



# Southwark's Digital Strategy

## Your Digital Council

February 2016

# Foreword

“We are delighted to present Southwark’s digital strategy. This document details our ambitions as a digital council and as a digital borough, it explores the value digital can bring and the challenges we will inevitably encounter.

The arguments for going digital are persuasive, especially in the current economic climate. Funding from central government to local government is being drastically reduced. Southwark Council will have to save more than £60million over the next three years. This is a key factor in our realisation that no amount of “salami-slicing” of costs can deliver the services we need. Instead, it requires a radical re-imagining of how we deliver services and manage operations.

If we embrace digital, the potential is enormous: reduced costs, increased efficiencies, better interactions with residents, better use of data and - the great prize - improved outcomes and better lives for the people we serve.

It will take hard work, creativity and cooperation to achieve. The political will is there, the realisation that re-imagining services from a customer perspective will vastly improve what we do is there. We must seize both and make Southwark a truly digital council and borough.”



Councillor Fiona Colley,  
Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Change and Performance



Councillor Radha Burgess,  
Deputy Cabinet Member for Digital  
Strategy

# The case for digital in Southwark

**Our Vision Statement:** “As a digital council we use technology in our operations and service delivery to improve outcomes and the lives of the people we serve.”

## Our Goals

In writing this strategy we had three objectives in mind:

- to create a practical guide that would set out the case for digital and empower our service managers to lead digital service design and transformation
- to inspire and initiate conversations across the council and the borough about our digital ambitions, learning from residents, managers and staff
- to clearly document how we will ensure the digital strategy is delivered and sustained over the coming years. In order for the strategy to succeed, it must be ‘live’ - updated and reviewed at regular intervals.

Southwark’s digital strategy is the first step towards embracing change and re-imagining our attitudes to digital infrastructure and service delivery.

There are major challenges in achieving this vision. Two of the biggest are legacy systems and the scale of change required. We have a sprawling, large portfolio of business applications and data, built in a pre-digital era and not fit to support modern online services; we also need to ensure sufficient focus and prioritisation of the change management effort required to make this a success. Rationalising our business applications, updating technologies and investing in digital training internally and externally are both critical to success.

With this document, we set out how we as a council and borough will address those challenges, and how we will keep up with the changing habits of our residents, their expectations and needs, and help achieve the incredible opportunities digital technology offers to improve our services and the lives of residents.

## What Does Digital Mean?

With a new emphasis on digital, we will use technology to improve our customers’ experience so we get services right first time. By streamlining our services and incorporating digital tools, our customers will move away from traditional methods of contact to digital interactions by preference - known as “digital by default.”

Going digital is less about IT technologies and hardware and more about developing a culture internally and externally that embraces digital as the norm. This includes our approach to using digital tools as part of service design and choosing to use digital as a legitimate way of communicating with our customers. The technologies we use and our ability to access them as an organisation whilst intrinsically linked will be separately addressed by the Technology Strategy, led by IT.

We have identified the two key initiatives in Southwark going digital as becoming a **digital council** and developing a **digital borough**.

In 2014/15 across our three My Southwark Service Points we had 146,743 customer contacts such as helping people with enquiries, payments and documentation and 25,163 self serve interactions with people independently using the digital facilities provided to carry out transactions online. We have seen a steady increase in the use of self serve facilities.

## Becoming a digital council...



Customer led service improvements



Digital culture



Digital inclusion



Continuous improvement

## ....and a digital borough



Digital inclusion

Access to infrastructure



## The cost of customer interactions



Face to face  
£10.53



Managing a phone query  
£6.45



Online self serve  
£0.08

## A Digital Council Is a Better Council

A digital council will mean putting our customers at the centre of all digital change, and developing and maintaining an internal digital culture. We must be supremely aware of the digitally excluded and ensure that there are non-digital channels for those who really need them. We must also continuously improve the digital services we provide.

As a big, complex organisation that provides hundreds of different services to our customers, over time we have developed separate processes and have become used to asking our customers to interact with each service in a different way. The way we have set up our services online makes it very difficult for our customers to get the information they need or to carry out an activity or transaction easily and independently. This inconsistent approach has become increasingly frustrating, confusing and time-consuming for our customers and indeed for us when processing requests and collating customer data. This is something we are actively changing.

We want to inspire confidence in our digital services for all of our customers. We want going online to be the first preference when customers choose to interact with us; for it to be digital by default. 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. We also want to have a consistent look and feel to our digital processes for our internal and external customers. By being bold, re-imagining and redesigning our services, and embracing digital tools and processes, we can improve the customer experience and make financial and resource savings across the organisation. With these savings we can increase our capacity and focus our time and expertise on understanding and helping those who need support to get and stay online. The better our online services are, the faster our customers will move away from choosing traditional methods of contact, like the phone, to digital interactions.

The Government Digital Strategy of 2012<sup>1</sup> set the scene for digital change and has since been the catalyst for digital transformation across central and local government. The Government Digital Service estimate savings between £1.7 and £1.8 billion per year from moving services from offline, face-to-face or phone, to digital channels. A key part of this saving is attributed to transactional services such as online payments, saving both customers time and the government money.

Government cuts to Southwark's budget expected over the next three years

40%



£90m

2011/12 to 2014/15



£31m

2015/16

## Reductions in government funding over the last 5 years

A further impetus for change in Southwark is decreasing budgets from central government and the impending additional 40% cut to our spend over the next three financial years. Since 2011/12 the government has cut Southwark's council budget by £90 million and in 2015/16 we lost a further £31 million. As per the Council Plan we have faced and will continue to face financial cuts, but will not let them limit the scope of our ambition.

In order to do more for less we need to radically rethink how we deliver services, to look for innovative and improved ways of working and reach out to our customers to understand and deliver what they want. We must rethink and diversify how we deliver those services. Our digital capability is central to us creating sustainable and legitimate solutions to the issues we face. We must act now or risk compromising valued and vital front line services to be able to meet budgetary commitments.



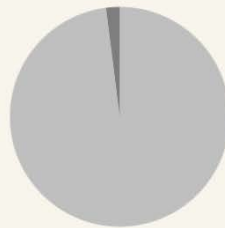
## A Digital Borough Is a Better Borough

A digital borough will mean we will extend our support to the wider community, improve access to infrastructure and actively support people to use it.

At Southwark Council we are committed to delivering a fairer future for all of our residents. Excellent digital services are a central way we can make this a reality. By actively improving our digital offering we will:

- Minimise waste and duplication of internal processes
- Create and maintain a web presence that customers choose to consistently use
- Make greatly needed financial and resource savings across the organisation
- Be able to reinvest savings and resource into supporting the vulnerable in our communities.

### Who's online?



Internet access (98%) No internet access (2%)

17% of residents (40,000) don't feel comfortable performing basic tasks on the internet, like paying a bill, sending an email or finding a piece of information. They're likely to be older, have a disability, council tenants and/or unemployed or low income individuals.



Residents with internet access at home

92%

51%

Residents who've recently called the council or visited a My Southwark service point



29% tried to solve the problem online...



...35% couldn't find what they needed



...and 26% were told to call or sort it out in person

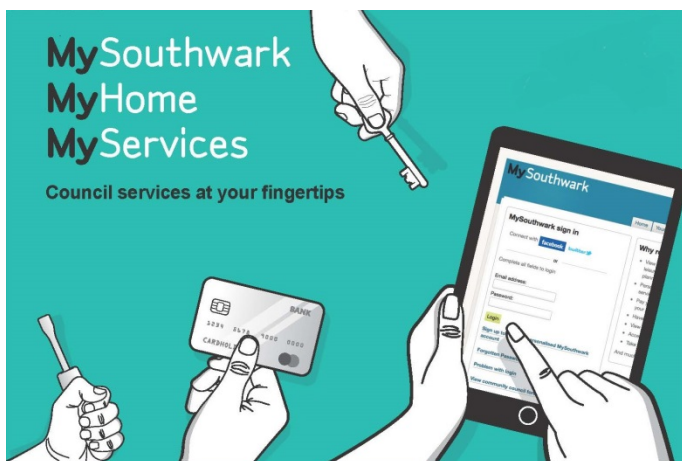
In Southwark we regularly ask our residents about their access to and use of the internet and their preferred method of contact when engaging with the council. These insights help us build a picture of what our customers think of our services. They also help us to identify areas for improvement and changes we can introduce that will knowingly benefit our residents, businesses and communities.

With 17% of Southwark residents not having basic online skills, it is clear that having access to the internet does not necessarily equate with the ability to use it<sup>2</sup>. Four specific groups of people have been identified as being less likely to have access to the internet or have basic online skills:

- residents over 60 years of age
- disabled people
- council tenants
- unemployed or low income households.

These demographic groups are particularly at risk of being digitally excluded, meaning unlikely to access a service provided or requested via the internet. The barrier to inclusion, identified nationally, is largely motivation, as 53% of households without internet access think that they don't need it, and lack of digital skills a secondary reason for not being online.

## Housing Self-Serve: A Case Study



The housing self-serve portal, which launched on 13 October 2014, enables customers to independently raise repairs via self-serve, check individual repair history and review account balances for rent or service charges. Previously these services were only accessible via phone or email which put a huge strain on resources to manage demand.

Whilst portal development has introduced significant improvements for our customers, the project experienced challenges that have taught us valuable lessons in digitising complex services.

## Lessons Learnt

Five key lessons have been learnt from the Housing Self-Serve project that can apply to any future digital change project.

- Determine clear governance, roles and responsibilities from the outset. A Project Manager must be appointed from within the service area to lead change, manage stakeholders and ensure their buy in.
- If working with a back office system, liaise with key stakeholders with detailed understanding who can document current capabilities, data requirements, current processes and any requirements relating to new products.
- Establish quality control measures for existing and future processes. This can minimise the poor quality and inconsistent interactions customers have with a self serve product.
- Fully understand the requirements for the project and research what other suppliers have to offer before committing to purchasing a product. Many of our back office systems are complex and it may be that there is not an off the shelf product that will link in easily. Understand what the new requirements are before purchasing something as amendments could be made to an existing system at a lower cost.
- Understand security requirements for any systems. Engage with IT as early on as possible into a project to understand what security checks will need to be carried out for the system, by whom, at what point in the project and how long they take to avoid potential delays.

## Response

Customer response to the portal has been very positive, with users saying that they are 'very impressed with the new system', and customer satisfaction is higher for the online self-serve portal than via email or phone. The challenge now is to encourage widespread take up of the online portal, particularly with council tenants. Despite continuous active promotion we are not seeing take-up by those in social housing.



## Benefits to customers

- Customer satisfaction has improved and fewer formal customer complaints have been made
- Convenience for the customer: the service is accessible online 24/7.

## Benefits to Southwark

- Introducing the self-service portal enabled us to phase out non-emergency repairs calls during out of hours and all rent-related calls to the Contact Centre

- Set a precedent for potential customer self-serve interactions across Southwark
- Substantial contribution to expanding council's digital offering and shifting customers away from traditional methods of contact
- Streamlined back end processes as self serve requests require less time/skill to process.

**Between April 2014 and March 2015, 497,658 calls were answered at the Contact Centre**



# How we will become a digital council

As we move services online, we need to completely redesign how services are delivered from the customer's perspective, to become truly digital rather than an online simulation of existing paper and manual processes. We are examining our current ways of working, the back office systems and how information is handled.

Many of the services we provide are physical products such as recycling collections or care for vulnerable adults. These may not be digital products but the processes that enable someone to receive these services can become digital to the fullest possible extent. These can include online booking of appointments, digital payments, online application forms and access to customer profile information in My Southwark.

We will enable the digital by default approach by:

- Making services accessible online 24 hours a day on any device including smartphones and tablets, so that applications and payments can be made at any time, anywhere, in a way that suits our customers. This is keeping pace with other modern businesses and therefore with our customers' expectations of accessing services and products.
- Providing pertinent advice and information that is succinct. We will review website content and use customer insight tools to constantly improve the information, empowering customers to easily find what they need on the website to carry out a transaction. This will reduce the need to phone or email the council.
- Diverting calls away from the contact centre and face-to-face interactions at the Service Points with easy to use digital services, saving money, time and officer expertise.

To make this happen, we need to act as a Digital Council, and in embracing this challenge we will:

- Establish a standardised approach to digital service redesign
- Utilise corporately endorsed digital tools: online application forms (eforms), digital payments, CRM and My Southwark
- Streamline internal, manual processes and scrutinise back office systems
- Make best use of IT infrastructure to enable sharing of non sensitive data across departments
- Share our experiences and lessons learnt from engaging with customers and from enabling change.



## Who is managing the transformation?

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance, the Deputy Cabinet Member for Digital Strategy and the Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation are leading digital transformation for the organisation. The Transformation team (in Housing and Modernisation), will coordinate organisation wide digital change as a Digital Transformation Programme whilst providing support and expertise to design and implement digital service improvements, realise efficiency savings and improve customer experiences.

The Digital Strategy for Southwark is closely linked to the 2012 Customer Access Strategy where we first articulated the need to improve the way customers access services, change how we engage with customers and invest and interact with technologies to the benefit of the organisation and our customers. The principles outlined in the Customer Access Strategy as below are still applicable.

- **Taking responsibility for customer service** because an efficient, effective local authority relies on customer focus being embedded at all levels of the organisation
- **Getting it right first time** because customers rightly expect that basic enquiries can be resolved correctly at the first point of contact
- **Digital by default** because digital council services are designed to take advantage of digital data to optimise, transform and create new and better ways of providing services in ways that customers now demand and expect
- **Treating everyone with respect** because we have committed to treating our residents as we would want members of our own family to be treated.

## The challenges we face

It is clear what we need to do and exactly why we need to do it but we must recognise that this will not be easy and that there are certain challenges we will encounter.

Councillors and officers alike are familiar with the difficulties and frustrations accessing and utilising IT infrastructure. These issues will need to be addressed so we can build trust in our technologies and a greater confidence that will enable us to create reliable digital services for all of our customers and staff. A Technology Strategy will be published, outlining our plan for addressing existing issues and future-proofing our infrastructure whilst considering the ambition of the Digital Strategy.

For many Local Authorities, it is commonplace to find a large number of business systems holding key customer datasets, each designed many years before the technologies and concepts of digital were known. This digital way of working will be different, but by creating an organisation-wide set of standards and key principles to help introduce change, we can ensure that services are supported and that our customers experience consistency and high standards from every council interaction.

Reflecting on the significant challenges there have been with IT system reliability, it is natural that there will be some reluctance to further trust technology systems to handle key business processes. In addition, digitally designed processes will be significantly different from the way services are currently delivered, so there will be significant hurdles to overcome to make this change successful. To achieve this change, we will need to recreate our organisational culture, gain buy-in and a sense of urgency in order to introduce change that will have positively impact our customers. Just as we want our customers to choose digital, we want staff to embrace digital as a new way of thinking to be able to provide better services more efficiently. It is crucial we get our staff excited by digital opportunities. We have the expertise and knowledge within the organisation to support this culture change with training, sharing of experiences and best practice and by establishing a robust governance to ensure that these principles work for us.

Research suggests that a face to face interaction with a customer can cost a local authority £10.53, managing a basic phone query can cost £3.00 and a customer interacting online or carrying out a transaction £0.08.<sup>3</sup>

# Southwark’s four digital principles

Our digital strategy will be underpinned by four principles.

These principles will guide the way we work and help us deliver the changes we make as an organisation.

**Principle 1 - “Putting the customer at the centre of digital change”**

Many of the ways we work as an organisation have been designed to reflect our internal structures and reflect processes that have built up over time. We will change this by putting our customers at the centre of the way we work. We will put ourselves in the customer's shoes and re-imagine services around them, using digital tools to make their experience of interacting with us smoother and quicker. We will develop relationships with our customers where they feel confident that the feedback they provide will be acted upon.

**Principle 2 - “Putting digital ways of working at the heart of our organisational culture”**

We will change the way we think of ourselves as an organisation by embedding digital ways of working at all levels of our organisation. We will build our digital capability, encouraged by our senior managers, by investing in our infrastructure and the skills of our workforce. Wherever possible, we will make digital ways of working part of everyone’s day jobs and cultivate an environment of digital self-confidence and capability. We will provide a digital infrastructure that staff can rely on to make their jobs easier.

**Principle 3 -“Ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits of digital change”**

As we change the way we work, we will ensure that our customers are not left behind and unable to access the services and support they need. We recognise that the most vulnerable in our community may need extra help. By doing things more efficiently through digital, we can make best use of our time and expertise, reinvesting it into supporting the vulnerable of our community in accessing our services.

**Principle 4 - “Committing to continuously improve our services”**

We will take an iterative approach to maintaining and improving our services by making small and incremental improvements. Instead of completely rethinking our approach every few years, we will regularly check in with our customers and obtain feedback so we can continuously improve our services. In doing so we can save money by minimising the need to overhaul and redesign our services from scratch every few years.



# Our priority areas

At Southwark we have identified five priority areas to focus on that will enable digital change - a transformed website, best use of our infrastructure, business intelligence and analytics, digital inclusion and digital communication.

## Priority 1 - A transformed website

We will completely redesign and modernise Southwark's website following the principles and standards set by the Government Digital Service. Thanks to feedback from customers, we recognise that the design and structure of our current website can be counterintuitive and confusing, often reflecting our internal organisational structures and service names. It's not very user-friendly. Currently we have a significant number of web pages that display expired information, irrelevant or duplicated content or broken links to web pages that no longer exist. We will create a website that is both well designed and well used, rooted in the digital principles of this strategy.

The website redesign is all-encompassing; from rewriting web content on every web page through to renaming service areas based on what our external customers call them.

**Transaction-led** – Our new website will be a transactional led website with the emphasis on easy access and use of self-service facilities such as online application forms and online payments.

**Up-to-date and relevant information** - We will continue to provide key information but really analyse its purpose ensuring that we are not duplicating what other websites publish (such as the NHS) and that key words and phrases are at the top of each page, in clear view, where possible. Services will receive training and guidelines on how to write engaging information for the web and where key facts should be placed on a web page to help customers access it quickly. All web page content will be regularly reviewed, maintained and owned by the service and the use of data analytics tools will confirm to us what customers want to read and what is no longer applicable.

**Mobile and tablet-enabled** - The design principles for the redesign are mobile and tablet led as many of our customers use them to access the Southwark website, so information and transactions will look and work as easily as they would on a desktop.



**Three clicks** - Our aim is for customers to access what they want from our website in just three clicks. To support this, we'll create a search function that will be a prominent part of all our web pages to help customers access what they want quickly.

**Rethinking the way we view success** – We will adopt new success criteria for our website. Previously we valued how long customers stayed on a webpage or how much time they spent viewing the website altogether. This will become obsolete. Instead we will use analytical tools to see how quickly transactions were carried out and how little time customers spent on web pages. This will demonstrate to us that the information we are providing is succinct and relevant, enabling the customer to transact with us efficiently and confidently. Any web pages that do not meet the criteria can then be amended to meet customer need or removed.



In 2015 we had 1,127,494 views of the website from mobile phones.

In 2015 we had 2,793,327 views of the website from desktops.

**Secure and personalised customer accounts** – We will increase the functionality of My Southwark, our secure personalised customer account. My Southwark currently enables customers to report repairs online, make enquiries, view housing rent or library account details, view localised services such as nearby libraries and leisure centres and have personalised home pages presenting information expressly wanted. It can also pre populate application forms, remembering key pieces of information that do not need to be re-keyed on multiple occasions.

My Southwark is a popular and well used digital tool but our aspirations for its development are greater. We will increase our ability to personalise content and actively push pertinent information to My Southwark users. Through tailoring our email communications in particular we want to enhance and improve the experience of interacting with us.

“I found applying for my Blue Badge much easier than it was a few years ago. I just had to go online to apply, which was really easy and the badge came much quicker than in the past. I also like that I can now check my rent account and council tax bill online too.”

***Philippe, Borough and Bankside***

As of the end of 2015 we had over 120,000 My Southwark customer accounts.

**Putting customers in charge** - We want our customers to become more like partners and not passive recipients of our services. Our website and My Southwark improvements particularly will support customers to initiate service requests, manage communications and receive regular electronic updates and notifications from us at regular intervals until a service has been delivered. We will also encourage and enable customers to find the information they need on our website without having to call the contact centre or get in touch with us by other means. This way of thinking will enable us to consider how data is open and best used across the organisation internally and how pertinent information is open and available to our customers at their convenience with minimal officer involvement.

For example, instead of someone sending in a Freedom of Information request which an officer collates data on and responds, instead we can make this information accessible and readily available to view on the website.

## Priority 2 – Making best use of digital infrastructure

Redesigning our services around the customer is a key part of our digital strategy. To enable this we will challenge and review our business applications, the systems that hold information about our customers, record details of transactions and account balance information. We currently have a high number of systems with many services having systems tailored to their specific service area only.

**Auditing our existing business applications -** When considering how an existing service can include digital processes and tools we will not be bound by existing technologies and applications. We will audit our existing systems to gain a clear understanding of the capabilities of the system and if it is being used to its fullest potential. With this we will also review our processes that incorporate use of systems to see where there is waste or duplication. We expect that significant financial savings can be realised through the phasing out and decommissioning of some of our back office systems and processes, and the introduction of alternative systems could bring about resource efficiencies. A beta approach to introducing digital services will be supported. This is a phased roll out of a change so customers can try the new product and give feedback so the project can be amended iteratively. This is particularly useful if the changes are very different to the previous way of working or if the scale of the project is quite large, benefitting from a break down into sizeable changes.

**Creating successful digital channels our customers want to use** – Channel Shift relates to customers moving from one method of contact, largely traditional, to another digital method and preferring to use it, not reverting back to previous behaviours. For the digital services we have already set up and those that we will imminently we will review on a case by case basis whether to switch off those old channels. To ensure that our digital channels are successful we need to ensure they are well-designed, as simple as possible and intuitive. A Channel Shift toolkit will be published to assist in getting customers to use digital processes that are either readily available or soon to be introduced.



**An agile approach to procurement** – Part of providing excellent and innovative digital services for our customers will involve us adopting an agile approach to procurement that will encourage flexible relationships with technology providers. This could mean entering into contracts with shorter time frames, working more easily with multiple suppliers at the same time, each with their own specialism. Importantly for our customers this could put us in a better position to keep pace with technological innovation and able to meet demand by commissioning new platforms quickly and at competitive costs. We have already started to introduce this new approach by engaging with smaller suppliers across the architectural supply chain and widening our pool of contacts in the sector, so we can find the right company at the right price not just automatically reverting to the big companies we are so used to working with.

**The best tools for the job** – A key component to modernising processes will be to make sure our staff have the best business and productivity tools for the job. We need to streamline the applications used and re-engineer our processes to ensure the most efficient handling of tasks.

## Priority 3 – Smarter ways of working through business intelligence and analytics

Each service collates customer data in some format and by making better use of data analytics tools we can gain a greater insight into customer need. We can see what information people access through our website, what people are looking for when using a search engine, if a desktop or smart device is used, if they are a new user or what the demand is for our online application forms or digital payments. For any digital service improvement introduced the collation and analysis of data is crucial for successful customer take up. Using intelligence collated from the website, social media, application forms, surveys or complaints can enable us to better commission services our customers want and support continuous improvement in service delivery. Where we do not collate comprehensive data it is important to determine exactly what information on the customer base would help manage future service demand and put measures in place to collect, manage and share these data insights.

There are many data silos in Southwark. We want to be a high performing organisation, getting the best value and making the best use of our data so we are looking into mechanisms that will enable us to extract, analyse, share and store data securely.

**Reducing manual processes-** The back office predominantly refers to formalised systems that store customer profile data such as payments, contact information and details on what service was requested. The middle office on the other hand refers to any manual processing of information, requests and payments by an officer in one or multiple teams in order to be able to provide the service requested. We often have to manually enter data into one or more back office systems to store the customer's information as well as respond to customer queries either by phone or email. By joining together technical capabilities and systems we can minimise the need for manual intervention when providing a service.

We will critically analyse our middle office functions to determine if digital tools can carry out such functions, increase automation and transfer customer data directly to a back office system. For example, by introducing a customer appointment booking interface online that is directly linked with the back office system of the service, we can negate the need for customers to call and book an appointment.

The results of increased automation in the middle office are streamlined processes that are easier for customers to access and officers to process, reduction of waste and duplication, and the delivery of significant financial savings.

**A single view of the customer-** We will use software to enable us to take a single view of the customer and

collect pertinent data to enable us to respond to customer queries and requests in a joined up manner.

We currently use CRM (Customer Relationship Management) in our customer service centre to log customer service requests that come in via phone, email or online application forms. It acts as the workflow management system linking service tickets to the correct back office system or to a contractor to process.



CRM plays a crucial role in how we engage and interact with our customers to provide services. A CRM IT system enables us to store data on an individual customer basis, to have one view of all their interactions with us and use the analytical functions. It is one of the key digital tools we will look to expand use of in order to realise efficiency savings and support the provision of great customer interactions with us such as direct appointment booking. As more services become set up to utilise our CRM IT system and collect data this will provide an invaluable customer insight which will enable services to respond to demand and make more focussed decisions. The benefits of a CRM IT system are the opportunities for increased automation and best use of officer time as oversight of service requests are provided entirely in one system, minimising rekeying, duplicated or incorrect information.

**Enhancing our digital skills –** We are committed to cultivating a digital culture and creating a buzz in Southwark around digital transformation. This is an exciting period of change and we want everyone at all levels of the organisation to feel empowered and motivated by what we are looking to achieve. In creating this stimulated and supportive environment we will look to each service area to identify a Digital Champion, or more than one if there is interest. These Champions will be a key contact for colleagues to discuss digital projects and approaches with who may have an interest in technology, gadgets or data. By having an informal network of Digital Champions we will be able to gauge appetite for change across the organisation and potentially any opportunities for collaborating on projects.

Our more formal approaches will be to create useful and interesting training sessions, toolkits and opportunities to share learning and knowledge across Southwark and with our counterparts externally. Our first activity is to assess what digital skills and readiness we have as an organisation and target training and support to address any skills gaps. As digital confidence in individuals and teams across the organisation grow we will look to support areas that are more hesitant, ensuring that no service gets left behind.

It will be important for us to promote our digital ambitions and culture particularly when recruiting new people to Southwark. We want people who will embrace our approach to digital and have the skills and behaviours we need to make things happen. Our recruitment competencies and behaviours will be updated to reflect our ambition and principles and ensure we attract high calibre candidates who can see themselves taking an active role.

**It costs £6.45 to manage a query in the contact centre.**

**To manage a stage one complaint costs between £200-£250. From April to September 2015 we had 4672 stage one complaints.**



## Priority 4 - Ensuring digital inclusion

Work to minimise digital exclusion in Southwark started in 2013 with focus groups set up to gather resident views on what problems to solve, and how best to solve them. With further workshops and discussions in 2014 we concluded that the problems to focus on were:

- how to stop people being left behind by the fast moving shift to online communications and transactions
- support the empowerment of individuals and communities to develop digital skills
- enabling the council to modernise approaches without making life difficult for people with minimal or no digital skills.

To help solve these problems we decided to set up volunteer Digital Champions based in and from local communities who are able to train other residents to learn basic digital skills and to develop confidence in using the internet to access council services. We are setting up 15 local Digital Inclusion Hubs, with 67 trained and supported volunteer digital champions who will work to support 500 new learners to develop digital skills and we intend to expand the opportunity to even more of our residents.

The digital inclusion project will keep pace with and coordinate with all new digital initiatives in Southwark, starting with:

- Proposals to create a single digital platform for health services, potentially linked to My Southwark, lead by the Clinical Commissioning Group membership and Southwark's Engagement and Equalities team.
- An EU funded project to create new community engagement web tools, led by Southwark's community engagement team.
- The move towards universal credit online services.

As an organisation we must focus on making digital services for the majority of our customers to access independently but also devise inclusive manual approaches and processes for the vulnerable and less digitally able in our communities. Services must promote and support appropriate digital transitions in order to realise much needed financial and resource efficiencies. If a digital service is being developed then it needs to be well researched in terms of the customer base and take up otherwise costs will be incurred elsewhere to enable customers having access to the service.



**"I have learnt computer skills from scratch when I started my job in a local community project which is also a digital inclusion hub. I started with learning how to turn on a computer. I can now send emails, pay my council tax online and report repairs to the council online. I have cut down on having to use the phone to do all those things I can now do online. My family are so surprised, and now they say I am a wizard for learning all of this."**

***Kathleen, Bermondsey***



## Priority 5 - Increasing pride and engagement in the borough and with the council via digital communication channels

We want Southwark to be a place where everyone can access services, find the information they need, take part in conversations and share their views. We must ensure that people across the borough and of all backgrounds can be a part of this. We want to use our channels to not just deliver services but also emphasise our community; to provide our residents with the means to be active citizens who take responsibility for future of their communities and borough.

Success means an improved reputation and specific goals being achieved, such as residents knowing to send in school admissions forms on time or getting more people using our free swim and gym offer. Our challenge is to continue develop our existing channels, along with new ones, to maximise the reach and impact of our messages, encourage behaviour change and increase involvement from residents.

**Digital marketing** - Digital channels are, along with print and face-to-face marketing, a low-cost, high-impact way for us to share relevant, timely information and issues with our residents, issues and information they potentially would not otherwise be aware of, for a low cost. Digital is a major element of our marketing, including both owned and paid for, and is a key channel for us to inform residents about events, services and campaigns. We have 14,000 followers on Twitter, one of the highest levels of resident engagement in London.

Targeted, paid digital advertising allows us to reach those residents who do not follow the council, either through social advertising or digital display and increasingly a significant part of campaign budgets are going towards digital. We are developing in in-depth digital communications strategy to maximise opportunities and future proof our communications.

**Conversation** – The evolution of social channels means that residents are increasingly expecting a conversation, rather than just to be informed. We should maximise the opportunity for user involvement to generate content on issues that resonate with them. We can be targeting posts towards topics that invite discussion and which show us to be taking the lead; we can steer the conversation but we need to be brave about the topics we bring to the table and how open we are to differing views.

**Evaluation** – Southwark will investigate tools social media analysis, prioritisation and routing. For example, analysing the sentiment and content of posts and then reporting this activity to the relevant service areas, along with adjusting social media posts to reflect resident interests.



## Digital Services in a Traditional Environment: Children's and Adults'

Southwark's Local Offer website provides online information about the services and opportunities available locally to children, young people and families. The service is primarily for those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) from ages 0 to 25 and is a statutory requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Southwark Information and Advice team provides a range of services to support parents and young people and actively develops, coordinates and updates content on the Local Offer website.

There are more than 100 statutory items that must be included in the offer. Southwark's offer includes ideas and feedback taken from consultation with several hundred of parents and young people during the design phase.

- In the first year (2014/15) the total number of pages viewed was 39,886
- Both Twitter (179 followers) and Facebook (67 likes) accounts have been created to promote the local offer and provide easy access to information, advice and support



### Benefits to Customers

- Access to services and information is now fairer. Prior to having all services online and in one place, customer access was reliant upon meeting the right person to suggest what is available locally.
- The online resource is available **24/7** which ensures that parents or young people who are studying or working full time have access to information, advice and support at any time.
- The offer provides a comprehensive platform to ensure all parents and young people can access **real time** information about events and changes to services or new services as they happen.

Customers can find a range of provisions that they can access **for free** or at cost.

The forum section of the local offer website gives customers the opportunity to engage in strategic planning and influence the design of SEND services.

### Benefits to Southwark

- The analytics and feedback process informs our commissioning team what services and support our customers want. For the first time this information can be used to inform planning and in the joint commissioning cycle.
- For the first time staff across services working with families and young people have access to the most up to date, accurate information regarding services and advice. This ensures consistency and more efficient communication across teams.
- The online service encourages customers to seek information and advice independently. If a customer calls the service an email is sent with a link to the appropriate information on the website to encourage them to check online first next time.
- Direct feedback and interaction with families and young people helps us to decide what families want and need
- As a proportion of customers are able to access the local offer on line this leaves more time for our staff to focus on delivering face to face services to the most vulnerable and hard to reach families.
- This approach ensures that the council is compliant with the Children and Families Act 2014.

### Digital Inclusion

- The Team has 3 drop in sessions per week at Sunshine House for customers who prefer to speak to someone face to face. Last year over 1,000 people were seen at the drop in. In addition we offer 1:1 booked appointments which include breakfast and after hours meetings for working parents, meetings at schools and at home where a customer is unable to leave the house.
- The Team provides a phone service available 9-5 daily. The team will access the local offer on behalf of the customer and provide the information they require.
- We have prioritised promoting the local offer to all staff working with young people and parents with SEND so that they can access the offer on behalf of the parent/young person they are working with.
- Where possible we are encouraging and modeling using the local offer so that customers can access their own information. We are piloting a project with year 11 pupils in selected schools to encourage them to use ICT and other methods to seek their own information, advice and support.

# Our Next Steps

Southwark's digital strategy is the impetus for digital change in Southwark Council and the foundation for all service design activities. It is a live document that will be regularly reviewed and amended to reflect not only our on-going ambition and priorities but also our technological capabilities.

In order to promote and support digital delivery in Southwark we will carry out a number of key activities and establish a governance and performance framework that will create uniformity across the organisation, measure success and customer satisfaction.

The initial areas of focus to achieve by the summer of 2016 are:

- Broadening the existing customer experience framework of measuring channel shift to all high volume transactional services. Measuring the success of digital change could include the proportion of services offered online, volume of successful transactions carried out online versus traditional methods or the degree of resource efficiencies realised.
- Develop robust governance to review and challenge service process, reinforcing the digital strategy, tracking progress and supporting transformative digital change.
- Establish a network of digital champions across the organisation to act as a reference point and advisor for change.
- Start digital knowledge sharing events across the organisation, including training, workshops, informal lunchtime learning, service reviews or digital rapid improvement events.
- Expand the current Digital Transformation Programme to capture projects and digital action plans across the entire organisation. This includes establishing a new Digital Transformation Board.
- Publish a series of toolkits to support service managers in designing and introducing digital processes, utilising business intelligence and applying robust monitoring and evaluation techniques.
- Bring together digital marketing campaigns encouraging customers to make best use of their MySouthwark account and to be aware of new digital services.
- Schedule the next review of Southwark's digital strategy to ensure that it continues to reflect the needs of our customers and the ambitions and capabilities of the organisation in line with other relevant strategies including the technology strategy.

- Attract digital business to Southwark through lobbying for high speed broadband throughout the whole borough, explore options to deliver high speed Wi-Fi across the borough and marketing Southwark as the best place to set up for digital businesses.

There are many digital projects underway in the council and these will become better supported under the umbrella of the digital strategy principles and will benefit a large number of customers. The initial next steps are to complete the following digital projects during the spring of 2016:

- Launching the first phase of the new website (beta), with a specialist web team established and a programme of continuous review commenced.
- Improving the eforms and portals for environment (waste) requests, so that these are easier for customers to submit online.
- Completing the next phase of the housing repairs online project, which will allow customers to manage their appointments online (repairs can already be requested and tracked).
- Simplifying licence applications to be eforms instead of pdf forms (removing the need to download print, complete by hand and post).

# Glossary

**Customers:** At Southwark our customers are anyone who interacts with us in any manner. This can include residents, businesses, community groups, councillors or officers across Southwark Council.

**Digital tools:** Corporately endorsed pieces of infrastructure that improve the process of receiving and storing customer information digitally. This includes eforms, digital payments, My Southwark and CRM.

**Eforms:** Online application forms that enable services to accurately store customer request information using pre-set fields as chosen by the service area based on the customer base and their requirements. This minimises the need to use unstructured emails that can often initiate lengthy email communications to resolve customer queries.

**Digital by Default:** A digital service that is so compelling, accessible and easy to use that customers elect to use it as a matter of first preference, over and above any other method available to them. This is also sometimes known as digital by default when taking a more service oriented approach.

**Digital payments:** A digital tool in Southwark that enables customers to pay for specific services online using a debit or credit card on completion of an online form. Customer transaction data is then sent to the service to notify that a successful payment has been made. Direct Debits, Standing Orders and direct transfers into a bank account such as BACS can also be seen as a digital payment as funds are received electronically and minimal or no officer involvement is required to complete the transaction.

**Digital transaction:** Any service that allows the exchange of information, money, permission, goods or services between Southwark Council and our residents, businesses or communities.

**Digital infrastructure:** A broad reference to existing digital tools, capabilities and frameworks that we operate within.

**IT Infrastructure/platforms:** A broad reference to existing IT tools including hardware, software, networks and facilities that are in place in order to develop, test, deliver, monitor, control or support IT services.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Government Digital Strategy: November 2012

<sup>2</sup> Digital Exclusion in Southwark: 20 March 2015

<sup>3</sup> Channel Shift: Realizing the Benefits, GovDelivery

