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Digital First Strategy

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Introduction

This strategy sets out how Lancashire County Council intends to deliver sustainable digital services to the public in a way that best meets their need and circumstance. It is an ambitious programme that will see many of the council's key services delivered in a digital way, utilising current technology to meet their expectations. It is important that customers have confidence in our systems and processes, knowing that their queries or concerns will be addressed in a timely matter, without the need to speak to multiple departments or repeatedly contact us for progress updates. This strategy also sets out a vision for ensuring that our technology and the way in which it is used and our staff are able to work as efficiently as possible whilst using the digital channels available to them, rather than relying on ad-hoc, paper-based solutions.

Where appropriate for the service and its primary audience, this 'digital first' strategy will support the delivery of the council's corporate objectives as outlined in the council's corporate strategy. These are:

- People make use of technology to access services, support and information
- We support people of all ages and abilities to learn and develop their skills
- We will equip our most vulnerable people with the support and skills they need to do more for themselves
- We recruit and retain a workforce that meets service needs

Vision

Lancashire County Council will be a Digital First organisation, supporting and empowering people, where possible, to engage with us digitally. Digital and on-line solutions will be the preferred method of engagement with us, and our digital solutions will deliver complete end to end transactions designed to meet the needs of the customer.

We will deliver our vision by:

- Putting the customer first and involve them in how we improve their experience by simplify processes and procedures.
- Making more services available 24/7 to fit in with our customers' and partners' needs.
- Defining the operating model for how the council delivers its services digitally.
- Ensuring the way customers, councillors, employees, suppliers and partners work with us and get information is as effective and efficient as possible.
- Using technology to automate processes as much as possible for both internal and external facing services.
- Establishing clear priorities that will help us to become a digital first organisation and setting specific and measurable targets to measure our progress.
Promoting 'channel shift' as much as possible to signpost customers to digital channels as first point of contact.

What does Digital First mean?

Being **Digital First** is not about replacing our services with digital only options, it is about encouraging and enabling those who can use digital tools, or go on-line, to do so.

Making services available digitally can deliver many benefits, including:

- 1) Saving customers time and effort by making services available at a time most suitable to them.
- 2) Providing customers with quick and appropriate channels when they contact us for advice, support or when raising complaints about the services we provide.
- 3) Being more efficient with our time - digital transactions can be delivered in less time than some manual processes. There is also the opportunity to combine digital platforms to improve performance and deliver services that meet actual customer need.
- 4) Generating long term savings.
- 5) Creating opportunities for innovation and growth by providing people in Lancashire opportunities to develop digital skills to support employability, by ensuring super-fast broadband is made available to individuals and business across Lancashire, allowing high-standards of connectivity and speed.

Our Priorities:

The needs of our customers must be at the heart of everything we do. Therefore, we have identified 5 key priorities that Lancashire County Council will commit to addressing in order to provide the best, possible services and experiences for our customers and service users.

These 5 priorities have been established through consultation and represent the areas where we will focus to become a Digital First council. The priorities have been identified through discussion and workshops with key stakeholders, which assessed our organisational aspirations in terms of working more digitally, potential blockers to success, opportunities for successful improvements and quick wins.

- **Become more data driven**
Ensure all data is captured accurately, kept up to date and accessible. This will enable us to make informed decisions that shape the direction of our services.
- **Embed a digital culture across the organisation**
Build confidence in our digital solutions and create an agile and flexible working environment that focuses on service outcomes. This will drive down costs, encourage innovation and enhance the skills throughout our workforce.
Becoming a digital first organisation is at the forefront of decision making and operational objectives.
- **Work with our partners digitally**
Work in collaboration with partners to deliver integrated digital solutions where possible, to join up our systems and processes. This enables timely decision making across agencies and gives a holistic picture of customer's needs, to deliver the right support at the right time.

- **Explore new digital technologies**

Work with partners, technology providers and 'best in class' organisations to find and understand new technological opportunities and innovative solutions that can benefit Lancashire. Use their experience and success to shape potential developments in service delivery and customer engagement.

- **Build a stronger Lancashire economy**

Promote the benefits of digital technologies and digital skills across Lancashire. Encourage customer engagement through continuing provision of access to Superfast and Next Generation Broadband for homes and businesses.

Becoming a Digital First council will mean that digital and on-line options will, where appropriate be our primary channel of communication

This will be the same for our staff, customers, councillors, partners and suppliers. We will make processes simple, appropriate and short, as well as ensuring we provide appropriate opportunities for 'digital learning' across Lancashire.

We know that no two customers' needs are the same and there will always be a need for us to engage with some customers in person or by phone. Where engagement via digital channels is not appropriate or practical, as in the case of our less digitally able service users, assistance will also be available through more traditional and familiar channels. However, we will encourage a digital first approach that will allow for a high volume of less complex interactions to be managed in a quick, efficient and less labour intensive way.

We will:

- Enhance the council's on-line capabilities, including our website, so that customers can transact effectively online, at a time and place that is convenient, without the need for repeating or duplicating information e.g. Report It, Apply for It, Pay for It.
- Implement and develop mobile applications where appropriate, to allow access to online tools from smart phones and tablets.
- Deliver an effective and customer focussed self-serve 'front door' for all services via the website. For all non-digital contacts ensure there is one dedicated point of contact via our Customer Access Service.
- Continue to develop our corporate social media channels and build on their success. Encourage the use of digital advertising across online channels where appropriate, to target hard to reach customer groups for priority communications.

Priority One

Become a more data driven organisation

LCC uses its data to commission and deliver services. However, we must become better at harnessing data. We need to better identify the information we hold, why we hold it, what we intend to use it for and understand what it is telling us. By managing our data better, we can make better informed decisions by identifying trends and patterns across services, across geographic locations and across our customers. We can then use what we know to target services to those customers and places that need them the most.

We will:

- Get the basics right by ensure the data we collect is appropriate, accurate and stored in the correct systems, in the correct way and in accordance with the relevant data protection legislation. Appropriate retention periods will be applied and data will be held in a way that makes it easily reportable, without the need for manual intervention.
- Deliver accurate, relevant and accessible data that can be used to support decision makers in effectively predicting and planning, both tactically and strategically.
- View our data as a priority asset for Lancashire and make better use of it strategically to help the people and businesses across the county.
- Develop a clear vision and approach to what we report and how we report it. This needs to be built upon the good practice set out in the data strategy to ensure confidence in the data we hold and publish.
- Simplify data collection, storage and use, minimising the number of different systems we use. We will maximise the use of core ICT systems and stop procuring and using bespoke, non-integrated, methods of data recording such as individual spreadsheets and standalone databases.
- Maximise the interface between 'line of business systems' (when these can't be avoided) and core ICT systems, to give a comprehensive overview of information. Ensure any digital systems used in day to day business can interface with our core systems, to enable centralised reporting and increase confidence in the data we hold.

Priority Two

To embed a digital culture across the organisation

A key element of this strategy is to embed a digital culture across the authority. This will be done by offering digital options as a first choice wherever possible. As well as effective system design, a significant culture change within the organisation is required.

We will:

- Drive positive culture change by encouraging the inclusion of digital first solutions at the heart of all strategies, and through support from senior managers by providing the leadership to drive this forward.
- Become a "paper-lite" authority, reducing the requirement for physical records and challenging paper usage wherever possible.
- Work with suppliers to increase e-invoicing, resulting in more records being stored electronically and work with partners to encourage electronic sharing of information.
- Build a strong agile workforce who will embrace and utilise technology that encourages electronic delivery of processes to ensure consistency and efficiency.

- Encourage integrated workplaces that are multi-disciplinary and support effective partnership working to ensure reliable connectivity, wifi, network and systems access (where required).
- Remove physical and technical barriers including access to buildings, ICT networks and support systems.
- Develop effective IT portals which allow customers and suppliers to access many services in a single place.
- Improve management information and HR processes making them more accessible with a focus on enabling managers to do more on line at first contact.
- Provide comprehensive employee support through a 'digital first' culture change programme. We will work in partnership to devise a programme of digital skills support to build capability and confidence throughout our workforce.

Priority Three

Work with our partners digitally

We need to be able to work with partners and suppliers using the principles outlined above. We need to have the ability to work securely in shared buildings, sharing networks and data whilst protecting ourselves, our partners and our customers. Our property strategy includes making all of our buildings 'digitally available' so we need to ensure our protocols for information sharing are kept up to date.

We will:

- Encourage and enable our suppliers to play their part in achieving our digital aspirations by ensuring there is some obvious benefit to them, such as timely payment and early payment incentives. In order to do this our systems need to be highly intuitive and easy to use.
- We will re-invigorate the i-supplier project aiming to achieve a 90% uptake of suppliers who interact with us digitally.
- Continue to build on the development of shared processes and ways of working with health partners, local authorities, Lancashire Constabulary and Contractors to deliver better services and outcomes more effectively for our customers.
- Work with others to provide and facilitate opportunities to develop digital skills across the Lancashire community including developing a programme of digital skills support, to build capability and confidence throughout our communities and local businesses.

Priority Four

Build a stronger Lancashire economy

The Lancashire Economic Partnership, will continue to help and support the digital and creative economy within Lancashire. We will continue to support our key initiatives listed below, and identify new central or regional government funding sources which will contribute to growing the digital economy, improve digital skills and create further employment opportunities by promoting the benefits of digital and improving digital skills.

We will:

- Deliver on our role as the first regional partner for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's, Digital Skills Partnership to map, promote and develop positive initiatives increasing digital skills within Lancashire. These will be continually developed and delivered to ensure the ongoing improvement of digital skills across all Lancashire residents to enable them to engage more easily with digitised council services, and empower them more generally in their jobs and day to day lives.
- Ensure our digital ecosystem grows by facilitating and strengthening links between employers and education through:
 - Placing approximately 500 students and pupils per year in digital and technology businesses, via our role as a pilot area for T-Levels and the Made Smarter programme, our Digital Advantage programme run by Digital Lancashire, and a variety of university placement initiatives.
 - Aiming for a digital advisor in every Lancashire school as part of our successful Enterprise Advisor network.
- Provide advice and, where possible, funding, to ensure that all office and property development has the correct infrastructure and community support to enable the development of digital businesses and digitally skilled businesses.
- Through our Service Level Agreement with Digital Lancashire provide a welcome and soft landing package to new inward investment from digital businesses and digital talent, through tours, community building events, and data collection to promote regional strengths.
- Use our Innovation Plan to drive digital innovation through the 5 key theme areas:
 - Staying ahead
 - New routeways to excellence
 - Broadening the innovation base
 - Enabling infrastructures for innovation
 - Letting the world know

Further details of the Lancashire Innovation Plan can be found below.

https://lancashirelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/LCC5166_Lancashire-Innovation-Plan_Online-1.pdf

Priority Five

Explore new digital technology

There is an ever increasing range of technology being developed, some of which is now reaching a level of maturity which gives local authorities the confidence to explore and engage with it where appropriate.

We will:

- Build a solid foundation and get the basics of becoming a digital first organisation right, before we fully explore these opportunities.
- Consider using more unconventional methods to compliment the delivery of our services to users, where there are opportunities and demand to do so.

- Strive to continually develop and improve service delivery and customer experience through technological advances, working alongside the traditional and familiar and learning from businesses and local authorities using new technologies.

Delivering Change, Monitoring Progress and Measuring Success

Resourcing the Delivery

In order to successfully deliver this ambitious programme of work, additional resource and investment will be required. A dedicated team will be required if we are to give the appropriate level of attention to delivering our objectives. It is proposed that this situation remains under the review of the Director of Strategy and Performance to determine the timing of this.

Monitoring and Reporting Progress

It is essential that we are able to monitor progress and ensure that the work we are doing is delivering a tangible difference to the staff and service users of Lancashire County Council. Therefore this strategy will be supported by a robust implementation plan. The plan will evidence the delivery of our priorities in and will set out key milestones and achievements.

The strategy will set out our five year approach to becoming a digital first organisation and will remain unchanged. Whereas the Digital First Implementation plan will evolve and change as we meet each milestone. This plan will set out the detail our *how* we deliver the digital first objectives along with timescales for delivery. The initial version of the plan will be included with this document as an appendix.

Progress in implementing the strategy and delivery plan will be reported to the Digital Board on a six weekly basis, with the option to report to Corporate Management Team as necessary. Progress will be reported to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement on an annual basis and updates to be provided to the Cabinet Lead for Digital on a quarterly basis, with the opportunity for ad-hoc progress reports as required.