Digital Strategy

2024-2027

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Foreword

Hillingdon Council continues to put residents first in everything it does. The Council Strategy 2022-2026 builds on the successes of the council to date and sets a clear vision, the ambition for residents and the council, and commitments to residents over the next four years to continue to respond positively to changing demands and requirements. The strategy provides a broad, overarching framework for effective business planning and strong performance management within the council to drive the transformation of services to continue to meet the changing needs and expectations of residents.

One of our ambitions is to be a digital-enabled, modern, well-run sustainable council with sound financial management, achieving positive outcomes for residents. Our Digital Strategy sets out our vision to embrace technology to be efficient and make it easier for residents to use council services, including supporting those who are unable to use technology.

Councillor Douglas Mills
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

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What is digital?

'Digital' is a mindset of being service-oriented and adaptive, and having an absolute focus on improving the lives of our residents.

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Our Vision for Digital

We will improve the way the council delivers services to residents by utilising technology. We will put residents first by enabling them to access the services they need quickly and at their own convenience, whilst also delivering more efficient and effective processes for council staff.

Principles

We will do this by:

- *Prioritising customer needs*
- *Carrying out an agile approach to delivery*
- *Delivering new business models driven by data*
- *One Council*

Context

This strategy explains what we're going to do to continue to make Hillingdon Council a digital-enabled, modern, well-run council in the next three years and beyond.

Our ambitions for the council is that we will strive to be an efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents.

This vision is set out in our council strategy and our digital strategy builds on that plan.

Becoming a digital council is not about implementing new technology for the sake of it, but about fundamentally improving our resident, visitor, business and staff experience through simpler, better services and tools.

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Progress so far

Over the last year we have started to accelerate our digital journey by:

Automated Voice & Web Chat

Becoming the first UK local authority to deploy an automated voice and web chat solution at scale.

Infrastructure

Delivered modern and flexible Infrastructure and a reduction in the number of applications.

Hybrid Working

Quickly adapting to hybrid working post the covid-19 pandemic, which enables us to keep services running.

Connectivity
Delivered a programme of connectivity improvements, increasing bandwidth across all our sites and across the borough. All meaning better access to the internet for residents.

We recognise there is plenty still to do…

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Our 5 commitments to residents

Safe and strong communities

Hillingdon is a safe place with resilient, strong communities with access to good quality, affordable housing.

A thriving economy

We are actively working with local businesses and partners to create a borough where businesses grow within a strong economy and local people can improve their skills and enjoy good quality jobs.

Thriving, healthy households

Children, young people, their families and vulnerable adults and older people live healthy, active and independent lives.

A green and sustainable borough

Hillingdon will be a sustainable, carbon-neutral borough, protecting Hillingdon's heritage, built environment and valued green spaces. Residents will live in pleasant neighbourhoods with access to sustainable waste management and transport.

A digital-enabled, modern, well-run council

We are a well-run, sustainable council with sound financial management, achieving positive outcomes for residents.

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Council Strategy 2022-2026

Our ambition for residents

Hillingdon is a safe, inclusive, green, more digital borough with a strong economy.

We want all our residents to:

- Live active and healthy lives
- Enjoy access to green spaces, leisure activities, culture and arts
- Live in a sustainable borough that is carbon neutral
- Be/feel safe from harm
- Live in good quality, affordable homes in connected communities
- Stay living independently for as long as they are able
- Achieve well in education, with opportunities for learning at all ages
- Have opportunities to earn an income that supports their families

Our ambition for the council

We will strive to be an efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents.

Safe and strong communities

Hillingdon is a safe place with resilient, strong communities with access to good quality, affordable housing.

We will:

- Work to keep residents safe from harm.
- Actively work in partnership with the Police, other partners and communities to prevent and tackle crime, including anti-social behaviour and drug-related crime.
- Support all residents across the Borough in their ability to have equal access to information, advice and services and to play an active role in resilient and respectful communities.
- Take enforcement action to protect residents and the environment.
- Enable more new homes to be available, in the appropriate places.
- Increase the number of affordable homes available each year.
- Work to prevent homelessness, including rough sleeping.

A thriving economy

We are actively working with local businesses and partners to create a borough where businesses grow within a strong economy and local people can improve their skills and enjoy good quality jobs.

We will:

- Work with partners and local businesses to promote investment and business growth, including attracting new companies to the borough.
- Procure services that supports local businesses and adds social value.
- Work in partnership with local employers and other stakeholders to provide opportunities for residents to learn new skills, to find local jobs and progress into better-quality jobs.
- Strengthen the digital infrastructure in the borough.
- Create opportunities for investment in sustainable local infrastructure to support economic growth.
- Work with partners to help tackle low pay.
- Support thriving multi-purpose, viable town centres, including estate regeneration, creating a new master plan for Uxbridge and exploring similar opportunities for other areas of the borough.
- Target support to help residents out of financial hardship.

Our commitments to residents

Our vision
Putting our residents first

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A digital-enabled, modern, well-run council

We are a well-run, sustainable council with sound financial management, achieving positive outcomes for residents.

We will:

- Be a strong leader of joined-up public services for Hillingdon residents.
- Continue to advocate on behalf of residents and businesses to promote and protect the best interests of the borough.
- Promote resident engagement across all communities.
- Embrace technology to be efficient and make it easier for residents to use council services, including supporting those who are unable to use technology.
- Continue to deliver a modern, responsive customer service.
- Make the best use of our land and buildings.
- Ensure value for money in the procurement and delivery of services.
- Continue to review and develop services to achieve the best possible outcomes for residents and communities.
- Develop a diverse, committed and skilled workforce in the borough.

Thriving, healthy households

Children, young people, their families and vulnerable adults and older people live healthy, active and independent lives.

We will:

- Work with partners, including schools and the voluntary sector, to deliver a range of innovative programmes that help improve the health of our residents and tackle differences in health outcomes.
- Support the most vulnerable residents in our communities to live independently.
- Develop housing options for vulnerable adults and older people that promotes active independent living.
- Develop innovative ways for residents to access early advice and support when they need it, to help prevent needs escalating.
- Work with the NHS and other partners to continue to develop joined-up services to meet the health, care and support needs of residents in the community, including the development of a new Hillingdon Hospital.
- Work with partners to ensure better access to healthcare in the community.
- Explore ways to work innovatively with the voluntary sector to help improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents.
- Ensure every Hillingdon child has access to a school place, including children with additional needs.
- Improve educational outcomes with partners and work to reduce the achievement gaps for children, including those with vulnerabilities and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in a 'Good' and 'Outstanding' local education setting.
- Increasing supported employment and apprenticeships for vulnerable people.
- Develop opportunities to support children with social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing at an early stage.
- Improving digital access for all.
- Develop programmes that enrich the lives of young people and support them to move successfully into adulthood and be ready for work.

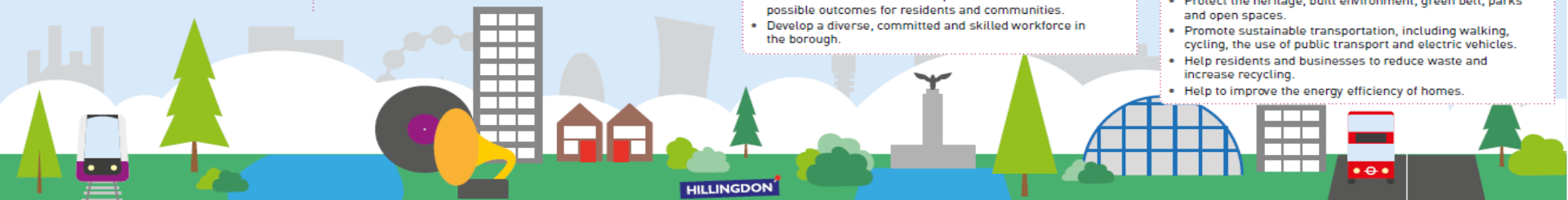## A green and sustainable borough

Hillingdon will be a sustainable, carbon-neutral borough, protecting Hillingdon's heritage, built environment and valued green spaces. Residents will live in pleasant neighbourhoods with access to sustainable waste management and transport.

We will:

- Work towards being a carbon-neutral organisation by delivering Hillingdon's Climate Action Plan with partners, including planting more trees and enabling investment in new sustainable infrastructure. Create opportunities to increase biodiversity across the borough.
- Protect the heritage, built environment, green belt, parks and open spaces.
- Promote sustainable transportation, including walking, cycling, the use of public transport and electric vehicles.
- Help residents and businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling.
- Help to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

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Our approach to guide all our digital, technology and data transformation work

Prioritising customer needs

Our service transformation will focus on meeting the needs of our residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. We will use research and data to better understand this in our borough and will use this to build and develop products and services to meet those needs.

We will make our services accessible to all, working to improve digital inclusion. We will test the services to make sure they are simple and intuitive, and support those who are unable to go online.

Carrying out an agile approach to delivery

We will embrace new ways of delivering improvements to our services, with small, iterative work packages backed by with research and data. We will invest in reducing bureaucracy and paperwork, and enable quick, data-driven decision making.

Delivering new business models driven by data

The data we collect about resident needs will support every aspect of our digital strategy. We will engage our residents and staff, developing analytics and research which will guide what we do and when. We will invest in meeting common need, ensuring we use our time and money wisely and making sure we can measure success and continuously improve every aspect of our services.

One council

We will become a digital council by facilitating cross-functional project teams, sharing budgets and goals, and by working in a more collaborative and innovate way. We will empower these teams to build and realise their own goals. We will give employees the space they need to deliver, share knowledge and work across the council rather than in a silo fashion to best support residents.

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Success in the next three years, will mean:

Resident

An even better resident experience when interacting with the council in accessing services and information. They will be able to carry out simple transactions quickly and easily, with a more joined up approach ensuring they only need to make contact once.

Staff

Happier, more efficient staff, who are equipped with the most appropriate technology they need to do their jobs. They will have had some of their manual work taken away in favour of being able to focus on higher-value tasks.

Data

A better understanding of our residents, through the smarter use of joined-up data. We will be using modern technology to join data sets and get insights which allow us to continuously improve our services and make better decisions .
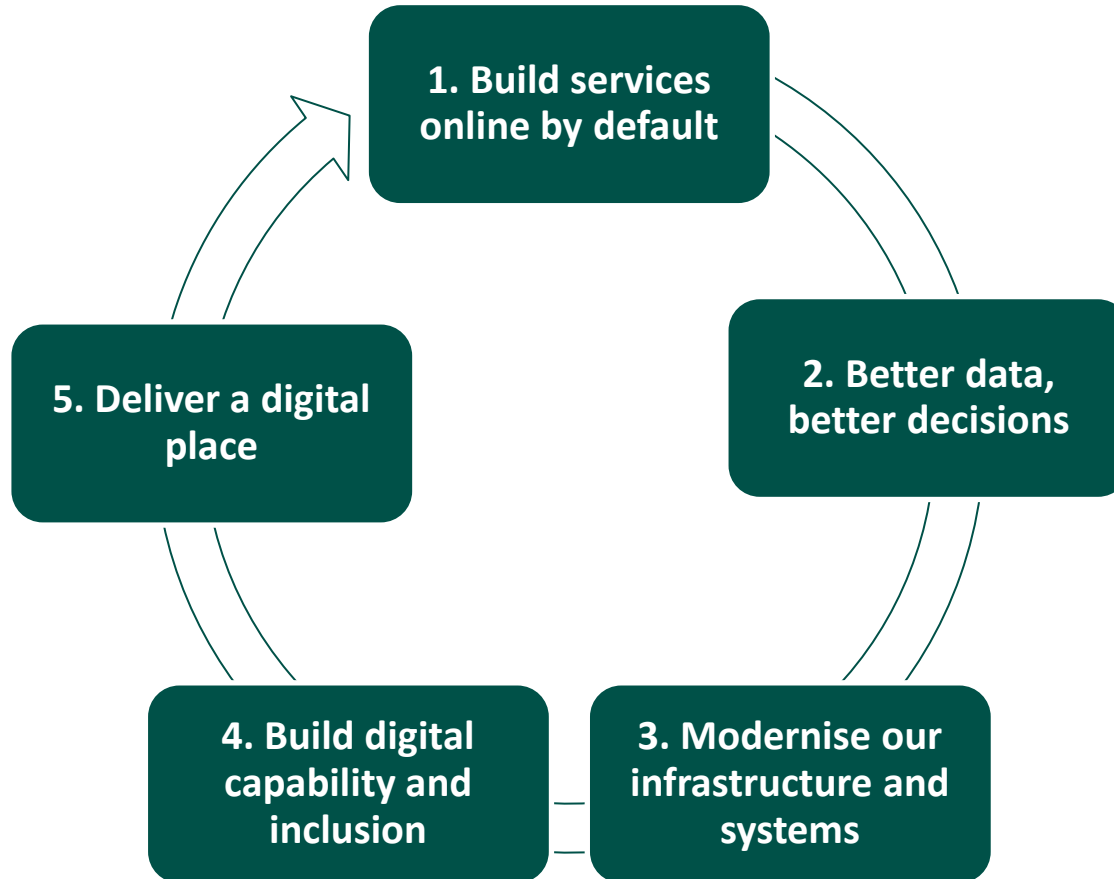
Service

A more sustainable financial model, where we are able to improve service delivery while maintaining or reducing costs .

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We will achieve this through 5 workstreams:

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1: Build services online by default

Residents expect services to be online and available on any device. People should be able to pay online, and experience seamless services from us. In turn this will improve resident experience' from our customer experience team and business areas, and improve our resident, visitor and business experience of us. The intended outcomes of this workstream are that:

- Most of our residents choose and prefer to interact with us online
- Residents can access their information about council services via our MyAccount function
- Residents will be able to carry out simple transactions quickly and easily, with a more joined up approach ensuring they only need to make contact once, whether for information or transactional services, without needing help
- Users understand our website and associated information, meaning they do not have to contact us if we have put the information online
- Our website will user friendly and accessible with single sign-on and a maximum of 2 or 3 clicks to get what you need.

To do this we will:

Build a roadmap of digital services in a data-driven priority order, focusing on high-volume services, and highly manual processes

Transform the work of our customer experience team and across the council by continuing to use different channels and technology, with one telephone number for those that must speak to an agent

Carry out research with residents to understand what they need from us and create a prioritised schedule of work

Put payments online for all payable services, making the council cashless for all but the most vulnerable

Consolidate and redesign our website, making it clearer and more accessible. We will introduce consistent, mobile-first design patterns, iterating based on user needs

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2: Better data, better decisions

All local authorities have a lot of data, but often lack the insight to make good decisions both internally and for our residents. Better data, and the ability to use it wisely, brings a huge amount of opportunities from better decisions by understanding resident needs across multiple systems. We want to have the right data, to make the right decisions. The intended outcomes of this workstream are that:

- We have a clear understanding of our residents', businesses', partners' and visitors' needs, both qualitatively and quantitatively, so that we can improve outcomes for and with them
- We can get insights from our data to improve services, and personalise them for their users, as well as being more efficient and effective
- We have the right infrastructure to share data and insights across our organisation, and with partner organisations in the local area and nationally
- We have better data about our employees to create a happier and more efficient workforce

To do this we will:

- Our business intelligence team is a key part of service transformation and has the remit of bringing insights directly to business areas
- They will build better reporting and insight on a service-by-service basis so people can truly understand their customer base
- Engineer our systems data to make it easy to combine and analyse, and work with suppliers to get better access to our own data
- Improve our data warehouse to deliver insights from the data we can collect, and a single view of the customer
- Utilise machine learning and artificial intelligence to improve customer experiences and make us more efficient
- Carry out a data cleansing and reduction programme to eliminate duplicate records and make our data extractable and accurate
- Work with partners and other stakeholders to better understand our area

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3: Modernise our infrastructure & systems

We need a modern infrastructure with systems that talk to each other, highly reliable hosting and platforms, the best of commodity technology and modern, cloud-based and application programming interface driven architecture. The intended outcomes of this workstream are that:

- We have a cost efficient and reliable technology estate, centrally managed and regularly reviewed to ensure value for money
- Great connectivity for both residents and staff
- We have full control of the data in all our back-office systems, and can extract and analyse that data to improve services
- We have a clear architectural vision and roadmap
- Our infrastructure and systems are resilient against a cyber attack

To do this, we will:

- Develop a clear architectural vision and mapping for all council technology systems, working towards a small number of specialist systems supported by shared components that provide common functions that are integrated through application programming interfaces, using cloud and software as a service solutions wherever possible
- Build integration points and automation between current systems, and ensure when new systems are procured, they use open APIs and can integrate with our current systems
- Review and refresh all back-office systems helping service areas transition to modern, cloud-based technology
- Deliver an ongoing portfolio of improvements to council systems, corporate technology which are prioritised on a clear roadmap and remove sub-optimal or paper-based council processes
- Ensure systems are secure by default and protected by multi layered defences

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4: Build digital capability and inclusion

We need highly skilled digital, data and technology resource which can be deployed to support our ongoing transformation needs. We also need to upskill our employees to be confident with technology and use this to implement the digital elements of service delivery to better meet the needs of residents and support those who do not have digital access. And in turn, ensure residents are supported to have access to and use digital devices, or supported if they can't. The intended outcomes of this workstream are that:

- Our employees feel confident in their knowledge and skills around the technology they need to do their jobs
- We can adapt quickly from project to project, using digital resources to help the council prioritise and meet its needs
- Improve our digital capability and engagement with our residents and businesses.

To do this, we will:

- Create a permanent rolling programme of digital apprenticeships, working with local higher educational institutions to build pathways for young workers and graduates who are interested in digital, technology and data
- Build digital, data, technology teams in the council consisting mainly of permanent staff with a small number of contractors or partners
- Partner with business areas across the council to co-create service transformation plans enabled by technology - and then deliver on them
- Work with other boroughs, government bodies and suppliers to share learning, work together and improve.
- Focus customer experience on supporting the digitally excluded and vulnerable
- Ensure residents have access to digital services to transact with the council and find council-related information

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5: Deliver a digital place

There is also an important role for the council in facilitating the use of digital technology to bring about further improvements within the borough, and the way it functions. This is increasingly important as Hillingdon, like many other areas, faces challenges from population growth, automation, congestion and the climate crisis.
The intended outcomes of this workstream are that:

- Improve digital connectivity across the borough
- Improve sustainability across the borough
- Improve our digital capability and engagement with our residents and businesses.

To do this, we will:

- Continue our programme of borough wide fibre and mobile connectivity improvements, increasing bandwidth across the borough for the council, businesses and residents
- Help Hillingdon become a Smart City by having a Planning service that instils digital innovation into current and new developments
- Create a clear digital offer to businesses that defines the way in which they should engage and interact with the council
- Use internet of things devices to capture data to gain new insights. For example, information on the performance of assets, such as boilers in council housing, energy use and sustainable energy management systems
- Leverage Social Value in the digital arena when procuring major contracts i.e. housing developments/commercial builds/any other high value contracts
- Develop the digital economy in Hillingdon

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Key Performance Indicators

KPIs
Objective: To reduce the volume of resident facing contact and channel shift to online.
Measure: Contacts offered (calls, emails and face to face).
Objective: To increase take up and maximise resident self-service.
Measure: Total Contacts that are self-service/digital.
Objective: To reduce the spend on customer experience by reducing demand both over the phone and face to face
Measure: Total spend on customer experience
Objective: To reduce the officer time for business areas spent on back-office processing, through better systems integration and automation
Measure: Total spend on business support
Objective: Reduced paper usage, helping to meet the council's climate commitments
Measure: Total spend of printing and postage