Digital Strategy
2017 – 2020

Final Version – 7 August 2017
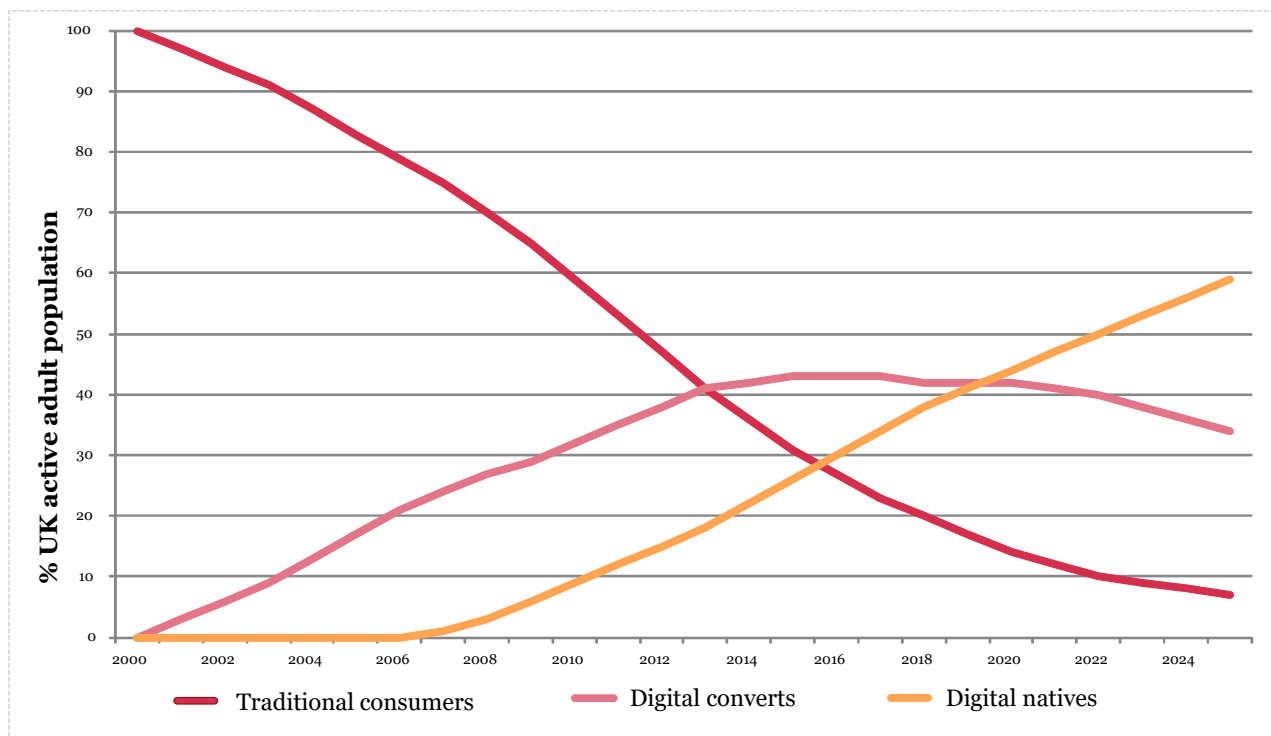
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1. Introduction

As a Council, our operating environment is changing very quickly. 10 years ago, apps didn't exist, the iPhone was born and Facebook/social media were in their infancy. Who knows what the next 10 years will bring?

What is certain is that as a local government, we need to be adaptable to operate in the digital world. We see the digital world as an opportunity, not as a risk. In particular, there are opportunities in relation to:

- how we can improve our operations and governance using digital innovation; and
- how we can connect with our community and make it easier for our community to interact with Council.

As we prepare for the future, it is apparent that the majority of people in the community will become digital natives – community members who grew up with and intuitively use digital technology. We are currently in a transition period.

| Up to 2013 The **Traditional consumers** are the majority | 2013-2019 The **Digital converts** are the majority | 2020 and beyond The **Digital natives** are the majority |

Source – KPMG Research on UK trends in use of Digital Technology

In developing this digital strategy, it is important to note that the strategy is not fixed, nor should it be. The digital world is changing daily. As such, we do not have a fixed strategy but wish to embrace change, identify new opportunities that can be explored and set principles on which decisions can be made.

In short, the purpose of this strategy is to identify how to make the most of opportunities and set up a series of principles to help guide future decisions. As an example, the emergence of block chain digital technology may fundamentally change the way in which commercial and other transactions are undertaken. As yet, it is not known whether this will impact (or more likely, how this will impact) on a local government. Therefore, the key is flexibility.

This strategy identifies:

1. The key principles we will use for future decision making;
2. What we have already done (or working on) in the digital environment; and
3. Some ideas that can be explored further to take advantage of digital opportunities.

For the purposes of clarity, Council's Digital Strategy focuses on Council operations and our relationship with our community. It is not intending to address digital opportunities for our community (e.g. economic development or social capital). These matters are addressed already through Council's Local Economic Plan and Social Strategy.

Some interesting statistics:
- Total dwellings with an internet connection – 80.9%
- Percentage of requests for service that were lodged electronically - 23.6% (average monthly figure based on average % of September 2016 – March 2017)
- Mobile phone ownership – there are 21 million mobile phones in Australia for a population of 24.5 million. Since October 2014, more people use their smart phone to find information than their desktop PC
- Number of Council Facebook users – 5,000

Our Vision

Our Vision for our Council with this Digital Strategy is

Digital innovation – making it easier to do business with and within Noosa Council

> ### *Internet of things*
> *In the short history of the internet, 2017 is a significant year. It is the first year there are more things connected to the internet than people. From street lights to water pumps, from car GPS systems to cameras – the possibilities are endless. This is creating deep connectivity and big data as never seen before*

2. General guiding principles for our Digital Strategy

We will use the following principles to help guide our decision making in relation to actions that we will take under this strategy.

2.1 Principle 1: **Outside/ in**

We will look at our digital opportunities firstly from the perspective of our customers and community, not from an organisational convenience perspective. In other words, we will put the needs of our customers first when looking at digital opportunities.

Example – Our website design should focus on structuring information based on customer needs and expectations, not on our Council structural hierarchy.

2.2 Principle 2: **Outcomes not ownership**

We don't need to own digital technology in order to get the benefits. There are many private sector providers or market-driven solutions which can provide outcomes that will help us achieve this digital strategy. We will focus on achieving the outcomes more so than needing to own the digital technology.

Example 1 – We may be able to use drone technology to assist during disaster events (e.g. inspecting flooded creeks) but this does not mean that we need to own and operate this particular technology. We simply need to have access to it and could put in place appropriate arrangements do so.

Example 2 – It may be tempting to spend time and Council resources to develop a "Noosa Council App". We will focus on what we want to achieve with an App, rather than spending time trying to build one. Where possible, we will rely on existing Apps in the marketplace and use "off the shelf" digital products rather than spending time and money on customisation.

2.3 Principle 3: **One point of truth for data**

We will do everything we can to ensure that our Council data is not fragmented and that we have one point of truth for data. This is important to ensure the integrity of data so that when we make it available to our community, our community can confidently rely on it.

Example - When considering a decision in relation to buying an ICT solution, we will always endeavour to rely on our existing corporate information system to ensure that data is held in one repository.

2.4 Principle 4: **Trial and error in a changing digital world**

We recognise that not everything we may try will be successful in relation to digital innovation. We also recognise and accept that we will learn from our mistakes and not be afraid to try something new. We see the digital world as an opportunity, not as a risk. This mindset will help us be innovative.

Example - If we try a digital project and it doesn't work, we won't be afraid to recognise that it has not been successful. We will learn from the experience and try something else.

2.5 Principle 5: **Value for money**

We recognise that undertaking digital innovations can have significant resource implications for our community, particularly for large complex digital projects. We will make decisions on which digital innovations to undertake based on getting the best value for money for our community. Where possible, we will focus on simple digital solutions to reduce costs rather than expensive digital solutions.

Example – The Snap Send Solve App is a free off-the-shelf App that enables customers to lodge customer requests with Noosa Council including providing photographs and GPS data. This is a simple solution that does not require customisation to meet our Council's needs

2.6 Principle 6: **The role of digital champions**

We recognise that some of our staff are more interested in the opportunity presented in the digital world. We aim to harness that enthusiasm by appointing "digital champions" who can encourage other staff to think about opportunities presented by digital innovation. Our digital champions will help generate and showcase ideas and create opportunities for digital change within our organisation.

Example - The use of the Instagram social media platform by our library services has resulted in a higher level of engagement of younger people with our library services. Local digital champions in our library services branch have used their initiative to develop the Noosa Library Instagram account by focusing on quirky and fun posts to attract younger readers.

2.7 Principle 7: **Turning data into knowledge**

We know that we collect a lot of data. Data on its own is not useful. It is only when that data is turned into information that it becomes valuable. We can gain knowledge from using smart data analytics.

Example – The Local Government Association of Qld is developing a local government data analytics tool called "Sherlock". This is designed to assist councils in analysing multiple data sets to provide intelligence that can be used by Council to improve service delivery.
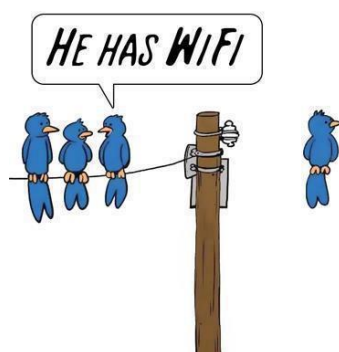
Drones can be used to monitor koala movements or to locate problem weed infestations in remote parts of the Shire

3.   Key Focus Areas

3.1   Openness and Innovation

How digital opportunities can improve Council business processes, how we deliver services and reduce our costs

The key focus areas are:

1.   Using digital solutions to improve service delivery internally and externally.

     Over time, we will migrate Council services onto digital channels to improve accessibility and efficiency, provided it does not disadvantage those most in need of them.

2.   Using digital technology and innovation to drive efficiencies and empower our staff.

     We will use digital tools to share knowledge and remove information silos within our Council resulting in collaborative decision-making, faster access to information, improved customer service, more autonomy for front-line staff and a reduction in the cost of service provision. We will ensure that new technologies are consistent with our Corporate goals and embedded in our business practices to maximise efficiencies.

3.   Adoption of digital technology that supports a more mobile and flexible workforce.

     We will provide digital technology to our staff using cloud and mobility solutions which provides them with more flexibility in how services can be efficiently delivered for our community.

4.   Further development of self-service channels to make it faster for our Noosa community to get what they want, when they need it.

     We will aim to have well-developed self-help service channels and increase customer satisfaction and provide standardised access to Council services and information provided it is user-friendly.

5.   Further automation of internal processes to improve efficiency for our Council staff

     We will aim to focus on reducing the amount of manual processing undertaken by our staff and automate or remove as many non-value adding processes as we can. We recognise that it is critical that our back end systems are robust and able to support automation.

6.   Supporting our environmental goals

     We will aim to use digital technology to support our environmental goals. For example, less paperwork can save printing and reduce carbon emissions.

7.   Ease of use

     We will endeavour to make our digital technology as easy to use as possible for our staff. This will maximise the take up of digital technology.

> *Less than 5% of jobs in the Australian economy could be 100% automated but with the opportunities from digital technology, up to 60% of jobs could be automated by up to 30% thus providing opportunities for either more interesting work or opportunities for productivity savings.*
>
> Source – Paul Higgins – Futurist

What we are already doing	What ideas we have
Data capture in the field using digital technology e.g. asset condition inspections, regulatory parking activities.	Expanding opportunities for data capture in the field to other areas e.g. tree management, waste management.
Using robotic driven cameras to capture the condition of underground drainage systems.	Using drones to capture asset condition information (e.g. Bridge inspections, environmental audits using LiDAR technology).
Social media presence via Facebook and Instagram.	Using Twitter to distribute media releases and other related information. Expanding our social media presence to better engage with our social media audience.
Email newsletters including specific newsletters for target audiences (e.g. community services and libraries).	Enhancing our current product offering to provide better information about Council services.
Service reviews looking at opportunities to improve how we provide a particular service.	Business process reviews looking at how we can use digital opportunities to enhance efficiency.
Using the Council website and other electronic job directories for the purpose of staff recruitment.	Also using LinkedIn for attracting the best possible candidates for staff recruitment.
Basic intranet site to collate Council information for our staff.	Interactive intranet site to enable better access to internal information.
Automating many existing human resources processes (e.g. leave requests, annual performance reviews etc).	Continue to make these digital services as intuitive as possible with all staff having access.
Online forms are available.	Online service requests seamlessly integrate into our systems.

3.2   Connection with our Community

How digital opportunities can help with the way we engage with our community, support customer service and meet customer needs in the digital age

The key focus areas are:

1.   We can use digital technology to continue to improve transparency.

      We will aim to have as much of our Council data as possible open to access by our community. We aim to make our decision making processes as transparent and consultative as possible using digital technology as one platform to improve transparency.

2.   We will use digital media and social channels to drive community engagement and more effective and efficient communication with our community.

      Digital and social channels can provide much quicker and up-to-date information than traditional media and communication channels. Digital channels are often the most effective and transparent options available but we also recognise that they do not replace face-to-face interaction which is important to build relationships with our community.

3.   We will aim to move with the times and live up to our community's expectations in relation to the provision of government services in the digital age.

      Our community is becoming more used to using digital channels and technology in their day-to-day lives. We recognise that one issue for Noosa is that we have a demographic which is older than the Queensland average and that while many of our younger residents are comfortable with digital technology, some of our older residents will still want to interact in a traditional manner. In introducing digital technology, we will aim to make sure that we do not dis-enfranchise sections of our community.
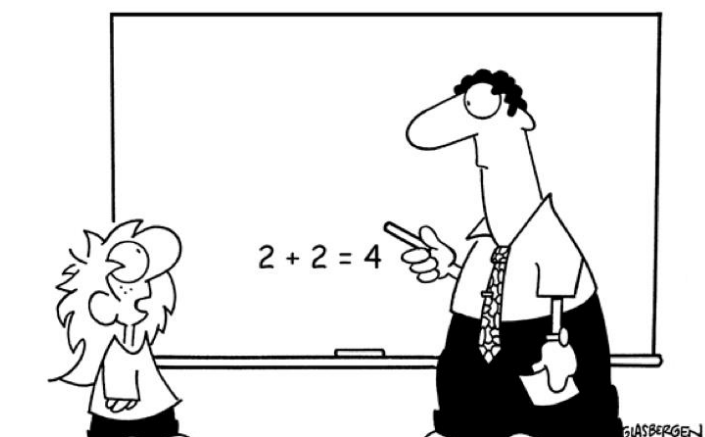
"How can I trust your information when you're using such outdated technology?"

What we are already doing	What ideas we have
Our Council agendas and meeting minutes are available online for our community.	Explore the option of live streaming Council and/or Committee meetings.
Our engagement portal (Your Say Noosa) is well developed as an engagement tool.	More use of videos as an effective communication platform with our community
Automatic phone call back system to speed up customer service.	The option of customer service web chat is explored to enhance the customer experience.
Technology to enable live messaging for on hold calls.	
Use of social media to enable push messaging during natural disasters.	Use of live footage from drones during disaster management to monitor problem areas (such as flooded creeks).
Self-service access to online catalogue and self-check out services at Council libraries.	RFID technology.
Online payments for all types of Council services and payments.	Web based request system that loads the request automatically into Council's request system.
Online community grants portal to assist community organisations lodge and manage their community grants.	
Digital services to the community to improve their knowledge and access to digital services via library programs (eg coding workshops, robot technology etc).	Integration of our social media platforms
Wifi systems installed in Noosa Council buildings.	Updated technology to increase Wifi speed.
PD Online enables customer to see current and recent town planning applications and decisions	A more integrated PD Online to allow customers to get better information about town planning issues and to enable more self-help in determining town planning requirements.

What seemed impossible 20 years ago in terms of digital technology is now common place.

What is possible in the future is up to us

4. How will we know if our Digital Strategy works?

We will know if our Noosa Council Digital Strategy is working if:

- There is a digital culture within the Noosa Council organisation with new digital initiatives coming forward;
- The range of online services to our community has broadened;
- By 2018/19, more than 40% of our customer requests are made via either online services or digital apps;
- Our Council website is more user-friendly;
- Digital technology is being used more widely by our field-based staff;
- We have a more proactive and effective use of social media;
- We have experimented with new digital technologies (e.g. drones) to improve the efficiency of our operation; and
- We have more Council data available freely to our community.

5. Acknowledgements

In preparing this digital strategy, we have had the benefit of reviewing a number of other digital strategies prepared for local governments both in Australia and overseas. In particular, we wish to acknowledge the Digital strategy of Darwin City Council, the Scottish government's "Local government ICT strategy" and Unitywater's Digital Plan for Customer Service.