

A network diagram on a green background featuring white icons of people connected by lines. Some icons are highlighted with concentric circles.

Digital Strategy

2017-2021

www.braintree.gov.uk



Introduction

Digital technology has become a major part of our everyday lives at work and at home. More people are now using the internet to interact with organisations. We are using online services for shopping, banking, information and entertainment because they tend to be quicker and cheaper to use. There are now more smart phones than landlines and people want to access services when it's convenient to them. Consequently we need to respond to these changing needs to ensure our customers remain well served.

.....▼.....

Focusing on digital will mean putting our customers at the centre of digital change, and developing and maintaining an internal digital culture. We must also be aware of the digitally excluded and ensure that there remain non-digital methods of contact for those who really need them.

We want to inspire confidence in our digital services for all of our customers so going online is the first preference they choose to interact with us. For customers to trust our services online and actively choose them first, we need to create truly accessible, good quality digital services, and to do that we need to transform how we work, starting with continually listening to our customers and incorporating their feedback when making improvements and changes.

As an organisation we have been responsive to technology and have used it to shape the way we deliver services, to drive efficiency and improve productivity. The technological environment is changing, and we need to be able to harness technology to continue to work smarter. We must find ways to drive better services at lower cost, which means using new technology to the very best advantage.

With the increased use of technology and larger amounts of information stored comes an increase of the impact created through cyber security threats. We need to ensure that we keep our customers information safe and ensure business continuity through strong management of our information and systems.

This strategy sets out how we will meet our challenges and make the best use of technology to deliver better outcomes for our customers.

Our Digital Landscape

The digital age is changing what we do, how we work and how we communicate. The world has been transformed by the Internet and our customers are embracing technology in all its forms.

.....▼.....

Where are we now?

- We receive over 66,000 visits to our website each month, with over a quarter of a million page views
- Mobile device users make up 47% of our online visitors
- Over 79,000 online transactions are made each year by our customers
- 74 online services are available through our website, including 60 online forms
- In 2016/17 31% of all transactions with the Council were made online.

The drive to make more services available online is already a priority for us and we have made great progress to:

- Make access to our services easier and more convenient
- Improve the customer experience of our online services
- Reduce waiting and be more efficient in dealing with requests
- Meet customer expectations for online services

In 2016/17 we made the following improvements:

- Launched our new website in March 2016, which is designed for all device types, improved the navigation, content and online forms making information easier to find and understand.
- Moved more services online including 'Open Access e-billing' for Council Tax and Business Rates, enabling customers to receive and review their bills online.
- Improved our technical and user Cyber Security knowledge and skills and upgraded our infrastructure to provide enhanced security, flexibility and performance.
- Launched a 'Do It Online' campaign to encourage customers to move to our digital channels.

Digital Council

As a Council, the way we work is changing. Becoming more flexible and working smarter is at the heart of transforming and streamlining our business.

Our aim is to:

- Increase the effectiveness of our activities
- Focus our work on outcomes rather than processes
- Reduce the financial costs of running our business
- Create environments that facilitate collaboration and innovation
- Reduce the environmental footprint of our working practices
- Create an environment which readily allows remote working and reduces the need to be in the office to work

The internet and digital transformation are powerful tools for freedom, innovation, growth and knowledge. The increasing uptake of internet-based technologies has brought, or will bring, significant advantages to our Council, Customers and District. But as our reliance on technology grows, so do the opportunities for those who would seek to compromise our systems and data. Responding to this threat and ensuring the safety and security of our systems is an essential requirement. The benefits of digital will continue if people and businesses feel safe whilst online.



What we will do:

- Improve mobility and flexibility of our workforce through the use of technology; enabling our teams to spend more time adding value to our customers
- Improve the way we handle and use information to make decisions that create better outcomes for our customers
- Reduce the cost of service delivery through the use of technology improving how our systems integrate and reducing duplication in our processes and data collection
- Regularly review cyber security threats, ensuring that our organisation is well protected and that we have strong business continuity plans in place in the event of an issue
- Improve our digital skills across the organisation to make the best use of technology for our staff and members
- Improve our interactions with other authorities, our knowledge sharing and the tools we use for these
- Ensure the management and handling of customer data is compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Digital Customer

We look to provide excellent services to our customers and value for money to the taxpayer. The ways in which customers interact with us are a critical part of the service we provide and need to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

Our customers want and expect access to services using a method and time that suits them. We need to be agile and responsive to customers' needs but also ensure that we deliver services in the most cost effective manner. We must balance treating customers individually and according to need, with continued pressure on finances and a drive to make best use of the most financially efficient methods of contact. Our customers are always at the heart of what we do and therefore improving access to our services through the use of technology is our priority.



We currently provide access to services through a number of existing channels:

- Face to face visits
- Telephone
- Email
- Online services

We know that the demand for digital services is growing and so are the expectations of our customers.

We need to continue to offer contact methods that meet the needs of our customers; however our overheads will reduce and we'll see an improvement in how we deliver services if every one of us adopts this strategy and thinks 'Digital First'.

We will do this by:

- Making digital services available 24hrs a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere with internet access, using any device
- Increasing the number of services available online
- Continuously reviewing the customer experience of our digital services and improving content and navigation so that information is easy to find and understand
- Promoting and encouraging use of our digital services so that our customers know what services are available and how to access them
- Supporting customers to use our digital services effectively

Digital District

As digital is becoming a bigger part of our society, it is important for our District to ensure that it is in the best position to use digital to support growth in a sustainable way.

The UK's digital infrastructure must be able to support the rapid increase in internet traffic predicted, providing coverage with sufficient capacity to ensure data can flow at the volume, speed and reliability required to meet the demands of modern life. This will play a crucial role in ensuring that everyone, wherever they live and however they connect, can make full use of digital services and benefit from participation in the digital economy.

Improved connectivity also increases innovation and productivity across the economy, bringing significant economic rewards and supports the large number of small and medium businesses within the District.

Although we live in an increasingly online world, a significant part of the population remains digitally excluded. One in 10 adults have never used the Internet and many more are missing out on the opportunities the digital world offers. Many jobs have a digital element, and effective digital skills provision is essential to ensure the workforce is prepared for this and future technological changes.

We need to work with our partners to increase the digital capability of those who are digitally excluded, as well as those who are online but lacking the confidence and knowledge to make the most of it.






We will do this by:

- Promoting high speed and reliable broadband development across the District for domestic and business use
- Ensuring that digital infrastructure is considered as part of the development of new communities
- Promoting digital skills for businesses across the District
- Working with education providers to improve the quality of digital apprenticeships

The research suggests that there are four key barriers to digital inclusion, and more than one may affect individuals at any one time:

- Access – the ability to connect to the internet and go online
- Skills – the ability to use the internet and online services
- Confidence – a fear of crime, lack of trust or not knowing where to start online
- Motivation – understanding why using the internet is relevant and helpful

Digital Strategy 2017-21

DIGITAL COUNCIL	DIGITAL CUSTOMER	DIGITAL DISTRICT
<p>Becoming more flexible and working smarter</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve technology to allow our workforce to be more mobile and flexible • Improve the way we handle and use information to make decisions • Reduce the cost of service delivery by improving how our systems integrate and improving processes in data collection • Ensure our organisation is well protected against cyber security threats • Improve the digital skills of our staff and members • Improve how we interact with other authorities, our knowledge sharing and the tools we use for these 	<p>Improving access to services through the use of technology</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure digital services are available 24hrs a day, 7 days a week • Increase services available online • Continuously review the customer experience of our digital services • Support customers in using our digital services • Engage with customers to design, review and improve services • Promote and encourage the use of our digital services • Provide people with access to the internet, technology and equipment and help them to learn the skills they need 	<p>Supporting growth in a sustainable way</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote high speed and reliable broadband development across the district • Ensure the digital infrastructure is considered as part of the development of new communities • Promote digital skills for businesses across the district • Work with education providers to improve the quality of digital apprenticeships 

Delivering the Strategy

This strategy will be delivered through an annual digital plan that will align with the corporate business planning process.

This will identify our key projects for each year of the strategy and will also set out the key indicators designed to measure the success of the Strategy.

Braintree District Council

Causeway House
Bocking End
Braintree
Essex CM7 9HB