

DIGITAL APPROACH



Tewkesbury Borough Council
2022 to 2024



Transform
Tewkesbury Borough



Tewkesbury
Borough Council

BACKGROUND

Everyone who interacts with our services online, should be left with the same satisfied feeling that they get when dealing with the likes of Amazon or John Lewis. Since our Business Transformation Team was introduced in 2020, this has been our mission – we want to reshape local government's reputation for online services by putting the customer at the centre of our service design and making sure the 'added extras' (like helpful automated communication and up-front information) are in fact prioritised as fundamentals.

Tewkesbury Borough Council is already pushing boundaries when it comes to its digital approach, and this document commits us to continuing to do this. Since the adoption of our low-code platform Liberty Create in May 2020, we have made a significant impact on our customers' experience online, as well as on streamlining and refining our back-office processes.

Our digital approach is not simply technical. The reason we are seeing success in delivering effective online services is because the council invested in its Business Transformation Team. This team brings together some unique and specialist skills to enable a comprehensive approach to delivering digital change – without which, progress would be difficult. Alongside the technical skills of developers, a business analyst, and a digital and web designer, we also have two programme officers who play a crucial role in ensuring our digital projects are kept on track and deliver the identified benefits. The team also plays a fundamental role in driving a culture shift towards thinking 'digital by preference' for service delivery.

As part of our user-centred and agile approach, we emphasise the importance of the buy-in from services across the council. To help us achieve this, we use a key piece of software Engage, which helps support our collaborative approach to process mapping and is a brilliant visual way of being able to show change. Without the input of our service specialists, our online services will fail to meet the needs of its users - both from a customer point of view as well as an officer and process perspective. Our Business Transformation

Team's approach is to engage fully with everyone it works with, communicating regularly and getting clarity early on in terms of expectation and results.

Corporately, we encourage our staff to adopt a digital mindset, and supporting this our Workforce Development Strategy emphasises the importance of recruiting for a digital environment. Our newly launched online recruitment portal also helps to make the process more appealing for candidates with IT and digital skills.

The drivers for us investing our resource in digital are focused around saving money and streamlining our processes – both of which are being achieved. But a further significant benefit is around shaping our services to meet the needs of our users to significantly enhance their experience with Tewkesbury Borough Council. In turn, by doing so, we are freeing up officer time to deal with more complex cases or with those customers who are not able to communicate with us online.

The way we are approaching digital is being recognised across the country, with interest from councils of all sizes, and the Business Transformation Team is repeatedly asked to present on its approach. Endorsing its success, the Local Government Association noted that this is a team that 'flies the digital flag for district councils'.

OUR DIGITAL DECLARATION

Reflecting our commitment to helping reshape local government digital services, we have signed a government-backed initiative - called the Local Digital Declaration. Joining councils across the country, the declaration is a collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, which includes:

- Designing services that best meet the needs of citizens.
- Challenging the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need.
- Protecting citizens' privacy and security.
- Delivering better value-for-money.

As part of this declaration, we have access to a range of digital skills training and funding opportunities. Evidence of this includes the £150,000 we were awarded in January 2022 following a successful bid to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to develop a proof of concept for a digital planning application tracker.



Reflecting the ambitions set out in the Local Digital Declaration, we have established our own set of principles, and these sit at the heart of the Business Transformation Team's work. We make sure we:

1. Put the customer first – digital by preference but access for all.
2. Make digital services as simple as possible.
3. Support a culture change which embraces new ways of doing things and shows openness to innovative ideas.
4. Have a 'one council' approach so that we are all pulling in the same direction.
5. Use evidence and insights to drive our decision-making.

The ongoing cyber security of the council is an important component of all digital projects. The transformation team works closely with the council's ICT team to ensure that all projects and suppliers have the right standards of security.



OUR DIGITAL PLATFORM

Our previous Digital Strategy focused heavily on securing a new digital platform. We had reached the limits of the capabilities of our previous digital platform, and coupled with the ending of its contract, we carried out a range of market research to identify what solution would fit best with our requirements.

Following a robust procurement process, we awarded the contract to Netcall's Liberty Create - a low-code platform that is highly successful in the private sector, particularly for banks and insurance.

Clear benefits of this platform included:

- Its ability to handle entire end-to-end processes
- Its flexibility for complex processes.
- The approach to customer care.
- The integration into other systems.
- Its online community – an ethos of sharing through accelerators / plugins and best practice through an online forum.
- Its low code functionality with the option to use code where needed.

The first 12 months of the Business Transformation Team's work programme involved moving from our previous platform to Liberty Create. This involved reviewing and improving around 50 processes. Key achievements include:

- ✓ Introducing a new FOI and complaints systems delivering a much nicer customer experience, as well as efficiencies in officer handling time.
- ✓ Achieving a 100% reduction in complaints that are not on our land due to improved mapping data.
- ✓ Reducing missed bin reporting by 50 per cent by giving information up-front to customers.
- ✓ Securing an additional £45,000 of income for garden waste – taking the total income to £1m.
- ✓ Delivering a brand new online bulky waste service – resulting in:
 - 158% increase in bulky waste income
 - 84% increase in bulky waste bookings
- ✓ £45k savings being identified through knocking out modules in existing software – for example in finance, licensing, antisocial behaviour.
- ✓ Launching a new internal dashboard giving officers easy access to their Liberty Create services – where they can find outstanding cases, as well as completed ones.
- ✓ Significantly reducing the time spent reporting on KPIs, thanks to easy-to-access data.



OUR DIGITAL PRIORITIES FOR 2022 TO 2024

Since the creation of the Business Transformation Team, the demands on its skills and capabilities have grown significantly. To ensure the team's priorities are managed appropriately, it works to a live programme of projects, which gets reviewed on a weekly basis. The dates shown are indicative and subject to change depending on incoming demands. Over the next two years, the team has identified the following as priority projects:

Quarter 1: January to June 2022



Paperless billing: To enable our residents to sign up to receiving council tax bills online.



In-house HR: To include the recording of sickness absence, booking leave and recording expenses.



Land charges online: To introduce an online process for land charges applications with back-office system allowing requests to be sent to planning.



Planning application tracker: Following a successful bid for £150,000 of DLUHC funding, the team has until the end of April 2022 to deliver a proof of concept. The tracker will allow applicants, agents and other parties to track the progress of planning applications.



Staff safety register: A system to help manage the register, only giving access to those that need it, while also ensuring it is secure and GDPR compliant.



Room bookings: To introduce an online booking system, which will enable bookings to be made, amended and paid for.



Commercial waste: To support this review with any digital requirements.

July 2022 to December 2022



Digital solutions: To support the development management review



Litter pickers' portal: Introducing an online application process and improved back-office process with Ubico for equipment and insurance provision.



Anti-social behaviour database: A GDPR-complaint online system for recording ASB incidents, linking directly to EH modules in Uniform.



Online licensing: Online applications and payments.



Food premises inspections: This is currently very paper-based, so it will introduce a more digital approach to processing inspections.



Cemeteries: To move to a digital and flexible way of managing the cemeteries processes – removing the need to invoice/chase payments, and to introduce online booking and automated communications.

2023 to 2024 (timescales to be set)



Asset register: Moving from a long and complicated spreadsheet to a more digital and flexible option.



Paperless billing stage 2: To build on the paperless billing functionality, to include change of circumstances, direct debit and applying for empty property discounts.



Property helpdesk: To replace the existing property helpdesk and build it on our in-house platform



Call monitoring portal: To improve the use of our phone system to enable a more joined-up approach to customer care.



Councillors' portal: To create a space for councillors to access helpful information about their ward areas, including planning applications, complaints, license applications and more.



TIC events booking system: To enable customers to book for tickets and events online using a booking facility.



In-cab technology: Supporting Ubico with the investment of in-cab technology.

Recognising the pressure on the Business Transformation Team, a reserve was made available to fund temporary posts to help speed up the delivery of projects. The additional posts will include a junior digital developer, business analyst and user experience specialist and a web and digital designer

GOVERNANCE

The Business Transformation Team is a critical element of ensuring the council delivers its Council Plan priorities, particularly around customer focus. The council's Corporate Leadership team sets the team's priorities, working closely with the Business Transformation Team and lead members. This corporate ownership, alongside regular and effective communication, ensures the purpose of the team and its priorities are understood throughout the council.

Given the competing demands on the Business Transformation Team, it is important to have a transparent and robust process in place for evaluating and prioritising projects as well as monitoring progress. A IT and digital technical board will be established in summer 2022, where any new digital projects will be evaluated to ensure they meet the principles of our digital approach. All relevant projects will also go through the council's project management framework and overseen by the council's Programme Board, with regular reporting to Transform Working Group.