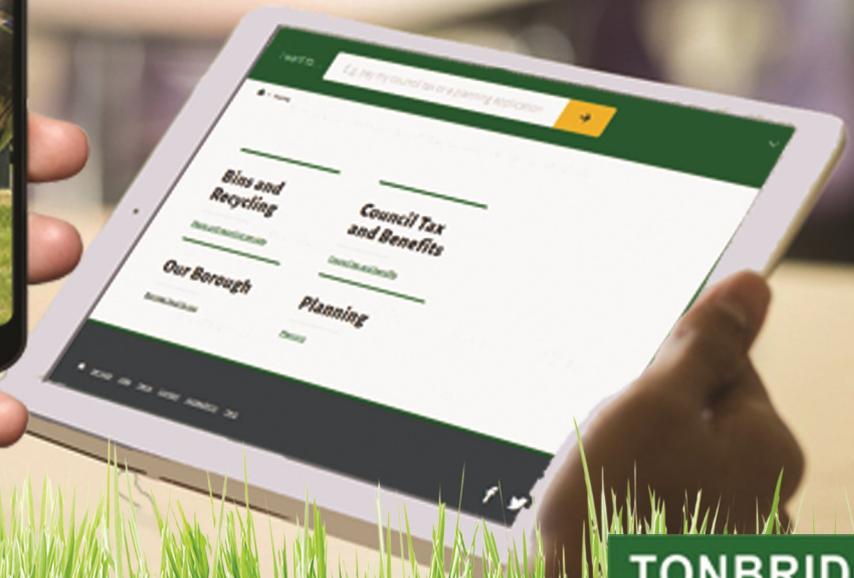


Digital Strategy 2019-2023



Foreword



New technologies are developing all around us and the way we interact with each other is constantly changing. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council wants to be at the forefront of this changing landscape, and the publication of this Digital Strategy launches our statement of intent to becoming a digital borough.

We want to ensure that our residents and businesses are able to take advantage of the digital opportunities that are available, accessing services and transacting with us seamlessly.

We want our councillors and staff to be able to work efficiently and effectively embracing the new technological advances, ensuring at all times that our communities are served in the best way we can.

We want to make ‘digital’ Tonbridge and Malling a smarter place to live and work, and I am delighted to launch this Digital Strategy.

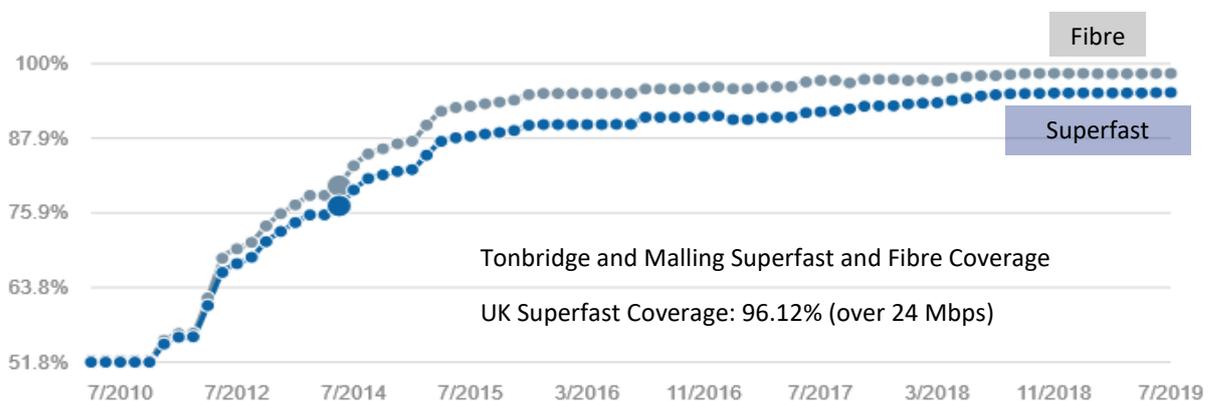


**Cllr Martin Coffin
Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property
and Deputy Leader**

Introduction

In keeping up with the continued efforts at improving customer experience and the quality of public services delivered to our residents and businesses, we will be adopting this Digital Strategy for the four years from 2019 to 2023. In line with the Corporate Strategy, it will remain customer and efficiency focused to underpin the Council and its Members' commitments to the communities and businesses we serve.

Over the last decade the Mobile and Broadband data [network coverage](#) across Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) has increased from 52.1% to 98.4%. In accordance with the global trend, the use of technology in day to day life and the choice of 'Digital' as the go-to-media for most personal and professional interactions amongst our customers has now become the norm.



Our residents already choose to use their smartphones, tablet devices and computers online, for banking, shopping, booking taxis, engaging on multiple social media platforms and many other everyday engagements. Hence, we will make it as easy for them to access our services and transact with the Council using the same devices and technologies that they are already familiar with. With the efficiencies gained, we will provide support to those who are less digitally confident, or who lack access.



In order to use Council funding as cost effectively as possible, and to face the challenges of meeting increasing public service demand with diminishing resources, embracing the Digital platform as the key engagement channel has now become an essential requirement for Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in meeting its customer expectations.

Where necessary we will mobilise our workforce with technology to provide a more responsive in field service, thus reducing the waiting times for our customers. Working with our partnering authorities within Kent, we will harness the latest technology to offer a proactive service, which will seek to prevent and respond to needs in ways that were not previously possible.

This Digital Strategy sets out the core priorities that we will be embracing to transform the Council's services through the 'Digital Transformation Programme'. In addition, where beneficial, we will use innovative technologies such as 5G, Internet of Things' (IoT), 'and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Robotics to further improve the environment and the lives of our residents.



Key Drivers

Over recent years the term 'Digital Transformation' has become synonymous with an injection of technology into organisations, often without the focus on either the challenges they face or the outcomes expected. For TMBC it is not simply about using state of the art technology. It is about improving and sustaining the quality of service provided to our residents and businesses, whilst meeting the current operational and financial challenges and preparing for the future demands.

Our residents expect the Council to solve the complexities and make public services intuitive and convenient. This involves overcoming varying challenges for the Council. Like all local authorities, TMBC also face a growing public demand for services, and financial constraints. Hence, developing and adopting a 'Digital Strategy' has now become essential in sustaining the Council services. This includes supporting fundamental change in our Council's service operations, enabled by digital transformation.

Whilst being customer-centric, our 'Digital Strategy' focuses on the following eight key drivers for the Borough over the next four years:

Evolution of customer expectations

Over the years our residents have become accustomed to the convenience of using technologies in their day to day life, where products and services are accessible simpler and faster. The digitally matured leading organisations are providing varying services, be it banking, grocery and gift shopping or the delivery of entertainment streamed to a multiplicity of devices, doing so on-demand and with relative ease. Our customers are also used to receiving truly personalised services that are joined up and integrated with other related services in ways that make sense to them. In addition the devolution and localism will only drive this expectation harder, as residents expect deeper integration across services such as Housing, Council Tax & Benefits, Planning, Parking, Environmental Health.



Increasing service demand

Due to multiple contributing factors from population growth to a number of central government policies coming in to force in recent years, there has been a steady increase in public service demands for local authorities across the country. The demands range from tackling the increase in homelessness to adhering to the new compliance policies impacting multiple disciplines of services across the Council.

Diminishing resources

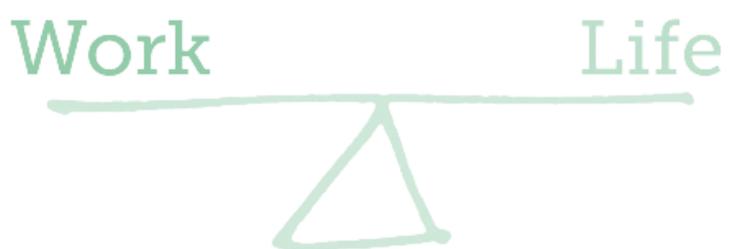
The public sector funding cuts are widely acknowledged as the primary challenge and in some cases a key risk faced by local authorities and residents alike. According to the Local Government Association (LGA) the local government funding cuts are set to reach as much as 60 percent by 2020, from the 2010 baseline.

The 'Green' agenda

Increasingly with the '[Climate Change Emergency Motion](#)', local authorities are facing challenges in meeting their responsibilities with regard to the national and the local green agenda . For example, making a positive contribution towards tackling the cause and effect of climate change and to lead on and promote, encourage and provide opportunities for healthy living.

Work life balance for staff

Over last decade, local authorities across the country have undergone significant reduction in head counts across Council services. At Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, reduction in workforce capacity over the past 6 to 7 years have exceeded £1m. In addition, as highlighted above, it is widely acknowledged that the demands on local government public services have increased in recent years with the trend indicating further increases in the future. Such increased demand coupled with diminishing resources often put the strain on our staff in meeting Service Level Agreements and customer expectations. Hence, the work life balance becomes a key concern for the Council, both in terms of staff wellbeing and sustaining the levels and quality of services provided.



Disconnected communities

The cost and impacts of disconnected communities has been highlighted in a new study by the [Eden Project Communities](#). It is reported that disconnected communities could be costing the economy £32 billion every year. Also, according to the research, conducted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research, neighbourliness achieved through connected communities already delivers substantial economic benefits to UK society, representing an annual saving of £23.8 billion in total. Therefore, it is imperative for TMBC to leverage technology to achieve community engagement through local investment and in partnership with leading network and internet service providers.

Loss of resilience in the local economy

There is increasing pressure on the Council to incentivise and help grow the local economy by supporting and promoting the local businesses. According to [‘the local democracy think tank’](#), *“When there is low or low quality employment, Councils are at the front line, dealing with the negative outcomes this produces – poor health and mental health, social isolation, homelessness and poverty. At the same time Councils may see their funding constrained as Council tax relief and housing benefit rise, and there is a greater strain on their services.*

It has therefore always been in local government’s interests to keep their local economy healthy as a key way of serving their residents and creating resilient places that promote wellbeing.”

Changing technological landscape

Local authorities are faced with challenges in meeting customer expectations, which are often based on service standards they experience as a norm. The prolonged lack of investment in technological architecture, along with the constraints of the monolithic systems, driven by service silos are key contributors to the stagnation and degradation of public services. Hence, it is essential for the Council to keep up with the changing technological landscape to meet current and future service demands.



Digital Objective

Mission:

To deliver on the priorities of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council through challenge, innovation and transformation, underpinned by technology

Vision:

To become an authority where the communities and businesses we serve are able to engage and transact with us responsively and seamlessly, irrespective of the services they access



Digital Strategic Priorities

In designing our digital services we will be adopting the [Government Digital Services' \(GDS\) design principles](#) as guidelines. Hence, our priorities will be primarily focused around our customer needs and the sustainability of the quality of service across the authority for all services. The Council will ensure that the digital services are designed to cater for the demographic cohort of the Council's population, ranging from ['Traditionalists' to 'Generation Z' \(aka iGen\)](#).

Over the next four years (2019 to 2023) we will be embracing five priorities as part of the core digital agenda for TMBC. These are 'One Council', 'Efficient Workforce', 'Demand Management', 'Economic Growth' and 'Smart Borough'



One Council

We will ensure that our customers experience a seamless and end-to-end service when engaging with the Council, irrespective of the discipline of service they require. This experience will be underpinned and delivered through technological solutions and approaches that will enable us to operate as 'One Council'. Our frontline services will adopt the '[Digital by default](#)' service standard, where customers could transact with multiple Council services via a single customer portal, accessible securely on the electronic devices that they use in their day-to-day life.

Single web platform & customer portal

In order to provide an Amazon-like, seamless, consistent in quality of service and personalised experience to our residents and businesses, we will be adopting a single Content Management System (CMS) across the Council's statutory and commercial services. This will allow the customers to access all Council services via a secure unified customer portal with single sign-on, either via the web or through an app on their mobile devices.

Inter departmental workflow

We will provide our customers joined up and intuitive public services through automated inter departmental workflow enabled by information sharing across multiple services in compliance with the relevant legislation (i.e.GDPR). Sharing information will bring a wide range of benefits to customers and reduce their duplication of efforts in engaging with various Council services in silos, such as Waste Management, Parking, Planning, Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Business Rates, Environmental Protection and Health Services.



Enterprise business solutions

The 'One Council' concept will be underpinned by adopting an enterprise technical architecture, which can serve multiple customer facing services. Therefore, natively enabling the consistency in quality of customer service experience amongst all frontline services. The enterprise solutions will involve streamlining of multiple facets of customer facing business processes catered via corporate systems such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Customer portal, Mobile workforce management system, Payment system, Document management system.

Systems consolidation

In addition to the above, where necessary, we will consolidate systems that currently serve the same purpose for various frontline services within the Council. As a result further improving the consistency in the customer experience and eliminating the duplication of investment and reducing the running costs for the Council.



Efficient Workforce

Whilst making our frontline services more intuitive and responsive, we will ensure that our staff are equipped with technology that will enable them to be more efficient and their working practices are aligned to take advantage of the art of the possible in terms of innovation. Therefore, providing our customers a more responsive service, whilst significantly reducing the back office administration efforts. Furthermore, this will significantly contribute towards the Council's 'Green' agenda through eliminated internal and external paper-work and reduced travelling.

Mobilisation

We will embed our mobile working solution into the business processes of our in-field officers to provide an enterprise solution that can be rapidly deployed to their field of work, irrespective of the line-of-business systems their discipline of service uses. This will enable us to:

- Cut down on paper-based administration – with an intuitive application and easy-to-use forms, paperwork is reduced, re-typing information is eliminated and information is stored securely
- Greater workforce capacity - increase field service capacity and unlock essential staff time that can then be used to focus on key frontline services
- Simplified access to information – access to all relevant job information and field data via a single mobile source
- Improve service level performance – deliver a more responsive, efficient workforce to improve SLA performance
- Deliver compliance – ensure processes are adhered to and the correct information is captured to maintain compliance with legislation
- Increase employee satisfaction – with smarter scheduling and intuitive mobile workforce management, field staff enjoy an improved work / life balance
- Reduce costs - minimise organisation overheads through improved processes, reduced travel and pressure on administration

In addition, our internal IT staff will be trained to develop and deploy solutions. This will help us sustain and minimise the design and development costs, whilst enabling the services to exploit the art of the possible in line with their business demands.



Process automation

We will ensure that all of our business process are aligned and automated where possible to make our customer engagement effortless. This will help increase efficiency in business processes, improve effectiveness of service delivery, enable inter-departmental joined-up services and accessibility to multiple inter-dependent public services for our residents and businesses.

System integration

By adopting an enterprise architecture and working closely with our application vendors, we will integrate our systems environment using pre-built Application Programming Interface (API) connectors to create a 'push/pull' data feed between the frontline and back-office systems. This will further enhance our customer's experience of digital services, as the information will be constantly updated amongst all relevant systems through a single interaction. This will also enable our staff in ensuring that they always have the most current and applicable information to hand to deliver the best customer service.

Investment in Staff

This Digital strategy will hold the Council's staff at the heart of it, as they play a primary role in serving and improving the lives of our customers. We will empower our staff with the most appropriate and robust technology, along with the required skills to perform to the best of their ability more efficiently. This will enable them to focus all their efforts on the qualitative aspects of the service delivery, where they add the most value to our residents and the businesses. This will also be an enabler in helping them to achieve optimum work life balance through the gained efficiency.

Agile Organisation

By embracing 'Digital by Default' approach, we will aim to improve our organisational agility within Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and become early adopters of progressive legislations driven by technological advances. For example, in earnest of the forthcoming reform to annual [electoral registration canvassing](#) by Electoral Commission in 2020, we are getting ourselves ready to adopt 'e-canvassing' as soon as the legislation is in place. This will help alleviate the current inflexible and inefficient paper based approach, and allow the Electoral Registration Officers to prioritise their limited resources on addresses where there has been change.



Demand Management

As part of the primary focus of this Digital Strategy, we will ensure that all our business processes and technological solutions are aligned towards switching from the traditional ‘meeting demand’ approach to a ‘managing demand’ approach. By adopting this approach, we will change the nature of the Council's role and relationship with our customers. The demand management process will involve providing our customers with solutions that helps alleviate the current demands that are preventable and the demands that are caused by resource capacity to meet their needs and thereby better manage the demand on our public services.

According to the [Local Government Association \(LGA\)](#), “*Demand management is an approach to achieving efficiencies that reaches beyond the boundary of the organisation. By changing the nature of the Council's role and relationship with customers, local authorities are seeking alternative mechanisms to meet customer needs and thereby better manage demand. Changing behaviours – of frontline practitioners, managers and customers– often features as a critical enabler of demand management.*”

Self-serve

We will enable and encourage our customers to engage with the Council through the digital media. This is already in practice amongst many of our residents currently engaging with the Council-tax and Housing benefit services, as well as ordering garden waste bins. Our customers will be able to engage with multiple Council services either via using an app on their smart-phones or via the Council’s website. This will enable our residents to easily switch from one service to the other (i.e. Council-tax, Parking, Planning, Waste, Environmental Health) via a single customer portal rather than having to call or email the Council. As a result the Council will receive richer information and residents are able to report issues at a time that is convenient to them.



Predictive Analytics

Whilst the 'Self-serve' approach helps with the customer engagement demand, the predictive analysis of our data will provide our services with insights into the preventable demand. In accordance with GDPR guidelines, business intelligence derived through the collective data available, will help create forecasts by integrating data mining, machine learning, statistical modelling, and other data technology. We will use predictive analytics to address the demands that are preventable through foresight.

Active performance monitoring

Through the use of active reporting and monitoring technologies, we will ensure that the Council's performance is managed on an active basis rather than being measured and reported retrospectively (i.e. weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually). This will be achieved via providing the relevant operational managers with dashboard facilities to monitor their performance indicators actively for the services and staff. This will help our services to become more responsive in terms managing the changing demands through efficient management of available resources.

Outcome focused

We will ensure that the adoption of Demand Management approach within the organisation is outcome focused in terms of the Council's statutory services and the relevant commercial services. Whilst we will employ technology to improve customer and staff experience by reducing demand on statutory services such as Council-tax, Housing Benefits, Waste management, planning, etc., we will ensure that technology is used to promote the Council's commercial services to generate income and encourage healthy living amongst our residents.



Economic Growth

The Council, through its digital agenda along with the investment in its infrastructure and website, will endeavour to support and improve local economic growth. We will look to exploit the changing trends of the consumer market, where most shopping is now done online, as an opportunity, rather than a threat to the local economy. As a result, encouraging our local businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups to establish and flourish and contribute to employment and development of the borough.

Promotion of local businesses

Much is made of the impact that the internet is having on our town centres – especially in terms of shopping and banking habits – and the struggle for these centres to evolve from being purely retail spaces. There are also remendous opportunities to use digital technologies to improve how people enjoy and experience what such places have to offer. By embracing digital in planning and providing for its uptake, the Council will help boost the way local town centres (and the activities that take place within them) are promoted, accessed, used, organised and understood. In doing so, places can gain a commercial advantage and become a key building block of wider tourism promotion too.

Supply chain linkages (B2B)

It is widely acknowledged that keeping supply chains local has significant benefits for the borough. Enabled by technology, the Council will make efforts to ensure that it helps to retain money within the local economy. It will reduce the chance of supply chain reductions, tend to be more sustainable and also make products more brandable. However, much of the time, businesses aren't aware of the other fantastic enterprises on their doorstep. A great way to address this issue is through the use of digital technology to create local links and stimulate that awareness. We will make efforts to establish an innovative local business directory that gives businesses an opportunity to raise their own profile, but also find out what businesses locally could supply them with, such as the goods or services they require, or that they could supply to.



Income generation

As part of the digital strategy, the Council will look to the potential opportunities of generating income through our own commercial property portfolio of buildings and street furniture for small cell 5G rollouts via leading internet service providers within the market. This will in turn ensure that the borough is better connected digitally for our residents and businesses. This approach will also enable us to improve visitor experience at places such as Tonbridge Castle and Country Parks. Opportunities will also emerge from the digital strategy to generate potential income via provision of a 'Mobile Working solution' as a service (SaaS) or a Platform (PaaS) under a shared services arrangement to other interested local authorities with similar disciplines of services as us.

Partnership working

We will work closely in partnership with other Kent authorities via Kent Connects, Kent Public Service Network (KPSN) and Smarter Digital Services (SDS) to deliver on the digital agenda for TMBC. We have already commissioned SDS to facilitate our business process mapping and reengineering workshops for our frontline services. We will also seek to develop wider partnerships with market leading cloud hosting service providers to achieve a more robust and improved frontline service availability for our customers.



Smart Borough

The Council aspires to become a 'Smart Borough', where we will use our digital infrastructure to coordinate and manage our assets through increased connectivity and sharing of data and information. To achieve this we will ensure the provision of an open data platform and a targeted and joined-up approach to developing a smart grid of connectivity across the borough through IoT sensors. This approach will enable the Council, residents, partners and businesses to access and use data to develop proactive solutions to social issues including planning, transport, energy, health and community safety, as well as opening up unlimited new commercial opportunities as a test bed for developers.

Engaged Communities

Through the investment in our digital platforms we will develop and encourage community engagement, where people are embedded within local networks of social support; in which social isolation is reduced and people experience greater wellbeing and other benefits from the better understanding, mobilisation and growth of resilience in their neighbourhoods.

Digital Inclusion

Tonbridge and Malling generally has a good broadband infrastructure, with just around 1% considered digitally excluded due the area not meeting the required minimum 2 Mbps connectivity for streaming services. Through work that the Council is supporting and endorsing through its Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy, these smaller pockets of digitally excluded communities are being supported and enabled. One such example is the national broadband voucher scheme, which enables customers who would not normally be supported through commercial development of enhanced broadband infrastructure.

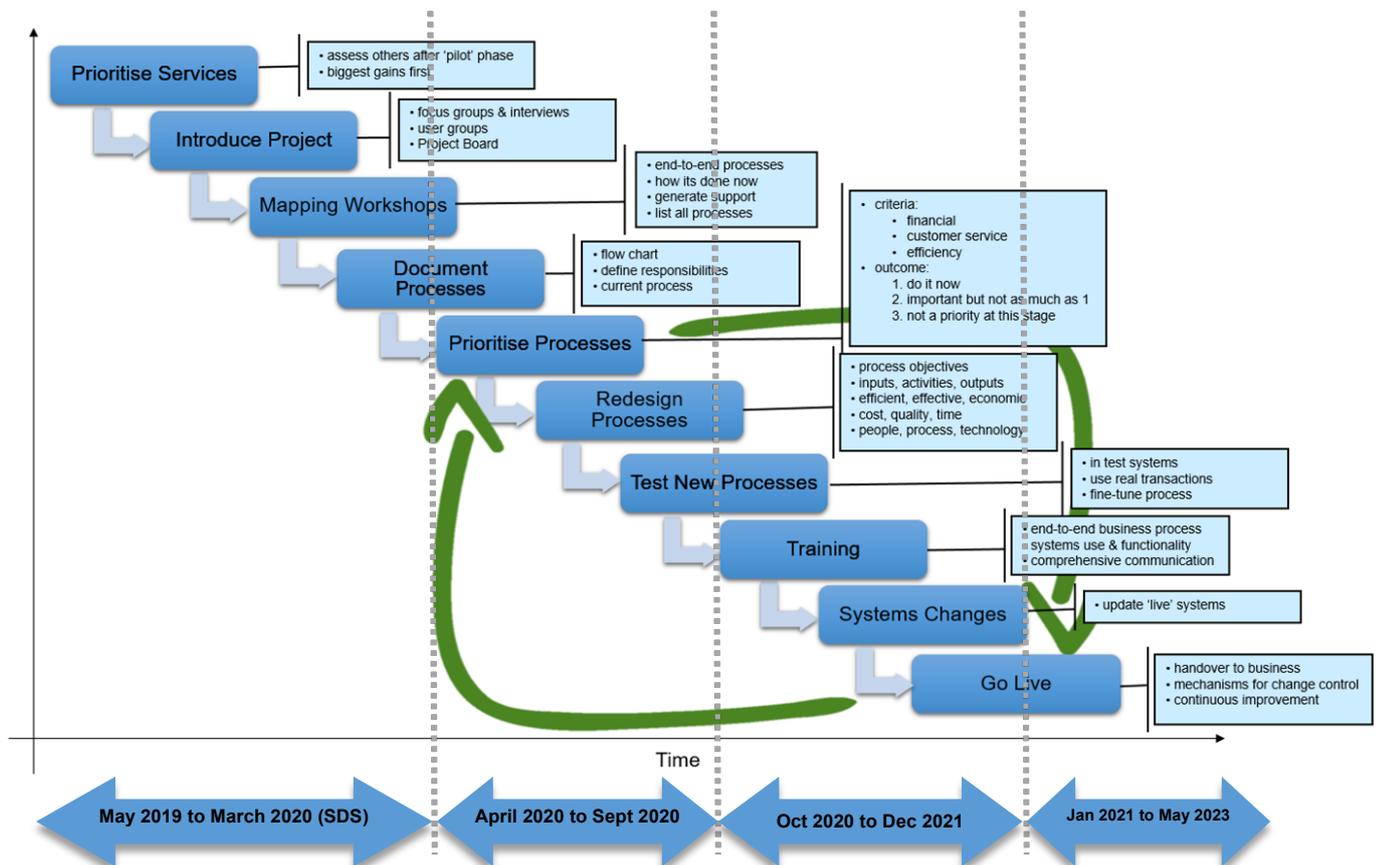


Digital Transformation Approach

In preparation of adopting this strategy over the next four years (2019 to 2023), the Council has already instigated a detailed review of current business processes and the technologies that are being used to underpin them within all of our key services. The business process review will be prioritised and managed as illustrated in the diagram below.

The outcome of the business process review will determine the technological changes required along with the new re-engineered business process to achieve the mission and vision of this Digital strategy. We will be adopting [Six Sigma](#) as the methodology for business process reengineering and Agile as the methodology for software solutions development and implementation process.

The business process review is expected to be completed by the end of this financial year (March 2020), followed by process reengineering, solution development and testing. Based on a successful user acceptance testing by the relevant process owners, we expect the rollout of the solutions to take place from January 2021 to May 2023. However, should there be any quick wins identified during the 'Business Process Review' workshops, then those projects will be prioritised to be delivered at the earliest.





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