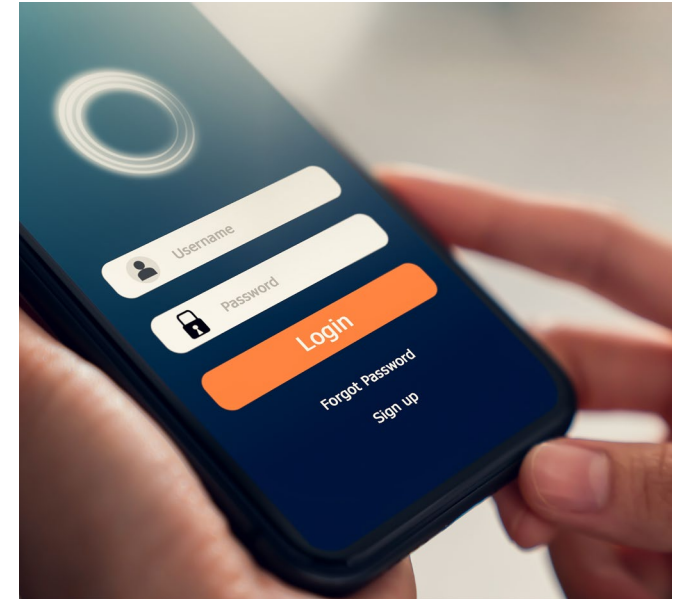
The website also provides comprehensive information on Council operations, such as committees, events and culture, and the local environment. Other websites such as [Woking Works](#), [Woking 2027](#) or [Planet Woking](#) also provides information on aspects of the Borough. If residents, businesses or visitors to the Borough cannot access or navigate these digital services, they might give up and become disenfranchised.

We envisage that by 2025, all transactions, information provided and most interaction between residents and businesses, with the Council such as paying taxes or applying for licenses, takes place online. The aim is that the current functional Council website becomes more of a true digital platform which will fully enable residents and businesses to access services simply and more easily and connect to other users.

Having such a digital platform could be delivered in the form of a community platform within it. The

premise would be to provide a quick and accessible entry into Borough services to connect residents and businesses alike. Some examples of services a Woking Borough platform might offer are:

1. Report a pothole or fly-tipping – the platform can utilise the mobile device's camera to photograph the issue. The location would be automatically identified using the phone's GPS signal, and the event could be reported in real-time.
2. 'Smart City' digital information and notices – providing users real-time updates of air quality and river levels detected from sensors installed throughout the Borough.
3. Schedule or unplanned event notification – the platform could detect the device's location and send alerts informing the user of issues such as road closures or accidents or opportunities such as offers from local businesses or cultural events.
4. Wayfinding and location support - read QR codes or beacons from locations within the Borough to identify points of interest or transport links.
5. Quick access to Council services – One platform to allow reporting issues, applications and application tracking, or Council operated schedules such as refuse and recycling collection.



An extension of the Digital Platform could be Digital Assistant technology, available in many phones and devices, such as Siri, Google Assistant or Alexa.

This would enable residents to ask questions such as 'What day is my garden waste due for collection?' or 'Report the street lamp in my street isn't working'. These may appear basic queries, but in the digital world connected residents are familiar and reliant on such technology.

Such innovations will have enhanced appeal to such connected residents and those who have readily embraced technology, keeping the Borough as a highly ranked place to both live and work.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion, is about making sure that people have the capability and are empowered to use technology to do things that benefit them day to day. The Council's [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#) highlights the importance of digital inclusion when accessing public services such as the NHS.

We will identify those with potential exclusion such as:

- Older people
- People in lower income groups
- People without a job
- People in social housing
- People with disabilities
- People with fewer educational qualifications
- People living in deprived areas
- Homeless people
- People whose first language is not English

Our actions will include:

- Introducing "Digital Champions" within the Community
- Teaching / upskilling digital skills throughout the community
- Improve connectivity Borough wide
- Inject confidence to utilise digital
- Inspire and motivate
- Identify any cost barriers and seek to lower them



We will seek partnerships: Working with a variety of stakeholders to help segments of society become digitally included such as:

- Faith Groups
- Charities
- Surrey County Council
- Surrey Heartlands NHS
- Voluntary/ Not For Profit/ charities to provide devices at a lower cost point or free of charge.

Working in close collaboration with our partners and stakeholders will be essential in ensuring digital inclusion across local communities and wider society. Woking Borough Council aims to be a leader in promoting digital inclusion to residents, businesses and visitors.



BROADBAND FOR ALL

As more services become Internet-enabled, businesses creating digital storefronts or more Council services being accessed via a website or platform, the demand for fast affordable Internet connectivity will continue to increase for both residents and businesses.

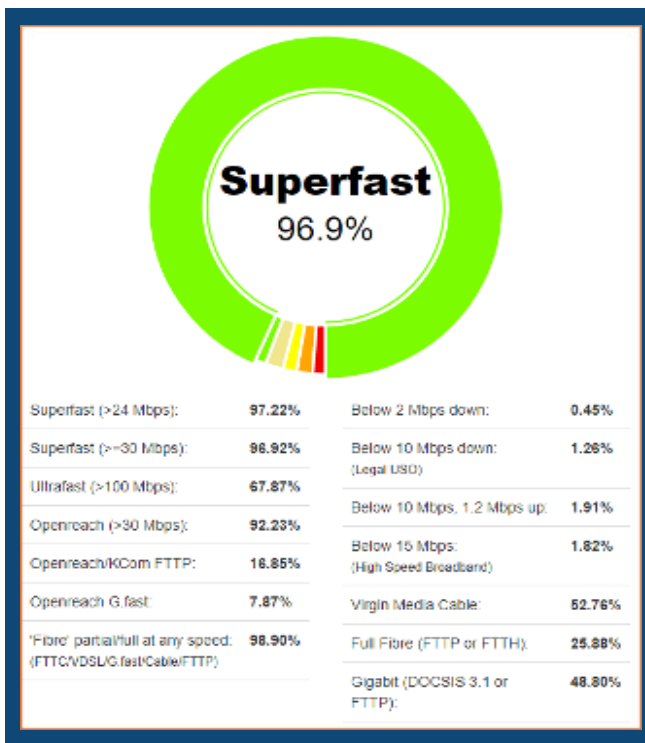
Residents and businesses have, and many depend on, the ability to connect to the Internet. Various Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer broadband and full fibre connectivity tailored to their specific needs and budgets, both commercial and domestic packages.

Mobile Network Operators also provide 4G and 5G internet services via mobile phones, tablets and mobile Wi-Fi devices. Public Wi-Fi is offered by pubs, hotels and shopping centres, and by the Council.

Connectivity isn't just limited to providing access to the Internet, however. The ability to connect also means access to digital services, innovating upon the digital services, and building a secure digital community and ecosystem where people can feel safe online.

The aim is to ensure all residents, businesses and visitors of the Borough have affordable access to

UK Broadband Coverage*



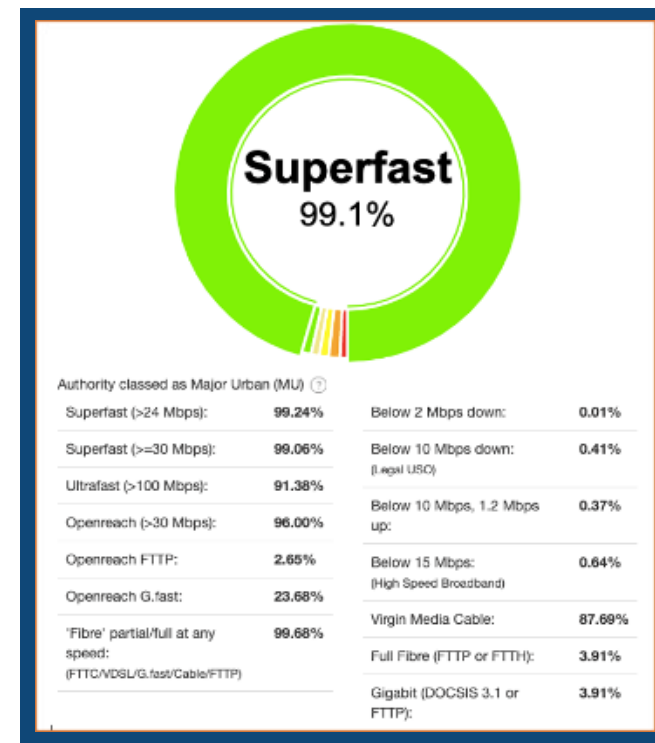
the Internet and Council-operated digital services.

This includes:

Currently broadband availability in the Borough is above the national average. By working with partners and stakeholders we will aim to:

1. Ensuring all residents and visitors have access to free public Wi-Fi in strategic places within the Borough such as the public-realm, libraries, art galleries, etc.
2. Ensuring all residents can subscribe to private,

Woking Borough's Broadband Coverage*



between superfast and ultrafast and gigabit internet regardless of location, utilising fibre and mobile 4G & 5G connections.

3. Engaging with private Internet Service Providers such as BT, Virgin, and City Fibre to utilise existing and planned fibre routes and ducts, to maximise gigabit connectivity across the Borough.
4. Granting residents, businesses, and educational facilities access to the Borough's "Smart City" information for innovation and educational benefits.

THE INTERNET OF THINGS

(IoT) used by everybody

By empowering residents to use digital technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), they can transform the way they manage their lives including health and wellbeing.

IoT is already used to help people with exercise, diet, energy efficiencies, security, both physical and online and for detecting poisonous gasses and smoke. However not everybody understands the technology nor do they link the cost to savings and efficiencies. Like all data driven sensor technologies, IoT can potentially benefit everybody in the community.

The Council can enable and influence how its residents and businesses can take advantage of technologies by prioritising technology at the design stage, working with residents its partners to provide the options that will deliver benefits of this technology.

Two examples are:

Smart homes

The Council can influence developers to install fibre connections in new homes which will make it easier to make a new home a smart home such as being able to connect domestic appliances to the internet. Remotely managed heating and security systems,



checking on pets via two-way CCTV and being remotely advised of callers and deliveries are becoming commonplace with brands such as Nest and Ring and Philips lighting leading the consumer adoption of IoT devices.

Technology enabled care

Technology enabled care (TEC) is revolutionising

the way we support and care for vulnerable people. Health providers are already providing IoT devices such as fall detectors and alarm pendants through to a myriad of apps designed to help people maintain their independence. Enhanced communication devices are helping to tackle loneliness through bringing together people via virtual groups and meetings.

THEME 2: SMART PLACE

We will unlock the Borough using smart technologies and give the Borough's businesses a competitive edge through digital infrastructure and advanced connectivity, promoting the Borough as an enterprising, vibrant and sustainable Borough with a strong, growing digital economy.

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Think of digital transformation less as a technology project to be finished than as a state of perpetual agility, always ready to evolve for whatever customers want next, and you'll be pointed down the right path.”

Amit Zavery, VP and Head of Platform, Google Cloud

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES

We will continue to support the roll out of 5G mobile and Full Fibre networks.

We will develop enhanced digital marketing solutions to actively promote the Borough as a digital place to live, work, play and learn.

Continue to grow our technology community, to attract more technology companies to the Borough through continued investment by both the Council, private and public sector partners.

Develop Woking as a “Smart Borough” using smart technologies to enrich the experience of our residents, visitors, businesses and wider community.

Safeguard our High-streets to ensure they remain sustainable and continue to be an integral part of the retail experience using digital technologies to help them remain relevant. Lead and support initiatives that cross-promote physical and digital retail businesses

By introducing a Digital Centre of Excellence, supporting a “Green Tech” incubator and accelerator hub, invention and innovation will have a place to thrive.

Establish Digital Woking, a community of tech companies to promote the Borough, to host tech events and support the Digital Centre of Excellence.

Seek initiatives to make the Borough a safe place to work, live, work, play and learn using smart technologies to improve wayfinding and security.

Support the aspirations of the Council's Climate Change Strategy by identifying digital technologies

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Connectivity plays a crucial role in the attraction, growth and retention of businesses resulting in increased productivity, innovation and growth in knowledge based sectors.

As our business community expands with “high growth – high tech” companies we aim to create a niche “Green Tech” sector, exclusive to the Borough. A smart place can help make its businesses smart.

We have 850 businesses within the IT sector in the Borough. Oracle, Virgin Media, Fidessa, Cubica, Capita, Ai Corporation, ArcomIT, Invotra, Inventica as well as Sunguards 200,000 ft2 datacentre.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

We have been laying the pipework for multi-use fibre optics across Woking town centre. This fibre can be “blown” to nearby buildings allowing the occupants ultrafast high-capacity gigabit speeds.

PUBLIC REALM WI-FI

Advanced digital infrastructure providing free Wi-Fi in the town centre a gigabit-capable network for businesses to underpin future growth and aspirations to bring next generation 5G mobile into the town.

Currently we have Wi-Fi in Commercial Way, Wolsey Place and Peacocks shopping centres, Mercia and Market Walks, Jubilee Square, Gloucester Walk and Square and in the Lightbox and Woking Park.

DIGITAL HIGH-STREET

A new initiative launched in July 2021 with [MyTownShops](#) provides an online platform for independent retailers, offering click & collect and a home delivery service.

- An increase in customers to retail outlets.
- An increase in outlet revenue by providing an additional revenue stream.
- Allows businesses being able to have an e-commerce presence.
- An increase in footfall to the Borough’s commercial centres benefiting all high street facing businesses.
- Provides a sustainable local economy.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

To move forward in this area:

FIBRE FOR ALL AND 5G MOBILE

We will engage with stakeholders and partners from both the public and private sectors to increase broadband coverage at speeds over 1GB and develop a digital infrastructure strategy to support the ambitions of our businesses and residents alike.

Full fibre infrastructure is vital to underpin 5G mobile coverage. At its heart is an emphasis on greater consumer choice and initiatives to promote quicker rollout and an eventual switch to Borough-wide full fibre connectivity. There are plans to create a “fibre spine” between Guildford and Basingstoke, and it would not be difficult to include the Borough.

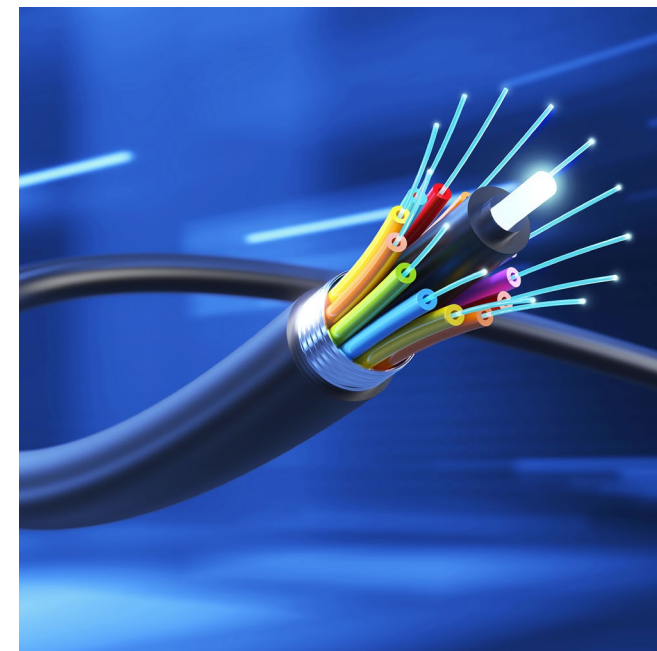
The Council has already begun creating fibre ducting infrastructure to deliver ultrafast Internet connectivity to commercial organisations. This project will be accelerated and augmented to ensure all commercial and industrial locations have fibre ducting provisioned and available.

We shall:

- Engage with Openreach & Surrey County Council and EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership to expand the fibre network.
- Enable tier 2, private sector companies to offer a full fibre network that can be accessed by businesses.
- Work with telecom companies to facilitate the maximum availability of 5G mobile throughout the Borough.
- Demonstrate the potential for 5G mobile through testbeds and application accelerators that develop new applications and services.
- Develop the financial case for investment, to support innovation, growth and service efficiencies.
- Explore innovative uses of 5G mobile in the delivery of services working with partners.

PROMOTION

“Destination Woking”, cited in the [Economic Development Action Plan](#), recommends a marketing strategy to promote the Borough as a destination of choice for businesses. The Council will do more to promote the Borough as a



destination for technology businesses.

The Borough has a growing digital technology sector and community with a mixed ecosystem of start-ups, small to medium sized enterprises and large technology companies. Growing our technology sector in the Borough, will attract more technology companies through continued investment by both the Council, private and public sector partners.

PRODUCE A SEPARATE STRATEGY TO

DEVELOP A SMART BOROUGH

A "Smart Borough" is an urban area that uses different types of interconnected digital methods and sensors to collect data, insights from which are then used to manage assets, resources and services efficiently improve operations.

The idea of a 'Smart Borough' is increasingly seen as focusing on 'Smart People' and the digital role all residents and stakeholders can play. A 'Smart Place' is not about being a slave to technology but technology being at the service of the people.

'Smart Places' allow people to connect wherever they are and however they want to. However, a 'Smart Place' does not only enable better communication and engagement within our communities, but it will also create a safer and simpler environment for the residents, visitors and workforce of the Borough.

Seek to improve the public realm through solutions such as:

- Monitoring of known fly-tipping areas

- Smart bins, signalling when becoming full
- Smart parking, directing drivers to empty spaces
- Smart lampposts, adjusting brightness when needed
- E-vehicle charging points, signalling when available

The Internet of Things in a town environment

The 'Smart' components are services that provide connectivity and automation. Many of these components are sensors that can detect and control events that traditionally required manual intervention. This concept, known as IoT – a fundamental component of a Smart Place.

As technology advances such sensors could be used to:

- Automated flood defences that alert against rising river levels and predict future flood cycles.
- Fly-tipping detection and prevention using smart cameras
- Air quality monitoring of nitrous oxide and particulate levels to inform residents of danger zones.
- Smart road transport networks that can detect high pollution areas and divert traffic in real-time

- Predictive and preventative maintenance of Council assets, detecting failed or failing equipment, or dangerous and unsanitary events such as blocked drains or overflowing bins.

SAFEGUARDING OUR HIGH-STREETS

We must safeguard the future of the High Street by leading and supporting initiatives that cross-promote physical and digital retail businesses.

The High Street is changing. Digitisation of retail outlets, the use of dark stores and dark kitchens (shops and kitchen not open to personal callers), even the ability to have items delivered within hours by drone or 3D printed in your own home is no longer limited to science fiction. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this change as consumers are forced into online storefront and delivery services.

The Council will respond to and support this accelerated change. One strategy, which is already underway, is helping businesses improve their online presence and this initiative must be continued and integrated with other website and app developers

to provide better access to promotions for the Borough's businesses.

This can be connected to digital wayfinding or signage services to allow businesses to advertise to local consumers and navigate them to their storefronts.

DIGITAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

The Borough being recognised as a Digital Centre of Excellence and innovation hub will increase its reputation nationally and within the county, driving further investment opportunity and possibilities for grants and sponsorships.

We shall:

- Seek and exploit opportunities to strengthen and expand the availability of tech co-working spaces, incubators and accelerators.
- Seek collaboration with educational facilities, sharing data and technology which can provide multiple benefits:
 - a. The Council has the opportunity to educate and develop future generations of digital age developers and entrepreneurs by harnessing data from their environment while learning and innovating.
 - b. Innovation is conducted jointly between



the Council and the public. The Council can delegate innovation and problem solving to the community, perhaps offering awards to the most creative and influential ideas. This would save the Council operating costs and create greater unity between the Council and the community.

- c. 'Smart City' technology and socialised data would encourage technology-based companies and start-ups to operate from the Borough since the networks and data platforms are available for them to build

upon. Education facilities may see an uptake in courses, as students have more tools and capabilities at their disposal

- d. Residents of the Borough will benefit from educational or start-ups' innovations, creating further momentum in the Borough's Digital Transformation journey.

DIGITAL WOKING

The establishment of a community of Woking tech businesses, digital professionals, volunteers and tech start-up entrepreneurs that work to actively enhance the digital capabilities and presence of Woking to generate new jobs, attract tech businesses and key digital skills into the area.

1. Establish technology streams for all key next generation technologies in conjunction with local tech businesses or interested groups:
 - Green technologies
 - Crypto-currencies / Blockchain / Web3
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI) / Machine Learning (ML)
 - Transport - drones / car / e-bikes
 - Health technologies.
2. Set Up an online presence and establish regular tech meetups and growth hacking events.

3. Setup a specific group to support marketing activities promoting Digital Woking.
4. Actively look to encourage the use of next generation technologies in the council and across the businesses in the borough so that we have use cases to promote.

DIGITAL WAYFINDING

Make a safer Borough to live, work, play and learn in by utilising smart technology to improve wayfinding and home and business security.

Wayfinding is an essential aspect of our everyday lives. In fact, wayfinding is so pervasive that it has become second-hand nature: we simply go about our days using street and road signs, aisle labelling in supermarkets, information kiosks at train stations or airports.

Although humans are wired to look for cues that help them find their way around, the popularity of GPS navigation systems and wayfinding tools like Google Maps and mobile apps like 'Waze', are now considered "can't do without" resources for many.

The rise of new technology is helping create digital spaces, which just like physical spaces, need to be designed and built with purpose and making sure



users can find their way around them easily and safely.

There are many examples of how a digital wayfinding programme can support the community's safety and well-being, the economy, and the environment. Digital wayfinding itself is multi-faceted, supporting location, mapping, and directional and advertising services. Therefore, the opportunities enabled by Digital Wayfinding must be assessed based on requirements of the Council, its residents and businesses.

Priority should be placed on discovering these opportunities and creating a roadmap for implementing solutions based on requirements. 'Smart City' technology will underpin Digital Wayfinding services, such as delivering 5G mobile networks, sensors and advanced Cloud-based software incorporating data analytics and artificial intelligence.

CLIMATE & THE ENVIRONMENT

This strategy aims to align with these objectives and action areas and identify ways in which digital innovation can be used to support the aspirations set out in our [Woking 2050](#) sustainable Borough strategy.

The recent report by Green Alliance: Smart and green: joining up digital and environmental priorities outlines five key areas of focus:

- Ensuring digitalisation and low carbon agenda are joined up in recovery plans
- Investing in smart, net zero compatible infrastructure
- Strengthening skills and capabilities with programmes supporting the growth of clean industries and digitalisation
- Promoting the public benefit of data in supporting the transition to low carbon futures
- Promoting greener digital technology

THEME 3: SMART COUNCIL

“

“Digital is something you are, not something you do. It’s about how you think, how you behave, what you value, and what drives decisions in your organisation.”

Tom Loosemoore

(Author of UK’s first digital strategy)

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES

Introduce Digital First as a concept

- The Council’s Political Leadership and Senior Officers exemplify and champion digital expertise and culture.
- Shift the culture of the Council to embrace technology and promote a culture of innovation and pro-activeness - “Digital First”.
- Empower all of our employees to seek new ways of “doing things” using digital means.

Review

- Programmes, projects, workflows, systems, processes and procedures to understand where digital technologies can offer resource efficiencies.
- Ensure we continue to have a flexible and mobile workforce, providing colleagues with the correct digital tools and skills required to deliver services effectively and efficiently from anywhere

Ensure our digital systems and services are protected from malicious attack.

Adopt the 5 Digital Principles

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Across the Council, we make use of a large amount of systems which enable the organisation to function and our staff to deliver public services.

We have made significant investment to equip our staff and Councillors with flexible modern equipment and software. We are about to go to the next level with the introduction of Microsoft 365 allowing easy integration with the majority of residents, businesses, other public services and our partners and stakeholders using Microsoft compatible software.

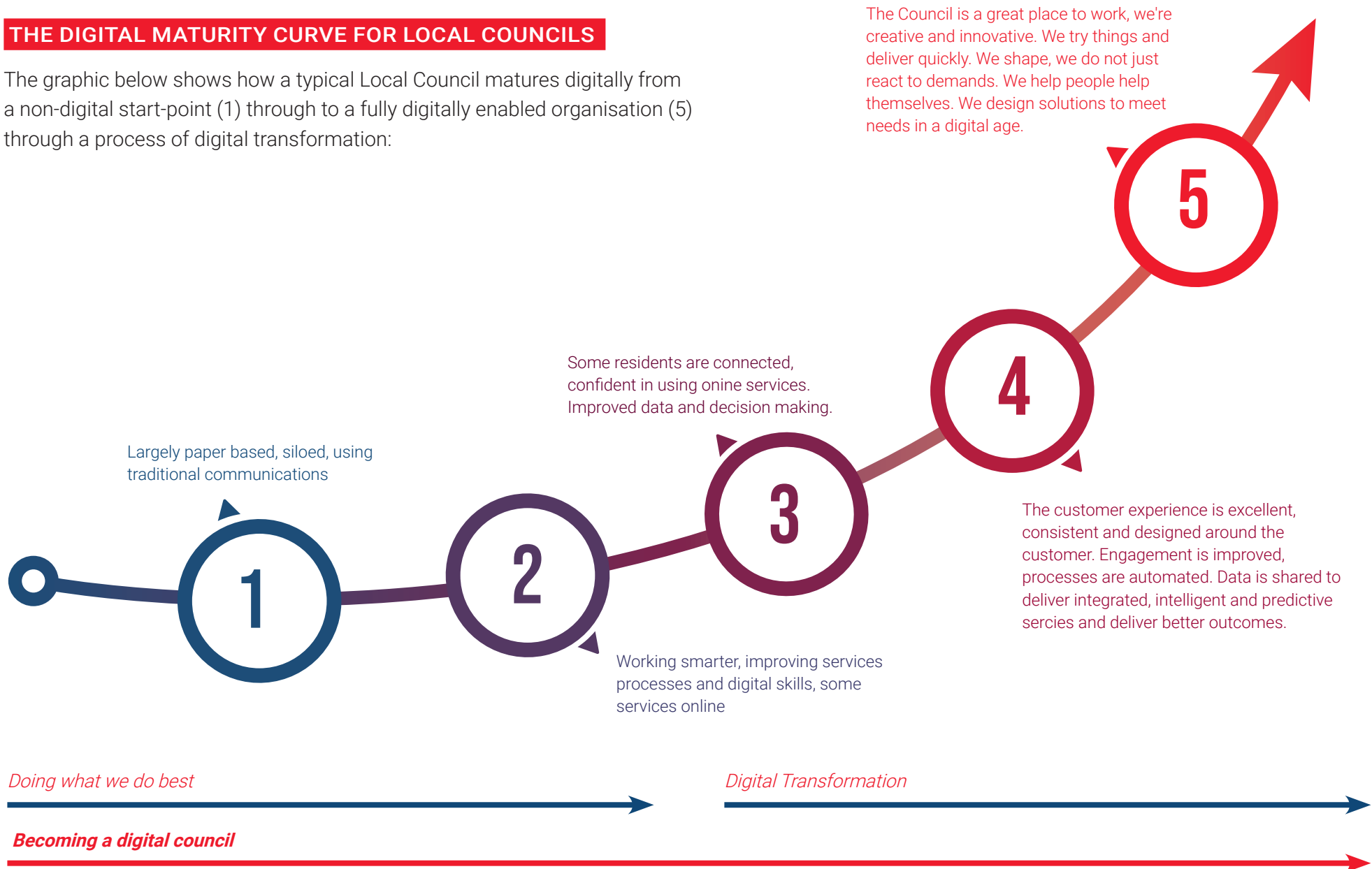
So far we have:

- Strengthened resources to support transformation and digital improvements.
- Empowered our staff by providing mobile solutions that can be effectively used in the field.
- Enabled home and hybrid working via the use of secure portals that encrypt and protect data.
- Addressed our skills gaps by ensuring that our staff are trained in new technologies.
- Supported our staff to work differently, providing training and support.
- Reviewed our services and functions to identify where adoption of digital technology can improve the delivery to our residents, businesses and wider community.
- Utilised the network of our public sector partners and stakeholders to identify best practice, building on success, yet still seeking local innovation.



THE DIGITAL MATURITY CURVE FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

The graphic below shows how a typical Local Council matures digitally from a non-digital start-point (1) through to a fully digitally enabled organisation (5) through a process of digital transformation:



DESIRED OUTCOMES

DIGITAL FIRST

The Council will aim to shift our culture to one that embraces technology and involves our staff with experience in developing it. The Council must accelerate the switch from analogue to digital, put the emphasis on proactive rather than reactive provision and ensure it is outcome driven.

It is essential that senior officers and elected Councillors are digital enablers promoting the right culture which will thrive on creativity and trust. The digital approach must be collectively owned and we have clear, simple and transparent processes for implementing digital improvements. Staff will be suitably equipped and inspired to embrace digital technologies.

The Digital First approach must be fed to all levels of the organisation, all ideas and contributions should be given equal consideration if it means that we innovate and improve.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF

PROCESSES/ SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

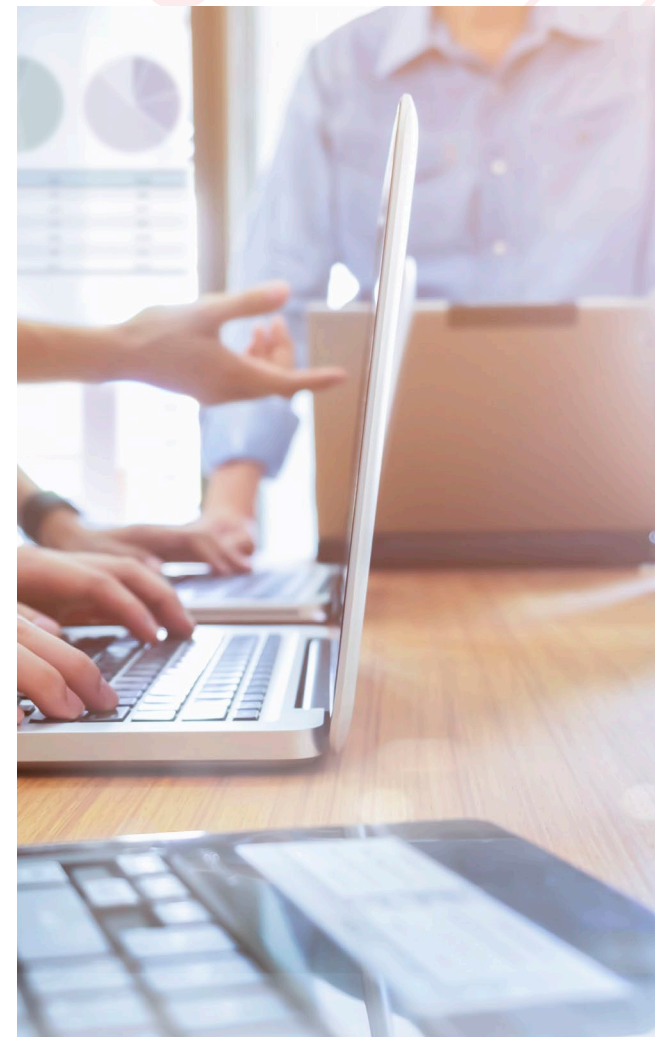
Review

A review of programmes, projects, workflows, systems, processes and procedures to understand where digital technologies can offer resource efficiencies should be undertaken. This will allow staff to focus on actions and providing better outcomes.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Investment

The Council should transform its own internal ICT systems and operating model, begin innovative projects to migrate services to the Cloud, re-architect its data repositories and enable a mobile workforce, all while ensuring cybersecurity maturity levels and operations are improved.

The Council will invest in the Council's infrastructure and equipment to enable staff to provide a more responsive service to our residents. ICT is a vital component in developing Council services and initiatives.



Currently ICT is not considered from the offset of a workflow. ICT can offer insight and knowledge on how systems can be better deployed, more cost-effectively controlled and maintained.

Going forward, we need to:

- Improve capability across the Council to make the best use of the equipment and software we already have.
- To improve governance and visibility over ICT spend in delegated budgets, establishing stronger controls to ensure value for money and standards assurance.
- Have a clear vision that will enable us to reduce the complexity and size of our back-office software estate and reduce duplication over time, and to increase use of 'Software as a Service' models (where software is accessed via a subscription rather than bought and installed on individual computers) so that we only pay for what we need.
- Strategically align ICT investment with business objectives.
- Where practical, begin using service design methods for our back office systems, to improve usability for Council staff, and adopt an even more flexible and mobile digital culture across the organisation that places user needs at

the heart of how we choose, buy, build and implement technology in the Council and how we design our internal processes.

- Review public facing digital interactions to ensure they are as good as or better than the commercial equivalents, such as responses, service-bots, interaction tracking and resolution.

Shared information

The ability to share and consume information organisation-wide ensures that a single data source is accessible by all relevant users.

The Council stores the same or similar information across many areas and might be used by one department working in a silo. This results in duplication and fragmented information across the Council as a whole.

Sharing information aims to create a mastered single version of the truth for that information which ensures the right people and systems can securely access it.

The Council's SharePoint migration which focussed on the consolidation and de-duplication of unstructured data (this is typically file shares, Word and Excel documents and files stored on





local drives). Such initiatives must be extended to structured data, such as databases, archives and application services such as GIS.

CYBER TRANSFORMATION & DATA

PROTECTION

Cybersecurity ensures the Council's digital assets and services are protected from malicious attack. It is not a case of if the Council will be subject to a cyber-attack, but when, and the consequences could be significant to all of the Borough, residents, businesses, and ultimately the Corporate Leadership Team who will be accountable for any breach.

The Council must continue to assess its cybersecurity maturity and practices. This assessment must be ongoing and budgeted year-on-year due to the ever-evolving landscape of the digital landscape.

A cyber-attack is perhaps the most prominent risk to the Council's digital environment and transformation – it must be addressed and taken seriously by all Council members.

Data protection is taken very seriously. The Council has adopted a strict [data protection policy](#) that all employees must adhere to.

“In order to provide services to local residents and businesses, we collect, use and share considerable amounts of personal data. We are committed to protecting your privacy when we use your personal data. When we process personal data we must comply with our obligations under data protection legislation.”

GOOD PRACTISE - DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

Council projects, programmes, work streams, or simple functions (e.g. this could be the requirement for a fibre or Wi-Fi network, a login to a web site, or a piece of software installed on a laptop) have some impact or dependency upon ICT systems. It is recommended that digital principles be applied to all.

Often, projects undertaken by organisations do not factor in ICT or digital impact until a solution is procured, budgets defined, or delivery has begun. This increases the risk of re-work, delayed timescales, increased costs and even failed objectives.

To reduce these risks, the following digital principles are recommended. An example *challenge question* is provided for each principle.

DIGITAL PRINCIPLES

1

Cybersecurity First

All Council digital solutions and projects must be grounded in a security-first principle and be secure by design.

Should this solution be subject to an independent security assessment, and what is the impact to the Council, its local businesses and residents if it became compromised by malicious cyber-attack?

2

Sustainable: socially, environmentally and economically

All digital solutions and projects must benefit and improve the Borough socially, environmentally and economically.

What is this project trying to achieve, and what rationale is there for its digitisation or use of digital services?

3

Accessible always and for everyone

All digital solutions and projects must be available to all regardless of their technical know-how, financial circumstances and personal capacity.

All solutions must be designed to withstand disruption and disaster and include business continuity planning in the event of disruption realisation.

What is the financial, reputational, safety and operational impact of a failure of this system, and has a plan been formed to provide continuity in the event of such a failure?

4

Open and portable

All solutions must, where possible, re-use existing digital platforms. Where a new platform must be introduced, e.g. a new network, or Cloud service, it must be designed to be reusable.

All solutions must be designed using Open Standards to ensure repositories (databases, software services) are securely accessible and consumable (where authorised).

Is this solution utilising or creating a digital platform that can be accessed and consumed by other Council services to enable 'Smart' ways of working and reduce overheads in the future?

5

Evergreen and innovate

All solutions must be maintainable and serviceable (and not by a proprietary partner – see principle #4) so they can be modernised and innovated against future requirements.

What is the plan to ensure this solution can be continually improved and developed to maximise its realisation as an asset to the Council?

CONCLUSION: SMART FUTURE

MEASURES:

By successfully delivering the digital strategy, the Borough will lead the way in sustainable growth and be a great place for people to live, work, play and learn. As a Council, we aim to have achieved across the three key themes: **Smart people, Smart Place** and **Smart Council**.

THEME 1: SMART PEOPLE – DIGITALLY ENABLING THE RESIDENTS OF THE BOROUGH

Headline / Outcome	Description	Measures	Supported by
Empowered Residents	Residents are empowered to manage their own interactions with the Council for all services and to ensure that digital is the primary method of choice	Increase usage of digital services versus traditional methods.	Woking Borough Council
Digital inclusion for all members of the Borough's society	Connectivity: Access to the internet	Increase broadband under "broadband for all" strapline	Work with private sector and public sector bodies. E.g. Openreach, Toob full fibre, EM3 LEP and Surrey CC etc. to increase availability and speeds.
Digital inclusion for all members of the Borough's society	Skills: Being able to use digital services	Offer free and subsidised (Government sponsored) training courses No of people who sign up to training courses	Government Digital Services Woking Works Digitally skilled volunteers

Contin.

Theme 1: Smart People – Digitally enabling the residents of the Borough Continued

<p>Digital inclusion for all members of the Borough's society</p>	<p>Accessibility: Council services need to be designed to meet all user's needs</p> <p>Confidence: To offer a safe digital environment.</p> <p>Identify those excluded and help them to become included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Older people - People in lower income groups 	<p>User group panel (residents panel?) testing, and surveys</p> <p>Cybersecurity as a digital principle is enforced.</p>	<p>Peoples network in Libraries</p> <p>Digital in community centres</p> <p>Assisted digital wayfinding</p> <p>Broadband for all</p> <p>Any Council "Alexa" developments</p> <p>Funding for community groups to support community inclusivity</p> <p>Community engagement strategy</p>
<p>Digital residency to enhance participation in and enjoyment of what the Borough offers</p>	<p>Direct personalised platform to access all Woking Borough Council services in one place, report potholes by having direct access to Surrey CC, report missed bin collections, report incidents of fly tipping, crime etc.</p> <p>Linked to wayfinding and parking platforms.</p> <p>Linked to Celebrate Woking, leisure, entertainment, retail, art galleries, restaurants, pubs etc.</p> <p>Woking Borough Council tenants can report maintenance issues – using AI</p> <p>Offers all involved to receive real-time progress updates, which provides a richer, seamless, and hassle-free experience for our residents</p> <p>A real-time, one stop shop for the Woking Borough resident.</p>	<p>Increase in the use of services and reporting</p> <p>Increase in footfall</p> <p>Increase in Gross Value Added</p> <p>Reduce service costs</p> <p>Reduce maintenance costs</p>	<p>Explore the introduction of a digital platform.</p> <p>Surrey CC/ Highways</p> <p>the Borough's businesses</p> <p>Culture and Leisure</p>
<p>Explore the introduction of a Community App</p> <p>Digital residency to enhance participation in and enjoyment of what the Borough offers</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council wants its residents and wider communities to have information and power at their fingertips – whether this be about the quality of the environment; the traffic on the roads; the events to experience or the places to get goods and services.</p> <p>Having a strong virtual presence is a powerful capability to improve the quality of lives and the environment. It does not replace our physical presence but supplements this and gives us greater choices.</p>	<p>Use of a digital platform</p> <p>Number downloaded</p> <p>Percentage of population</p> <p>Usage statistics</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Private sector partners</p>
<p>Working with partners and stakeholders</p>	<p>Working in close collaboration with partners and stakeholders both public and private sector to achieve the outcomes of this strategy</p>	<p>Partnerships developed and operating with a shared agenda around digital inclusion</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council and key partners and stakeholders</p>

THEME 2: SMART PLACE – DIGITALLY ENABLING THE INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS THE BOROUGH

Headline / Outcome	Description	Measures	Supported by
Woking is known as a Smart Borough for business	<p>Businesses will look at Woking Borough and recognise it as a place that has the infrastructure; culture and attention to tech commerce/ digital initiatives.</p> <p>The Council will be seen as a key enabler and agent of government to support the development, growth and sustainability of tech industries in the Borough.</p> <p>Business sectors will migrate to the Borough recognising the collaborative opportunities that are enabled by the Council's approach to economic development</p>	<p>Increase in businesses</p> <p>Increase in jobs</p> <p>Increase in Tech Sector businesses/ jobs</p> <p>Development of a recognised evergreen tech sector</p> <p>% increase of businesses that have ultrafast and gigabit availability</p> <p>Feedback from businesses and organisations</p> <p>Number of joint initiatives and sponsorship with business</p>	<p>The Council's strategy to achieve Borough wide connectivity using its assets as a lever for further inward investment</p> <p>The Council establishing or supporting a "Green Tech" incubation & accelerator centre.</p> <p>The Council establishing a dialogue with government through Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to both influence the governments approach and attract inward investment into the tech sector and infrastructure in the Borough.</p> <p>Linkages to economic development strategy and economic development action plan.</p> <p>Collaboration with colleges / universities and business</p>
Establish a Digital Centre of Excellence	<p>Establish a high growth – high tech incubator hub with a niche "Green Tech" focus.</p> <p>Encourages innovation and invention which in turn inspires new generations of digital knowledge workers.</p> <p>A Digital Business Academy could be established in the Borough or a joint venture with Tech Nation's Digital Business Academy.</p>	<p>No. of new tech start-ups and jobs</p> <p>No. of "Green Tech" businesses that migrated to Woking Borough because of the DCE</p> <p>Boost reputation and inward investment</p> <p>Provide digital test beds for other sectors i.e. retail.</p> <p>Skills and training in digital skills to enhance local knowledge base.</p>	<p>Collaboration with private sector to manage</p> <p>Surrey County Council's economic strategy 4th priority is to capture a greener economy.</p> <p>Seek funding opportunities from LEP and via Surrey County Council.</p> <p>Woking Borough Council hosting tech business events e.g. hackathons or Digital Innovation Awards.</p> <p>Digital TEDx</p>
Digital Woking	<p>The establishment of a community of Woking tech businesses, digital professionals, volunteers and tech start-up entrepreneurs that work to actively enhance the digital capabilities and presence of Woking to generate new jobs, attract tech businesses and key digital skills into the area</p>	<p>Establish technology streams for all key next generation technologies in conjunction with local tech businesses or interested groups.</p> <p>Set Up an online presence and establish regular tech meetups & growth hacking events.</p> <p>Setup a specific group to support marketing activities promoting Woking digital.</p> <p>Actively look to encourage the use of next generation technologies in the council and across the businesses in the borough so that we have use cases to promote.</p>	<p>Collaboration with private sector to manage</p> <p>Surrey County Council's economic strategy</p> <p>Seek funding opportunities from LEP and via Surrey County Council</p> <p>Woking Borough Council hosting tech business events e.g. hackathons or Digital Innovation Awards.</p> <p>Digital TEDx</p>
The Borough is known as a Smart Place for people	<p>Smart technology to provide real-time data around health & wellbeing objectives through the deployment of sensors to measure air and noise pollution, traffic congestion and IoT in Council owned properties,</p>	<p>Greater efficiencies</p> <p>Cost savings</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Woking Works</p> <p>Thamesway</p>
Digital High Street	<p>Supporting the High Street become more digital. Multi-channel retailing.</p>	<p>Increased footfall</p> <p>Increase in car parking revenue</p> <p>Increase in businesses migrating in</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Woking Works</p> <p>MyTownShops</p>
Woking Borough has exemplary full-fibre and 5G mobile connectivity	<p>Woking Borough Council will continue to work with digital infrastructure providers to ensure the Borough has market leading full fibre and mobile connectivity</p>	<p>Percentage of Borough with access to full fibre and 5G connectivity vs. local, region and national benchmarks</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Surrey County Council</p> <p>Infrastructure Providers</p> <p>Thamesway</p>
Digital innovation supports the Council's 2050 Climate Strategy	<p>The outputs from this strategy support and underpin the Council's wider 2050 Climate strategy</p>	<p>The Council's transition to Net Zero is accelerated through the use of digital innovation</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Planet Woking</p> <p>Action Surrey</p>

THEME 3. SMART COUNCIL – DIGITALLY ENABLING WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Headline / Outcome	Description	Measures	Supported by
<p>The Council wholly embraces the digital era and exploits digital developments and capabilities to address the key and important issues in the Borough</p> <p>The Council adopts the 'Digital First' and 5 digital principles</p>	<p>Successful digital developments start from having a culture of restless innovation and a focus on the "wicked" issues in the Borough.</p> <p>Digital in the Borough is purposeful through establishing a connection between the things that are important to Woking Borough and the application of digital to support these.</p> <p>A focus on the services we deliver will drive digital developments.</p> <p>Technology is the servant to our services and our services are empowered to adopt a digital focus and mentality.</p>	<p>Number of digital solutions to address issues and challenges</p> <p>Percentage of services that are delivered on line / through digital</p> <p>Increase the number of users to our digital services</p> <p>The Council adopts the five digital principles and always cross-checks its operation against them</p>	<p>Council networking with Government Digital Forums</p> <p>Development of Partnership working / collaboration / sharing – with Surrey CC and Surrey's District & Borough's</p> <p>The Council Transformation and Digital service hosting internal digital meetings / events</p> <p>Digital overview and plans produced for each Directorate</p> <p>All reports, projects and programs are checked against the five principles, other digital implications and are included as a default.</p>
<p>Data and information is an asset that is confidently used to promote the quality of residency in the Borough</p>	<p>The Council is in a privileged position of holding data and information on members of its communities and will hold this information with utmost respect and security in mind which will not be compromised.</p> <p>Building from this principle, the Council will use the information to support joined up services.</p> <p>Data Insight - The use of joined up data will also give us a better understanding of our resident's requirements through their use of digital engagement and services.</p> <p>Joining up and sharing of internal data beyond SharePoint – i.e. databases, archives and services such as GIS.</p>	<p>Number of referrals to information commissioner</p> <p>Number of data breaches</p> <p>Number of information sharing agreements</p> <p>SharePoint as an exemplar, its function should be deployed across all software and systems (CRMs for example.)</p>	<p>Information security and cyber security</p> <p>Data sharing agreements</p> <p>Data on the Councils website</p> <p>Any Data Protection Officer sharing with D&B's – this general area may lend itself well to partnership / shared services and collaboration</p>
<p>Digital technology and data is secure and protected</p>	<p>The Council ensures its digital systems and data is secure protected against misuse and malicious attack</p>	<p>The ongoing security of the Council's systems and data is maintained 24/7</p>	<p>Woking Borough Council</p> <p>Partner Organisations</p>
<p>Woking Borough Council is an exemplar of a digital organisation</p>	<p>The Council has to be seen as a modern employer in the digital era in order to be an advocate and agitator in the digital Borough</p> <p>The Councils operating infrastructure needs to support modern ways of working and partnering.</p> <p>Our employees need to be able to work close to our communities and where they provide greatest impact.</p> <p>Our communities need to have confidence in our capability, efficiency and effectiveness which starts with their experience of how and where we interact with them.</p>	<p>Satisfaction with ICT</p> <p>Number of training courses / staff capability development</p> <p>Agreed Council ICT strategy and investment programme</p> <p>Efficient and cost-effective mobile/mobile workforce support.</p>	<p>Council ICT Strategy and specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud-first (Software as a Service (SaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)) • Evergreen policy for software • Flexible working strategy • Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) • Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) • Secure data priority over device security (data is not stored on devices or can be wiped remotely) • Applications should work on all devices and platforms • Technical Refresh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Laptops for all o Cloud-based device management o Citrix maintained for transformation purposes o Decommission datacentres and Citrix <p>Implementing much of this provides us with a disaster recovery solution by default. Getting everything into the Cloud, providing all colleagues with devices that are portable and with a modern VoIP solution will allow colleagues to work from anywhere, such as we have found working during Covid-19 lockdowns.</p> <p>Digital capability staff development programme</p> <p>Corporate Systems Strategy</p> <p>Relationship development and plans with key tech suppliers (e.g. Microsoft)</p>

GOVERNANCE

The Digital Strategy will be monitored through the Council's performance management arrangements ensuring linkages with Service Plans and other Corporate Strategy documents are maintained.

REVIEW PERIOD

An action plan will be developed once the strategy is adopted to implement the recommendations. The strategy will initially be reviewed after one year when the initial phase of work via shorter-term actions has been undertaken.

CONSULTATION & FEEDBACK

A consultation on the Digital Strategy is present on the Council's [Community Forum](#) platform to record comments from Enterprise M3 LEP, Surrey County Council, The Chambers of Commerce, local businesses, employees and residents. The strategy will be promoted to local businesses through the Business Liaison Team's Woking Works marketing channels including email newsletters and social media posts.

The strategy will also be considered by The Economic Development Task Group and The Executive.



APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC CONTEXT DETAILS

NATIONAL POLICIES

Having a collaborative approach to digital infrastructure, inclusion, architecture, services and products, driven, enabled and empowered by Woking Borough Council will ensure that our residents, businesses and visitors receive cutting edge technology which will benefit the community in which they operate. The Council cannot achieve its digital ambitions alone, it needs strong and effective partnerships to develop a shared vision.

Aligning Woking Borough Council's digital strategy with both regional and national strategies will enable investment locally, de-risk duplication and forms a key part of a wider UK geographical digital agenda.

UK DIGITAL STRATEGY 2018

The UK Government's [digital strategy](#) applies the principles set out in its Industrial Strategy and focuses on seven themes that align.

1. Building world-class digital infrastructure for the UK.

2. Giving everyone access to the skills they need.
3. Making the UK the best place to grow and start a business.
4. Helping every British business become a digital business.
5. Making the UK the safest place in the world to live and work online.
6. Maintaining the UK government as a world leader in serving its citizens online.
7. Unlocking the power of data in the UK economy and improving public confidence in its use.

FUTURE TELECOMS INFRASTRUCTURE

REVIEW (2018)

Digital infrastructure is central to the future of the UK economy. [The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review](#) (FTIR) will create the right market and policy conditions to secure world class connectivity for all.

When looking at the speed, resilience and reliability that consumers want and businesses need in order to grow, it is clear that full fibre and 5G are the long-term answer. These technologies have the

potential to transform productivity, and to open up new business models. The FTIR, announced in the Government's Industrial Strategy, has considered the changes that need to be made to the UK telecoms market and policy framework to give us the best chance of meeting these goals.

The Government has set clear, ambitious targets for the availability of full fibre and 5G networks. 15 million premises connected to full fibre by 2025, with coverage across all parts of the country by 2033 and majority of the population to have 5G coverage by 2027.

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

(2020)

The [National Infrastructure Strategy](#) was developed due to Government acknowledgement that infrastructure underpins the economy. Transport, digital, energy and utility networks are vital for jobs, business & economic growth.

The UK Government is committing:

- £5 billion to support UK-wide gigabit broadband roll-out,
- A 'Shared Network' extending 4G mobile coverage to 95% of the UK,
- A £250m to ensure resilient and secure digital networks;

The government intends to deliver high quality, reliable digital infrastructure that works across the UK.

Fast, reliable digital connectivity can deliver economic, social and well-being benefits for the whole of the UK. Never has this been more important than as the country deals with the impact of COVID-19, when digital infrastructure has enabled home working, home learning, and kept families in touch with each other through extraordinary circumstances.

Greater connectivity can help businesses innovate, grow, and create jobs. In doing so, it can help areas attract and retain young people and families, supporting thriving societies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, operators have rightly focused on

network resilience at a time of unprecedented need for good connectivity.

The government is working with industry to target a minimum of 85% gigabit capable coverage by 2025, but will seek to accelerate the roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Its economic objective (Section 2.8a) of the NPPF is "to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure".

Section 10 states that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is

essential for economic growth and wellbeing and that the need that planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including 5G, and full fibre connections to existing and new developments.

Local policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments.

NET ZERO STRATEGY: BUILD BACK

GREENER (2021)

The Government's [2021 Net Zero Strategy](#) makes multiple references to how digital adoption and digital technology will be key components of achieving its Net Zero vision.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

The ambitions of both Surrey County Council, Enterprise M3 and Woking Borough Council are intrinsically linked including its digital ambitions.

It is imperative that Woking Borough Council's strategic objectives are aligned and compliment those of both EM3 and Surrey County Council so funding and infrastructure works are easier to bid for and implement, and communication with all stakeholders, including national government and telecom companies takes place to ensure that progress is made.

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

"We will make the most of digital technology to change how we work and innovate and improve our services to help Surrey and its residents thrive."

Surrey County Council Organisation Strategy 2025

Surrey's [Digital Strategy 2025](#) sets out its approach to digital, and like the Council's strategy, enables improved outcomes for residents. Surrey County Council's ambition is broadly the same as Woking Borough Council in that both authorities recognise that they need to adapt their services to exceed community expectations.

The strategy has 7 priorities:

1. Supporting independence

- a. Providing residents with a simple way to manage their information Provide residents with a simple way to manage their information and access a range of online services from the Council and its partners in one place
- b. residents to maintain independence through personal technology in the community.
- c. Provide greater choice of communication channels to support residents in finding the information or services needed

2. Tackling inequality

- a. Establishing a network of digital champions to support and advocate digital services and promote digital skills training opportunities.
- b. Join-up data with health and other partners to identify vulnerable residents most at risk and in need of support.
- c. Using digital technologies to identify need at the earliest opportunity and help people to find and manage the right support for themselves or those they care for.

3. Investing in digital infrastructure

- a. Partner with commercial and/or public organisations to establish county wide digital

infrastructure including 5G, ensuring that we take an inclusive approach that does not leave our rural areas behind.

- b. Explore use of new technologies to create a smart county and help to address our environmental challenges, e.g. developing sustainable transport approaches, smart mobility and energy efficiency.

4. Connecting communities

- a. Engaging communities through social media tools to involve residents in public services and create community resilience and promote platforms for residents to seek and provide support within their local community.
- b. Use data to identify needs of our communities early and inform local commissioning.

5. Mobile workforce

- a. Improve partnership working through sharing of data and facilitating effective day to day working practices such as access to connectivity.
- b. Develop innovation practices and take an agile approach to delivering change.
- c. Support the development of more flexible job roles and enabling increased multi-disciplinary team working.

6. Empowering staff

- a. We will digitise processes wherever possible to free up staff time and create increased capacity for services to focus on residents as oppose to administrative processes.
- b. We will support staff to develop their digital skills to make effective use of emerging technologies.
- c. Empower front line workers with real time information.

7. Data and insight

People:

- a. Align information on services delivered to residents in order to better model our understanding of need, risk and appropriate support.
- b. Provide access to, update and manage personal information and preferences.

Place:

- a. Develop our understanding of local communities that live and work in Surrey to put them at the heart of all decision making.
- b. Make non-personal information available through open data for social innovation and benefit.

Organisation:

- a. Use data to understand our workforce and apply digital technologies to engage with and develop staff in more effective ways.

Priority 3, [Surrey's Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework](#) has 3 main objectives. Council Officers will seek to work closely with colleagues at Surrey County Council to deliver 'A grade' infrastructure to the Borough.

- a. to work with commercial providers and other partners to deliver a strategic programme of investment to maximise connectivity at 1GB+ and access to 5G mobile services to residents, businesses and communities in Surrey.
- b. to deliver a hyper-connected environment which will:
- c. Deliver a range of Surrey County Council strategies, outcomes and benefits which depend on a step change in digital capability and connectivity.
- d. Support access to all digital service, economic and employment opportunities for all Surrey's residents, businesses and communities.
- e. Facilitate a new range of emerging technologies, capabilities and applications to enable Surrey's entrepreneurs, businesses

and universities to compete nationally and internationally and drive economic growth.

To leverage external Government funding and revenue streams from digital related assets and activities.

To complement these objectives, there are 6 main drivers that will enable delivery:

1. Government's allocation of £1.2bn to support gigabit broadband rollout to the 20% hardest to reach areas.
2. Importance of digital connectivity to the well-being and prosperity of Surrey's residents and businesses.
3. Surrey's economic growth requires a hyper-connected environment to facilitate its innovation eco-system.
4. Delivering the benefits of Surrey County Council service outcomes requires a step change in digital capability and connectivity.
5. Securing commercial / public good benefits of autonomous vehicles, drone delivery, healthcare provision dependent on fit-for-purpose digital infrastructure.
6. With reference to gigabit capable coverage, Surrey is behind the UK average (17.2% to 39.0%); 5G roll-out is also slow, some coverage in population centres but very little in rural areas. Surrey's competitive position is at risk.

ENTERPRISE M3 – LOCAL ENTERPRISE

PARTNERSHIP

Connectivity & 5G

The LEP has identified 8,500 digital businesses, employing 50,000 people, many of which are SMEs, accounting for 7.4% of all businesses within the region.

A [report](#) published by the LEP in March 2020 conducted research into connectivity within the region. It found that:

- All companies would like access to high-speed connectivity but few have it today.
- Lack of connectivity is cited as hampering the efficiency and growth of their businesses already
- All cited the biggest problem with getting high speed connectivity was that operators are not interested in businesses, only consumers
- Many of the companies only had access to speeds in the tens of Mbps and those that had access to higher speeds (typically 100 Mbps) had to pay for expensive leased lines to get it
- Companies have therefore developed sometimes

expensive “work-arounds” to enable their businesses to function in the absence of high-speed connectivity.

The result will lead to:

- Lack of productivity
- Little to no growth
- Companies migrating to other towns or cities

Given the economic impact that these technologies deliver it is imperative to ensure that technology infrastructure across the Enterprise M3 region never inhibits productivity improvements or growth.

The rollout of 5G will need EM3 and the Local Authorities to facilitate this development because, as already identified, commercial operators are unlikely to meet this demand if left to their own devices.

It would be important for Local Authorities to facilitate “Neutral Hosting” as a way to accelerate the roll out of digital connectivity and 5G networks. To do this, it is recommended to:

- Connect regional assets as 5G will need a fibre backbone to support it. There are plans to create a “fibre spine” between Guildford and Basingstoke, but it would not be difficult to include the Borough.
- Create 5G testbeds – companies will need somewhere to develop and test their ideas.
- Lead in the 5G world – Incubation and Acceleration – as a region we have to encourage and develop new businesses who typically understand the technology but lack business skills to grow and scale.

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIES

“Local government is pivotal to the ability of telecoms operators to deploy the networks and infrastructure that will be essential to the UK in both its current and future connectivity needs.”

Broadband UK

CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2022

“First and foremost, Woking Borough Council’s Corporate Plan is about values and how these will shape the future of the Borough”

Councillor Ayesha Azad, Leader of Woking Borough Council.

The [Corporate Plan 2021/22](#) adopted by the Council in April 2021 highlights the need for the Council to be innovative, proactive and effective.

This will be achieved by:

- Developing Woking as a smart Borough, exploiting the opportunities provided by 5G and new

technology innovations.

- Creating an online civic space, which makes it easier for residents to feed in their views and influence Council decisions.
- Modernise working practices and improve residents’ digital experience.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017-2022

The [Economic Development Strategy](#) makes reference to connectivity and infrastructure as “key factors in economic competitiveness. Connectedness influences locational decisions by people and businesses and attracts further investment and higher skilled workers.”

It also noted that the Borough had been successful in attracting many high tech and knowledge-based businesses, due, in no small part, to its location at the heart of the two major growth corridors.

The recently published Economic Development Action Plan emphasizes the importance of digital in the Borough. All the priorities and associated actions will be underpinned by this digital strategy, Priority 4: Woking a place to be: in particular

“Finalise and implement the Digital Strategy to create a super-connected Woking Borough through Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) infrastructure and the Digital Centre of Excellence..... Implement the Digital Strategy to create a progressive digital platform to transform the Borough into a digitally smart Borough and help businesses to get the most out of the opportunities around digital”

HOUSING STRATEGY 2021-2026

[The Housing Strategy](#) makes reference to strategic priorities that have the opportunity to use digital technology to assist in achieving these aims.

- a) provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs.
- b) To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need.

- c) To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing.
- d) To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders.
- e) To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector.

The Internet of Things (IoT) and particularly sensor technology can be considered to offer many benefits and cost advantages for Council owned properties:

- Access to real-time data about the performance of their housing portfolios and (to a lesser extent) the behaviour of their tenants.
- Reduced costs and better and easier maintenance.
- Tenants seek benefits around better service, such as pre-emptive repairs and more accurate maintenance schedules, followed by lower costs typically based on cheaper energy bills.

This Strategy will recommend the introduction of a Woking digital platform that can offer services such as real time updates to tenants, provide notifications and updates on tenant enquiries.

HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY

2021- 2031

The Council adopted the [Living Well in Woking Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#) in July 2021. Its aim to deliver its vision that “Everyone in Woking Borough lives a healthy and independent life”.

The digital strategy supports these action plan items set out in the strategy:

- Utilising digital approaches where appropriate – in developing our action plan we have considered opportunities to provide digital services to our residents to improve their health and wellbeing.
- The action plan includes a digital inclusion project that which is a key outcome in the strategy.
- Senior managers will ensure the action plan reflects the principles described in the Priorities chapter (supporting diversity and inclusion, partnership working, resident engagement, building on our strengths and utilising digital approaches where appropriate).

December 2020 the North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership partners, including Woking

Borough Council, adopted an Alliance Agreement setting out a shared vision, digital inclusion for health and social care that includes:

- The delivery of innovative solutions supported by technological and digital infrastructure.
- Embedding innovation – sustained structure for vaccination, embedding digital models and embracing the health and public sector role in socio-economic development.
- Technology Enabled Care (TEC) has for instance been successful in improving the lives of the vulnerable.

CORE STRATEGY – WOKING 2027

To support the implementation of digital connectivity, the Council recognises through its [Core Strategy](#), in accordance within the National Planning Policy Framework, that improving the Borough’s communications infrastructure is integral to achieving sustainable economic growth, facilitating social interaction, and to make sure that the local community has access to the highest quality facilities and services.

This policy seeks to ensure that acceptable provision can continue to be made for communications infrastructure, including ‘next generation broadband’, whilst ensuring the impact on environment, visual and residential amenity is minimised.

DM22 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document states that “Development proposals.....On-site infrastructure should be provided, including open access ducting to industry standards, to enable all premises and homes to be directly served by the latest broadband technology, including fibre optic broadband technology. Exceptions will only be considered where it can be demonstrated by evidence that making such provision would render the development unviable”.

WOKING 2050 (CLIMATE CHANGE

STRATEGY, NATURAL WOKING)

Technology can play a large part in maintaining a sustainable place: [The Strategy](#) cites the principles of Smart Growth as “...using technology and innovative ways of working to increase productivity without

damaging...quality of life or the environment...”
The strategy’s priorities will be underpinned by technology

- Energy efficiency and the use of renewables
- Reduction of carbon emissions
- The use of smart sensor technology to monitor, report and reduce:
 - o Travel congestion
 - o Noise pollution
 - o Air pollution
 - o Clean air in its green spaces
 - o Flood prevention and monitoring

