Appendix 1

North East Derbyshire District Council

(Digital Strategy)

(2025-2028)

Equalities Statement

North East Derbyshire District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and when delivering the services it provides to all sections of the community.

The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Access for All statement

You can request this document or information in another format such as large print or **language** or contact us by:

- **Phone** - 01246 231111
- **Email** - connectne@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk
- **Text** - 07800 00 24 25
- **BSL Video** Call – a three way video call with us and a BSL interpreter. It is free to call North East Derbyshire District Council with Sign Solutions, you just need wifi or mobile data to make the video call, or call into the offices at Wingerworth.
- Call with Relay UK via textphone or app on ***0800 500 888***– it is a free phone service provided by BT for anyone who has difficulty hearing or speaking. It's a way to have a real time conversation with us by text.
- **Visiting** our offices at Wingerworth – 2013 Mill lane, S42 6NG

CONTROL SHEET FOR (Digital Strategy)

Strategy Details	**Comments / Confirmation** **(To be updated as the document progresses)**
Strategy title	Digital Strategy
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Date strategy forwarded to Information & Improvement and Communications (to include on Document Library and Internet if applicable to the public)	tbd

Foreword – Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, NEDDC Leader and Managing Director

"It's not enough for government to just 'keep up' with the scale of change happening all around us. We have to understand it, use it, and shape it. And we must grasp every opportunity to drive greater value for money for the taxpayer." **Secretary of State for SSIT**.

"*A key principle of our Digital Strategy is that it's not about technology, it's about great service design, utilising the tools of the digital age to make it easier, faster, inclusive and a more fulfilling experience when residents and businesses work with us*." **Lee Hickin, Managing Director.**

As an organisation we embrace innovation, creativity, new ideas and new ways of working to ensure our Council succeeds. We challenge functional barriers, encourage, coach, and empower our colleagues to engage, develop talent from within, create an environment where people want to be successful and take ownership and most importantly – be ONE TEAM.

I truly believe that the adoption and development of our ONE TEAM ethos, coupled with our 'collaborative leadership' approach, sets the organisation up to succeed in helping to shape the future of the communities that we serve.
The digital agenda provides an opportunity to grow, to innovate, to make data led decisions through analysis and evaluation. It can provide digital inclusion to our communities, which in turn can support us becoming a smart, well-connected and inclusive district.

Digital supports the efficient and effective running of our business. It can generate efficiencies in ways of working, help innovate and enable us to partner well with others. It can make our services simpler, easier to access and more straightforward to use. Users of our services, regardless of age, gender, race, ability or disability rightly expect a user experience from their council that is fair and comparable to that which they experience in other parts of their lives and we aim to meet this expectation.

"*Customers need ways of getting things done 24/7 in ways that suit them. We recognise the importance of the 'customer journey' with us and recognise that it needs to be as simple, intuitive, accessible and efficient as possible.* " **Cllr Nigel Barker Leader of the Council**

We run a large, complex range of services, many of which face significant financial pressures and increasing demand. Navigating this complexity and challenge to deliver our digital ambitions in an ever-changing world is no small task, and one which this strategy helps us address. Our digital plans over the next five years are carefully designed to achieve the right balance.

We need to keep operating costs down whilst maximising the security, quality, and effectiveness of our services. Improved technology will fundamentally change how we deliver our services, and we will support this with a culture that ensures we use it well. our Council Plan, sets the roadmap for this, ensuring we engage with our residents, our

businesses, and our staff. Our ONE TEAM ethos is at the core of everything we do, along with ensuring our decisions are data driven, evaluated and feedback is sought and then acted on

There is more work to do, but we are in a strong position to improve in ways that will make a real difference. As we do this, it is important that we leave no-one behind. Accessing digital services of course requires people to be digitally enabled, and we will work to help tackle digital exclusion in our communities whilst respecting individual choice over how customers and residents choose to access council services.

We will seek to support digital equity by providing our residents with more effective digital options, as well as supporting those who struggle to access digital services and still want to contact us in other ways.

Cllr Nigel Barker, Leader of the Council and Lee Hickin, Managing Director

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Introduction

Digital transformation is a fundamental reality for local government today.

Our digital strategy is essentially a roadmap of how we will use digital technologies to support the ambitions of our council plan making North East Derbyshire a great place to live, work, access public services and cares for the environment

This strategy will update and evolve as the changing world around us does. We set out a five-year plan to improve how we serve our residents and businesses in a digital world, not just for now, but also for the future.

As we learn from feedback and evidence we gather, we will adapt, using the action plan that forms part of this strategy to monitor our achievement and adapt to changes.

Digital technology underpins practically all elements of council operations. It helps colleagues to work efficiently and focus their efforts on the practical things our residents need. It supports access to services and provides the systems that capture the information we need to understand how we are doing and how we can improve.

In recent years we have invested significantly in our technology, developing an enterprise-level Microsoft 365 environment. This has already begun to improve our technological foundations, and it is on this base that our next phase will be built. This strategy sets this continuing digital journey out.

"Our ethos and ONE TEAM culture means we are agile and can look inwards at what we do. We are confident to self-critique our processes together, so we follow best practice.

We remain innovative and always open to change, we balance risks with innovation, with our goal to be well equipped, capable and forward thinking to provide outstanding services now, and in the future." ***Lee Hickin, Managing Director***

Where we are now

- Over 50% of transactions with us are digital
- 14,000 residents (out of 50,000 homes) in the district signed up to receive our email news bulletins
- Collectively over 22,000 people follow us on our social media channels
- Our website has 750,000 interactions each year
- Accessibility ratings of over 90% on our website
- 54,000 calls answered annually
- Answered 11,000 emails annually
- 7,700 online forms completed annually
- Manual based transactions are common place across the organisation
- Digital working is still being embedded
- Culture change is still needed to embrace the digital revolution
- There are skills and knowledge gaps across the council in digital expertise
- Progression with speed is a barrier due to back office complexities and security restrictions
- Staff and resident perceptions: The consultation on the Council's Digital Strategy has revealed strong overall support for the proposed digital ambitions, with a significant majority of respondents endorsing the vision for digital transformation. However, there are notable concerns that need to be addressed, including the need for human interaction, digital exclusion, security and data privacy, and the potential impact on jobs. While the community is well-integrated into the digital world, some residents face barriers to accessing and using internet-based services. Additionally, staff feedback highlights strengths in internal communications and digital tools, but also identifies areas for improvement, such as enhancing and utilising Teams.

Current Strengths

1. **Comprehensive Vision and Goals**: Our strategy outlines a clear vision for digital transformation, aiming to enhance service delivery, boost efficiency, and engage citizens effectively
2. **Action Plan**: The inclusion of a detailed action plan with specific goals, timelines, and measures is commendable
3. **Focus on Digital Inclusion**: Addressing the digital divide and promoting digital literacy is a strong point
4. **User-Centric Design**: Emphasizing the importance of user experience and accessibility in service design is crucial

Our Digital Vision:

Our vision is simple, to embrace digital transformation to provide better services and outcomes for the residents and businesses of North East Derbyshire.

Our approach to digital improvement

Prioritising customer needs
Service improvement will focus on meeting the needs of our residents and businesses, particularly those who are most vulnerable. By using research and data to better understand this in our district we will use this to develop services and ways of working to meet those needs.

Our services will be accessible to all and will be working to improve digital inclusion. Services will be simple, intuitive and support those who aren't online to be digitally enabled.

Creativity and Innovation
Embracing new ways of delivering improvements to our services, backed up by research, data and feedback. We will invest in reducing manual based tasks and paperwork, utilising AI and embracing new technologies, enabling quick, data driven decision making.

Driven by data
The data we collect about our residents, businesses and staff will support every aspect of our digital engagement and improvement. We will engage through research and analytics which will guide what we do and when. We will invest in meeting the ambitions in our council plan and ensuring we invest our resources effectively, ensuring successes are measured and continuously improve our services through feedback and evaluation.

Leadership and Culture
We will become a digital council by facilitating cross functional project teams, sharing goals and by working in a more collaborative way. Employees will be given the space to deliver, be empowered to share knowledge and work together rather than in silo's to best support our needs and those of our residents and businesses

Digital Ambitions

We have a clear understanding of the needs to our residents, local businesses, partners and visitors, both qualitatively and quantitatively, so that we can improve outcomes for and with them.

This understanding helps set our digital ambitions which cover four key areas, underpinning what we want to achieve over the next five years and beyond:

Our Aim: Easy, engaging, and inclusive.

To do this we will:

Provide easier digital access to council services and encourage people to use it. Take a user-centred approach to design and maximise accessibility. Take action to improve digital inclusion.

Our Aim: Simple, stable, and secure.

To do this we will:

Work in a prioritised and systematic way to simplify and modify our digital estate to make it as secure, resilient, and reliable as practical.

Our Aim: Well-used and used well.

To do this we will:

Support colleagues to make the best, fullest use of the tools and technologies available to them, developing high levels of digitally skilled collaboration. Provide robust data and insights to ethically improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Our Aim: Collaborate, share, innovate.

To do this we will:

Adopt the right technologies, systems, processes, culture, and governance to provide a safe and productive environment for wider collaboration, automation and problem-solving, using technology.

Real-Time Interactivity

Our digital vision and ambitions translate into real digital enhancements:

We will integrate more real-time communication tools, leveraging the power of ai by looking to utilise live chat, government digital service ai resources such as ‘minute’ for removing the need for human manual tasks to free up capacity to focus on adding quality and value to our digital services.

We will also ensure we are providing more interactive social media campaigns to enhance resident engagement which align to our council plan outputs and what resonate with our residents by analysing the data from our social media channels to provide interesting, engaging and relevant campaigns.

Data-Driven Decision Making
We will incorporate more robust data analytics tools (ai) and provide training for staff to leverage data for informed decision-making

- **Example**: Using AI-driven data analysis to improve decision-making processes, as seen in Camden Council's RentSense system

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy
Our strategy includes comprehensive cybersecurity measures and protocols to protect residents' data.

- **Example**: Implementing multi-layered security measures including firewalls, anti-virus software, and regular security audits, similar to the approach taken by Howden Group

Stakeholder Engagement
We will engage stakeholders, including residents, in the transformation process. Regular feedback and consultation will help tailor services to meet their needs.

- **Example**: Conducting regular surveys (twice a year) to gather feedback from residents.

Agile Implementation
We will adopt an agile approach to implementation, allowing for iterative processes and continuous improvement.

- **Example**: Using agile methodologies to develop and deploy new digital services, as demonstrated by the AI implementation plan at NEDDC

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation
We will establish a framework for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the strategy's impact. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will be used to measure success and make necessary adjustments.

- **Example**: Regularly reviewing and updating the digital strategy based on performance data and feedback, similar to the approach taken by NEDDC and the Council Plan reporting and metrics framework

Digital Literacy Programs
We will sign post to digital literacy programs and leverage funding and grants where possible to ensure all residents can access and benefit from digital services. Partnerships with local NGOs will help reach vulnerable populations.

- **Example**: Sign posting to digital skills workshops in our printed magazine and via online channels, similar to the initiatives run by the Government Digital Service

Unified Digital Platform
We will implement a unified digital platform, utilising cloud services such as OneDrive and ensure our data is of high quality and integrates all services, providing a seamless experience for residents and increased usability and interrogation for internal use and ai data decision making.

Digital Inclusion

Ensuring that all residents have access to digital resources and can participate fully in a modern digital society is a key part of our digital strategy. Making sure that vulnerable groups are able to participate and learn digital skills are crucial to ensuring the future is accessible for all.

On the face of it, addressing digital exclusion should be easy – you simply need to identify who's excluded, find out why, put measures in place to close the gap and implement the change.

The challenge is that the reasons for exclusion are more complicated than this – and evidence increasingly points to exclusion as a spectrum. Rather than someone being either digitally included or excluded, they might be somewhere in between – and depends on context.

What we do know in the UK, is that the older you are and the poorer you are, the more likely you are to be digitally excluded.

People over the age of 70 are significantly more likely not to use the internet than younger age groups.

Other factors like disability, skills, income, motivation and confidence also play a part, and when someone has more than one of these factors, the likelihood of them being digitally excluded increases even more. (Source: Four essential steps for delivering digital inclusion projects and initiatives | Local Government Association)

Objectives

We have three clear objectives, where we will work with partners to reduce inequalities in the digital world in North East Derbyshire and help facilitate:

- Access to digital services
- Enhancing digital skills
- Increasing digital participation

Inclusion Plan

In order to meet our objectives, we have set out a clear plan to understand who are digitally excluded, why that is and how we can help change things for the better. To do this, we will:

- Identify target groups – use resident surveys to identify those who are most likely to be digitally excluded such as older adults, low income households, people with disabilities and those with low digital literacy.
- Understand barriers - Assess the specific barriers these groups face, whether they are related to access, skills, confidence, or motivation.

Implementation and Support

We will implement our inclusion plan by:

- Identifying digitally excluded groups through resident surveys and regional and local datasets

- Understand their needs from the data and engage with our partner organisations to signpost to digital training programmes to improve digital literacy and skills, tailored to the needs of specific groups of people.
- Provide a support service – support given to our residents to help navigate digital services and build confidence in understanding and undertaking online transactions such as paying council tax online, understanding how to report issues in the district for example. This will be done on an individual basis where customers interact with our staff to help them be more digitally confident.
- Lobby the government and regional EMCCA authority to ensure everyone has access to affordable and reliable internet services and digital devices.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In a world that is increasingly reliant on technology – having digital literacy, access and connectivity is more important than ever. The 'digital divide' – which separates those who don't have access to digital technologies or the ability to use them from those who do – has real implications not just for individuals, but for communities and the public purse too.

There is an increasing reliance on digital participation in nearly every aspect of our lives – from securing and holding down a job, to accessing education and services. Without widespread digital inclusion our economic success as a country and our personal health, wellbeing and attainment are all at risk of compromise and existing societal inequalities risk being compounded.

When analysing the digital divide there is usually a close correlation between digital exclusion and poverty. ‘Digitally literate’ people will end up having more and remaining better off financially and socially; where ‘digitally impoverished’ people will be at an even greater disadvantage.

People who have characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age and disability in particular) are also more likely to be excluded. So, not only is there a strong economic and societal rationale for investing in inclusion – there's a moral compulsion too. The United Nations has identified internet connectivity as a basic human right and yet, even in developed countries like the UK, there remains a persistent gap between people who can easily access the internet and have the skills to use it – and those that don’t or can’t.

When considering the business case for inclusion at a local level, it is critical to look at potential benefits in a holistic way and in the medium to long term. Although digitally included people are more likely to use online services, channel shift is only one of the benefits of inclusion and is rarely its core, or most impactful outcome.

Strategy Action Plan

Ref	Action	Target Date	Expected Outcome	Lead Officer	Measure	RAG	Actual Outturn/Outcome (when completed)
Easy, Engaging and inclusive (EEA) EEA1	Map current systems used at the council (major systems review)	December 25	Log of all our systems, how they interact with each other and if they are fit for purpose or need to change in line with technology advances, improved customer journey, efficiencies in time and money. Leading to an improvement roadmap	KoG	Process map of systems in place across the council , what is used by whom and how they integrate together. Record of innovations possible and barriers to delivery. **What it delivers against the ambition –** simplification of back office systems – increase efficiency, easier to use for the customer journey – goal to increase digital take up and streamline resources and efficiencies and understand where we are as a council and where we need to be		
EEA2	Utilise One Gov sign in system	December 2028	Improved customer journey, simplified sign on for council transactions.	KoG	Customer satisfaction **What it delivers against the ambition** centralised data – higher digital take up of online transactions		
EEA3	Measure customer satisfaction with digital services	Annual survey	Understand the needs of our residents, businesses and staff (for those who take part)	KD	% of residents accessing and satisfied with digital service provision **What it delivers against the ambition –** gives us a greater understanding of our customers		

					wants and needs, helping to shape policies plans an strategies and forward vision. Completes feedback and evaluation loop of best practice.		
EEA4	Seek under represented groups (non digital residents) identify them and provide opportunities to increase digital skills through partnership working	Dec 27	Engage on digital transformation Ensure/improve compliance with Accessibility regulations	KD,DV,TB	% decrease in users who don't use digital services % increase in users reporting improved confidence or digital literacy **What it delivers against the ambition –** inclusivity, inclusion and accessibility of services to all		
EEA5	Simplify our digital services for the customer, single sign on for all services	December 27	Residents and businesses can effectively engage with council services when and where it is most convenient for them (Improve customer journey)	KoG	% increase of residents using digital services. % increase of customer satisfaction in digital services **What it delivers against the ambition** – ease of use for the customer – streamlined datasets, centralise data – higher quality data – enabling use with ai/automation functions. Customer journey improved by simplification – increase digital take up of online transactions		
EEA6	Providing quick and easy access to information and online services. Simplify our website to access info within 3 clicks	Dec 26	High performing, accessible website with less than 3 clicks to information	DV	% increase in website satisfaction % increase in website accessibility and usability		

					What it delivers against the ambition – improves customer journey – increases confidence and ease of use. Increases accessibility and inclusivity to all		
EEA7	Implement a tell us once service	Dec 28	Remove the need for residents to complete several forms to inform separate services of changes in their circumstances and support an improved customer experience	KoG	% increase in user satisfaction when using the service **What it delivers against the ambition** – improves customer journey – increases confidence and ease of use. Increases accessibility and inclusivity to all (customer journey improved through simplicity. Datasets centralised for forward progression of automation/ai)		
EEA8	Keep our systems and digital technology up to date and relevant to their purpose – ensure systems are using latest versions of software that are most appropriate to the functions performed	Apr 26	We will test the services to make sure they are simple and intuitive and follow best practices.	All service managers and KoG	% of software/systems using latest version **What it achieves against the ambition** – improves customer journey – increases confidence and ease of use. Increases accessibility and inclusivity to all (customer journey improved through simplicity. Datasets centralised for forward progression of automation/ai)		
Simple, stable and secure (SSS) SSS1	Simplify and modify our digital estate to make it as secure, resilient, and reliable as practical	Dec 26	Systems being utilised to their full potential	NA	Usage statistics for platforms **What it achieves against the ambition** – robust, safe and secure for staff and residents		

SSS2	Achieve/maintain compliance with relevant cyber accreditations	Jan 26	Fit for purpose, safe and secure systems	NA	Statistical data to evidence security/compliance		
SSS3	Back office systems and infrastructure that are resilient against cyber attack	Jan 27	Robust, safe and secure for staff and residents	NA	Data breach analysis of data we hold		
Well used and used well (WUUW) WUUW1	Improve staff customer journey Undertake surveys, review, consider outcomes	Dec 26	New systems have walkthroughs on how to use – collaboration working to ensure systems are fit for purpose	All service areas	Staff survey results - increase staff knowledge and confidence in using digital and automation		
WUUW2	We will make further use of Power apps and AI to integrate channels, applications and workflows to enable seamless end-to end transactions across a wider range of services and maximise the first touch capability of council officers.	Dec 26	Cost savings, resource efficiencies, improved customer satisfaction/staff skills increased in digital	All service areas	Staff survey results - increase staff knowledge and confidence in using digital and automation		
WUUW3	Build a roadmap of digital services in a data-driven priority order, focusing on high-volume services, and highly manual processes	Jun 26	developing high levels of digitally skilled collaboration. Provide robust data and insights to ethically improve effectiveness and efficiency	KoG	% increase in uptake and usage of ai in the organisation (surveys) and viva insights (increase in transactions on copilot)		
WUUW4	Transform the work of our customer service teams and	Jun 27	Simplified customer journey, developing	Digital T Team	Stats to show reduction in calls, emails and webchats		

	across the council by continuing to utilise technology, ai and automation with one telephone number for those that must speak to an agent		high levels of digitally skilled collaboration.				
WUUW5	Put payments online for all payable services, making the council cashless for all but the most vulnerable	Jan 28	Online transaction monitoring **What it achieves against the ambition** Provides data and insight into our customers to better serve their needs whilst ensuring they have digital skills	Digital T Team	Increase in payment transactions, reduction in physical cash taking		
Collaborate, Share, Innovate (CSI) CSI1	invest in reducing manual based tasks and paperwork, and enable quick, data-driven decision making.	Dec 26	**what this achieves against the ambition** automation and problem-solving, using technology.	DV/DTTeam	Increase in digital/ai measures through viva insights, staff surveys		
CSI 2	Streamline the number of ways colleagues contact each other – reduce the need for desk phones, utilise Microsoft apps and teams for calls to simplify and innovate with staff	Jan 26	Simplified contact methods across the council	ICT/DTT	Reduction in communication channels		
CSI 3	We will use research and data to better understand our residents and businesses needs identify new ways of working – align with	Jan 27	Reduction in number of back office systems, better utilisation of systems through	DTT	Reduction in number of back office systems, greater efficiency of systems in use (digital insights from providers)		

	ai/automation/national approach to digital and ai		feedback/evaluation surveys				