

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET MEMBER

SOCITM BETTER CONNECTED OUTCOME & DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on the recent SOCITM Better Connected national survey of local authority websites and to outline proposed next steps.

1.2 The key points in this report are:

- A national survey of 400+ local authority websites has been completed
- The council secured an improved rating achieving 3 stars out of 4.
- A digital development plan for 2014/15 is proposed for approval

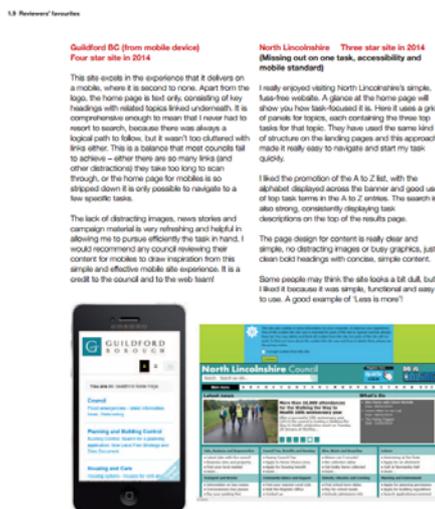
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1. The SOCITM Better Connected Survey is the only independent survey of all UK local authority websites. Each council is awarded a rating from one to four stars with four being the highest. In 2013 our rating slipped from three stars to two stars.
- 2.2. The recent “Enhancing the Web Channel” programme of improvements to the council’s website was informed by the outcomes of the 2012 SOCITM Better Connected survey and an understanding of customer needs. The aims of the programme were to improve customer access to services and information by using a “top task” approach combined with grouping services logically around customer use rather than by council structure and improved search functionality.
- 2.3. Moreover, in response to a 50% growth in website visits, steps were taken to ensure that the website automatically optimised for any type of end-user device, including mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets.
- 2.4. The new website was launched 31 October 2013. It was reviewed by SOCITM on 3 December 2013. At that time certain area of content were still being created and improved by service area web authors given its recent launch.
- 2.5. The SOCITM Better Connected 2014 survey results were published 3 March 2014. We were awarded three stars for 2014 (previously 2 stars in 2012).

2.6. The North Lincolnshire Council review summary stated:

“This really is a very good site. The mobile version was easy enough to use and the desktop site really promotes top tasks, which makes it quick and easy to navigate. It appears to be a new site and so there are some issues with dead links between the 3rd party systems (like the mapping system). Most of the tasks were easy to carry out, with logical journeys and a good range of clear, concise content. There were a couple of tasks that scored badly because of missing content (register a food business and care homes task). However, the quality of the site is really good and hopefully these issues will be ironed out in the coming weeks. No hesitation in scoring a 3 and recommending for 4 stars if it passes the threshold tests.”

2.7. Our website was also included in report as one of the reviewer’s five favourite UK council websites of the 400+ that were evaluated:



“I really enjoyed visiting North Lincolnshire's simple, fuss-free website. A glance at the home page will show you how task-focused it is. Here it uses a grid of panels for topics, each containing the three top tasks for that topic. They have used the same kind of structure on the landing pages and this approach made it really easy to navigate and start my task quickly.

I liked the promotion of the A-Z list, with the alphabet displayed across the banner and good use of top task terms in the A-Z entries. The search is also strong, consistently displaying task descriptions on the top of the results page.

The page design for content is really clear and simple, no distracting images or busy graphics, just clean bold headings with concise, simple content.

Some people may think the site looks a bit dull, but I liked it because it was simple, functional and easy to use. A good example of "less is more" !”

2.8. The website was also identified a range of good practice:

- Navigation of “Top Tasks”
- 4th highest rated council from the 21 within the Yorkshire & Humber region in terms of volume of visits per head of population.
- No broken links were found on the website.

2.9. The report also identified a number of opportunities for improvement. There is a need for continuous improvement to maintain the momentum from the 2014/15 programme of enhancements in order to continue to meet the customer expectations and to assist the council in making channel shift related savings, including initiatives contained within the approved budget. A proposed Digital Development Plan is attached at Appendix A.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 **Option One: Approve the 2014/15 Digital Development Plan.** The programme has been developed using lessons learnt within the 2013/14 web programme, learning from the SOCITM Better Connected 2014 report, customer feedback and established best practice.
- 3.2 This plan sets out Digital related activities within Digital Services, Business Support (eg. Channel Shift and Digital Inclusion) and across the council (eg. the Do It Online Campaign) into a single coherent vision. The key themes include:
- Service Specific Microsites
 - Innovation (*with national groups, other local councils and “digital” vendors*)
 - Data Integration & Knowledge Reporting (*eg. B.I. and Open Data*)
 - Channel Shift (*short term evidence lead / longer term BI focused programme*)
 - Digital Inclusion
- 3.3 It also includes a web-development programme, key themes include:
- Accessibility
 - Search Engine Optimisation
 - Single Sign-on for Website & Self Service Portal
 - Mapping
 - Operator Webchat
 - Website Design
 - Enhanced Customer Journeys
 - Implementation of a Centralised Content Model
- 3.4 **Option Two: Do nothing** – without further work the council website will not continue to meet customer expectations and as such the council will not be able to realise the necessary channel shift savings to enable continued service delivery with reducing operational budgets.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option One: Approve the 2014/15 Digital Plan:

Advantages

- Provides a joined up approach for all Digital activities throughout the council
- Identifies the need for all work streams and how they contribute to a wider aim
- Ensures opportunities for cross service working are identified and exploited to provide the best possible outcomes for the council and our customers
- Identifies opportunities to access or deliver services in new ways
- Further improves the customer experience
- Further improves the website functionality
- Provides an improved model for website content that will deliver improved customer journeys
- Addresses known issues

Disadvantages

- None identified

4.2 Option Two: Do Nothing

Advantages

- Requires no resource
- Requires no additional cost

Disadvantages

- Will not meet our customers needs
- Will not enable agreed channel shift budget savings

4.3 Approving Option One is the preferred option.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 The work will be delivered by the digital services team in conjunction with web authors and the communications team. No additional costs have been identified.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken that indicates no adverse impacts arising from this report.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Consultation with SOCITM, other local authorities with four star rated websites and external bodies has highlighted that the 2014/15 web programme principles reflect established best practice for local authority websites.

7.2 Web development work is undertaken in conjunction with service managers and content authors.

7.3 No conflicts of interest have been identified.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Policy and Resources Cabinet Member notes the outcome of SOCITM's 2014 Better Connected Survey; and

8.2 Approves the 2014/15 Digital Development Plan attached at Appendix 1.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

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Date: 1 April 2014

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Cabinet Member Report: Enhancing the Web Channel May 2013
SOCITM Better Connected 2012 and 2013

Website Enhancement Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
<p>Accessibility <i>(work to improve the experience for all users of the council website)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule regular meetings with the Diversity Standards Officer Revise the design templates to address issues with colours and white space that exist on all pages Implement a web page reader Implement web page translation Ensure compliance with A and AA accessibility standards and British Standard BS8878 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve DAC accreditation Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
<p>Improved Technical Platform / Standards <i>(work to deliver an upgraded technical platform, single sign on for web and self service portal, mapping and controls to ensure correct use by council employees)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade website CMS to latest version Upgrade CRM, eForm and Self Service Portal to latest version Implement a single sign on for the corporate web site and self service portal Implement geographic content for website (eg. nearest rubbish tip or nearest library etc.) Implement live mapping for reporting and viewing requests for council services in the self service portal Move all remaining e-forms into the self service portal Revise the current Quickclick / Do It Online features to deliver a solution that complies with best practice Address the identified issues with misuse of headers as formatting tools for content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year Commence work in March 2015 to draft a cabinet report and 2015/16 web enhancement action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
<p>Operator Webchat <i>(work to introduce an new customer online chat facility to interact with call centre staff online)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a customer web chat facility that is fully integrated with our website and call centre telephony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)

Website Enhancement Programme	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
<p>Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) <i>(work to improve the search engine within the site and also raise the profile for our pages within search engines such as Google)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse customer search terms since launching the new website in October 2013 Work with website authors to improve search results for frequently used terms by revising pages and adding key word tags Improve the website search algorithm Implement enhanced SEO techniques to ensure that relevant searches for council services and information appear high in search engine such as Google 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
<p>Revised Website Design <i>(work to improve the design aspects of the website ensuring compliance with best national practice, accessibility needs and address customer feedback)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the publications team to revised the current design ensuring compliance with national best practice and accessibility standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
<p>Revised council-wide content model <i>(work to implement a centralised model for all website content to ensure a common approach that complies with the council's style guide, web standards and national best practice)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the councils style guide Produce a web standards document Implement a resourced centralised approach for all web content Standardise approach to content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications (Legal and Democratic Services)
<p>Enhanced Customer Journeys <i>(work to improve the customer experience when accessing council information or services online)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review page hits since launching the new website in October 2013 Ensure that our top tasks reflect the most accessed information and services Work with Communications and Service Areas to ensure the customer journeys are as simple as possible with no unnecessary steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review finding of SOCITM Better Connected 2015 survey Review online customer feedback and statistical website usage analysis throughout the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)

Innovation Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Council-wide Innovation <i>(work throughout the council to exploit opportunities to improve service access or delivery using innovative approaches and technologies)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor other UK council innovation successes and consider whether similar benefits can be achieved here Work with stakeholders throughout the council to identify opportunities to improve service access or delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop robust business cases for relevant products Lead service area adoption of these technologies and changes to service deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Innovation with National Groups <i>(work with established and emerging national innovation groups to share best practice, project ideas, resources, risk and identify)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-establish a link with National Innovation Group including NESTA, SOCITM knowledge hub and SOCITM innovation platform Contribute best practice, share ideas, identify project and funding opportunities that will benefit us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute best practice, share ideas, identify project and funding opportunities that will benefit us Lead service area adoption of these technologies and changes to service deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Innovation with Other Councils <i>(work with other councils to share best practice, project ideas, resources, risk and identify)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-establish links with local councils that have a reputation for digital excellence eg. Rotherham, Barnsley and Kirklees Contribute best practice, share ideas, identify project and funding opportunities that would benefit us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute best practice, share ideas, identify project and funding opportunities that will benefit us Lead service area adoption of these technologies and changes to service deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Innovation with Vendors <i>(work with established vendors of innovative / digital solutions to local government)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish links with leading vendors of digital products Consider benefits and arrange product demonstrations Develop robust business cases for relevant products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead service area adoption of these technologies and changes to service deliver <i>Continued implementation of innovative digital solutions across the council</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Exploiting Our Existing Digital Platform <i>(work with suppliers to identify and exploit additional functionality within our existing digital suite of products)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain product roadmaps for all relevant products Identify and implement quick wins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and implement longer term benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)

Data & Intelligence Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Open Data <i>(work to deliver council data in a format that our user development community can reuse)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Data Quality to agree the initial data sets Use our SOA within Digital Services to provide access to data in an end user usable format such as JSON 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with Data Quality to release additional data sets Monitor the outputs from our local and national development communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Business Intelligence Pilot <i>(work to introduce a Business Intelligence / Data Warehouse Proof of Concept using CRM data to identify opportunities for Channel Shift to deliver sizable savings and to monitor the success of Channel Shift in both increasing online transactions and reducing transactions by traditional channels)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Customer Services to ensure the CRM records jobs inline with the ESD toolkit list of 800+ council functions Develop a portal to enable requests for any council service to be viewed, over any period by service channel Work with Customer Insight to identify trends and early opportunities for Channel Shift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Customer Insight to develop a new Channel Shift Programme detailing key areas where significant savings can be made Implementation of early outcomes from that programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Interim Channel Shift Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Additional Self Service Savings <i>(work to deliver channel shift savings as a result of additional self service / eforms)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a combined benefits change of circumstance e-form Implement a combined council tax discount e-form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible development of a benefits application e-form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Approved Budget Savings <i>(work to ensure that approved service specific channel shift budget savings are realised)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items for the recent full council approved budget 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Insight (Business Support)
Existing Project Savings <i>(work to ensure that channel shift opportunities are exploited and savings are delivered)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure channel shift opportunities are identified and exploited within the current online leisure centre booking project 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Insight (Business Support)
Analysis of Existing Data Sources <i>(work to ensure that channel shift opportunities are identified and exploited)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of existing data from a range of sources (eg. telephone statistics etc.) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Insight (Business Support)

Interim Channel Shift Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Communicating the Changes <i>(work to ensure that channel shift opportunities are promoted to ensure customer take up)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted campaigns including promotions, press, stationary, vehicle / building signage etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted campaigns including promotions, press, stationary, vehicle / building signage etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications (Legal and Democratic Services)
Digital Inclusion Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Community Training <i>(work to continue provision of volunteer lead online taster sessions for residents at rural council sites eg. libraries throughout the region)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued provision of online taster sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued provision of online taster sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Insight (Business Support)
Community Road Shows <i>(work to continue provision of road shows and drop in sessions in rural locations throughout the region eg. pub car parks etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued provision of community road show online events with the Council Event Vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued provision of community road show online events with the Council Event Vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Insight (Business Support)
Commissioned Website Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
Commercialisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree specification with customer Agree design with publications Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Fit4Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree specification with customer Agree design with publications Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)
Music Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree specification with customer Agree design with publications Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Services (Business Support)

Commissioned Website Action Plan	2014/15 – Q1 & Q2	2014/15 – Q3 & Q4	Lead Service
HR Services For Schools Customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
PHASE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
Invest In North Lincolnshire (Phase II)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
Visit North Lincolnshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)
Local LSCB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree specification with customer • Agree design with publications • Site development, testing and live operation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Services (Business Support)

North Lincolnshire Council Digital Development Plan

2014 - 15

Digital Services



Digital Services improving online access to council services for customers and using innovative solutions to improve service delivery and reduce operational costs

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Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

Introduction

The everyday lives of many people within North Lincolnshire are already being enhanced by exposure to the internet.

The council provides a wide breadth of diverse services throughout the area. With budgets reducing year on year these services need to use innovative, modern approaches that improve and enhance access to services, transform delivery and to reduce operational costs.

The internet needs to become our preferred channel for customer transactions. We must exploit opportunities to deliver the best possible online customer experience ensuring that they can access the services they expect, simply, at a time that they find convenient and with the device they prefer (e.g. PC, laptop, tablet, smart phone, game console etc.).

One of the major projects being undertaken by local authorities and other public bodies is to provide and enhance our services by providing more and more of our services on-line and relying less and less on face-to-face and telephone channels. The benefit of '*channel shift*' is that the council will be able to enhance the customer experience by providing services which are far more convenient to the user and will allow them to access our services from many different platforms as well as being able to track progress. The benefit to the council is that the web is by far the cheapest customer channel and the more services are provided in that way the lower the cost to the council. A survey of 480 public sector organisations identified that councils forecast potential savings of £300m in 2014-15 through channel shift.

Digital services have a crucial role in the channel shift agenda as detailed on page 4.

A Digital Services team was created within IT Services as part of the 2012 Review of Council-wide IT Services. The team have several core functions including:

- Operate, monitor and continuously improve the councils portfolio of online and supporting IT applications (eg. websites, CRM, SSP, social media)
- Use modern data integration techniques to improve council wide customer intelligence to support better decision making and the council's channel shift programme
- To use innovative modern approach to improve customer access to council information
- Improve delivery of council services and reduce operational costs

This plan documents our approach to building on our existing digital platform (e.g. website, social media, self service portal, CRM, Business Intelligence) to develop and improve our on online portfolio.

Our aim is to deliver digital services which are so good that customer will prefer to use them rather than our traditional, more expensive face to face and telephone channels.

The document also details the increasing importance of innovation within local government and the need to forge working relationships with other innovative councils, groups and established public sector suppliers when delivering digital solutions.

This plan is joined up with a number of other related initiatives that together will encourage, but not force, customers to use our portfolio of online services and information.

Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

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Our approach to identifying and delivering modern innovative digital services.....	Page 9
Our 2014-15 digital services action plan.....	Page 10

Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

Facts, figures and associated benefits:

82% of the UK population are already online, using the internet to bank, shop and transact.

Customers now increasingly demand access to information and services online at a time and location that is convenient to them with any internet compatible device.

The internet continues to develop at a rapid pace and to ensure our digital services continue to meet customer expectations we need to pro-actively monitor their use and feedback of our existing solutions to take opportunities to plan further developments and incrementally improve our existing online portfolio.

Over 50% of UK internet access is by mobile devices (eg. smart phones and tablets). Locally our website visits exceeded 50% by mobile devices for the first time in the last week of 2013. We will therefore use a mobile first approach when designing our future online services.

Our online services are available round the clock, everyday of the year. Way beyond office hours.

Digital transactions are much less expensive to the council. Additional benefits of well designed end-to-end solutions can include reduced data entry and processing resource.

NLC average costs for a digital transaction are 18p. By comparison average costs by telephone are £4.26 and face-to-face costs are £12.26. *The existing Channel Shift programme will assist in making the internet the council's preferred channel and ensure cashable savings are delivered.*

End-to-end digital services can provide customers with live updates for their requests preventing the need for second visit, telephone call or even an email. *This can improve our performance within the national N14 performance indicator – Reducing Avoidable Contact.*

Five million homes within the UK still do not have internet access. Over half of these stated “they did not need it” but one in five households identified lack of computer skills as a barrier to getting online. *The existing Digital Inclusion elements of the existing Channel Shift programme will provide local volunteer lead training to those people that need it most.*

Digital business is emerging as a disruptive new world of people, business and things. As with any disruption this is creating opportunities for innovative solutions.

Today there are already more mobile phones in the world than there are toothbrushes. The number of devices will proliferate along with the number of ways of interacting with them.

In 2009 there were 1.6 billion personal devices in use with a further .9 billion other “things” are connected to the internet. By 2020 this “internet of things” is expected to grow to over 30 billions connections with personal devices growing to 7.3 billion.

Emerging SMART technologies; **S**ensor networks & “the internet of things”, **M**aker machines, **A**ugmentation, **R**obotics and **T**hinking machines are already blurring the lines between science fiction and science fact.

A number of cutting edge councils are already considering how these emerging digital technologies will impact the quality and longevity of citizens' lives and affect the future of council services.

Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

What's going on nationally with digital:

There are a number of national digital campaigns and programmes including the following:

Initiative	Overview
Better With Less	SOCITM (the professional body for local authority IT) approach to developing council digital services and strategies.
Rewiring Public Services / Future Council	LGA (Local Government Association) approach to transforming local government service delivery
Government Digital Plan & Service Design Manual	The government's own approach to online service delivery along with an approach to developing services for a digital age
Local Digital Campaign	DCLG's approach to sharing innovation and best practice to improve service delivery throughout the public sector
Digital by Default	The cabinet's ambition to make 80% of its services available on-line and to promote this as their preferred customer channel

At this time none of these approaches are mandated for Local Authorities. But they are all currently hot topics within local authority IT Services and some impact is expected from most of them.

By ensuring that our local approach supports the spirit of these national agenda's we can readily adopt of these national approaches in whole or part if they become legislative.

The ongoing reduction in central government funding will continue to necessitate the need to deliver services in a more innovation modern way if we are to continue to delivering all the services our customers expect.

The challenges for all councils are similar and as such there is a need to establish strong links with local councils that have a reputation for innovation excellent, national innovation groups and recognised suppliers of digital products to the public sector.

A shared approach allows ideas, best practice, risks, costs and resource to be shared across a number of stakeholders to achieve the better outcomes than any one organisation could achieve in isolation.

Product user groups will allow councils to work with digital product vendors to shape the future roadmap of their products functions and features to meet shared and specific aims.

Digital trends are still emerging and as such local authorities need to better understand digital capabilities, digital opportunities, digital gaps and digital threats in order to better plan their approach to exploiting new and emerging technologies to deliver innovation, modern ways of accessing and delivering council services.

Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

What's going on locally with digital:

A number of key projects were identified and delivered in 2013/14 to improve customer access to council services / information, improve service delivery and reduce operational costs including: Self Service Portal Phase I, II and III – a common platform was introduced that ensures all relevant customer service requests are held in a common CRM database. Over 50 of the highest volume online service request forms from the entire portfolio of over 200+ are currently included. Phase I, II and III saw integration developed through our SOA with the back office IT applications for Highways, Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services respectively.

Enhancing the council website – a programme of enhancements were implemented in response to evidence of customer use, changing local government trends and feedback our professional body (SOCITM) . This included a mobile device friendly new design that focused on top tasks, new channels with services grouped logically rather than by council structure and an improved search. The development was done in-house for the first time ever.

Audience specific micro sites – a number of new audience websites were developed in-house using our existing EIBS Easysite CMS including www.investinnorthlincolnshire.co.uk and www.commercialbusinessservices.co.uk . Smaller audience specific websites were developed in-house using Droopal an open source CMS including www.joiningupthehumber.co.uk

Innovation – an approach was agreed to identify opportunities to work together with national groups, local councils with a reputation for innovation excellence and digital vendors to share project ideas, best practice and hopefully costs.

We also continued to develop and maintain North Lincolnshire Council's digital services platform includes the following key components:

Firmstep CRM – our common CRM for a range of customer services request types whether they are made online, face to face or by telephone

Firmstep Platform – our online customer self service portal (SSP) where customer can register once to request a range of council services and monitor the progress of their requests (in many cases in realtime)

EIBS Easysite – our CMS for the corporate website at www.northlincs.gov.uk and a number of audience specific microsites

eVoice – our easy to use website builder for local community and charity websites.

SOA – our in-house developed technical solution for data integration across a range of back office systems. Examples of this are the automated entry of SSP jobs into the highways system (Confirm) and ability to provide status updates for service requests to customers online.

Intralinc – our in-house intranet to share information council-wide along with a range of HR eforms, the organisation directory and bulletin board.

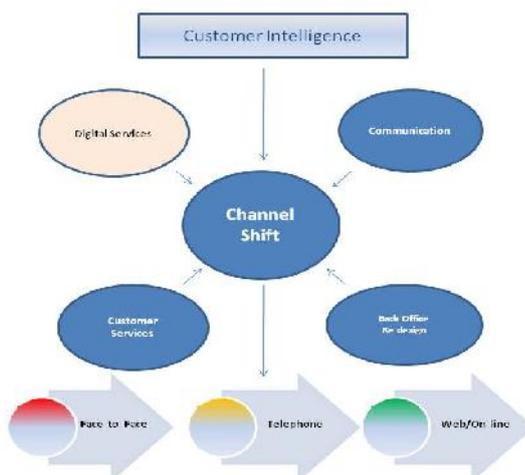
Monitoring Tools – we use a suite products to monitor customer use of our digital platform and to identify opportunities that will continuously improve our digital services

Digital Development Plan - 2014-15

Channel Shift

The channel shift agenda can bring real benefits to the public as well as making a projected £300m saving for local government within 2014-15.

The concept of channel shift is about moving customer transactions and interactions from the more expensive channels of face-to-face and telephone contact to the web. Current figures identify that locally our cost of a face-to-face customer transaction is £12.08 higher than the same transaction delivered via the web.



There are five key elements to channel shift:

Customer Intelligence: the most effective channel shift programmes often start with gaining citizen insight to understand what their key priorities are and how these might be catered for within an online environment. Not just thinking about what customers need now but projecting future needs to understand what services will look like in five or 10 years and how they will be accessed. We need to have the intelligence to understand who are customers are; and where and when they are currently accessing our services, before we can begin to shift channels.

Digital Services: In order for channel shift to be successfully applied, Digital Services need to provide the tools to make this happen. We need to provide web and on-line tools that provide the customer with a better and simpler service than they would have received through any other channel and this involves providing innovative web based and on-line tools which allow the user to both access and monitor service delivery. This channel can often be more cost-effective for the user as well as the council.

Communications: Regardless of how we provide our services to our customers there is little point in providing these services if the public and/or our users know the service is available and by what channel. Communicating the availability of our services; the channels that are available is key to users and the benefits to the users in using a different channel is crucial to any successful migration

Back-Office Redesign: In order for channel shift to take place we will often need to re-design how our back office systems and processes operate. This should also help to generate some of the efficiencies forecast through channel shift

Customer Services: The customer services team has a key role in communicating and offering other channels to our customers. When customers access our services via face-to-face or telephone channel we can use this contact to advise the customer that there are other methods of accessing our services which would benefit the customer.

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What's going on locally with Channel Shift & Digital Inclusion

A Channel Shift programme has been established within Business Support to coordinate activities though out the council and in particular within Customer Insight, Digital Services, Communications and Customer Services. It's current focus is to establish the necessary framework to deliver future service specific channel shift projects and associated savings. Key components include:

- Ensuring the website provides the best possible experience for our customers
- Ensuring Customer Services promote the website as our preferred channel
- Establishing a volunteer network to deliver on-line taster sessions and road shows within rural areas of our community
- Provision of PC's for public use within council buildings and making resource available to assist customers
- Communications activities to promote the website and on-line services (including promotional press releases & campaigns, changes to signs / stationary etc.)

A Business Intelligence (B.I.) Proof Of Concept with Digital Services will align customer service request types within the corporate CRM (Customer Relationship Management System) with the national ESD Toolkit's list of 800+ services that a typical council offers. A portal will be created that can report on requests for any of those 800+ services during any period and display the results by channel (ie. online, face to face, telephone or post). The portal will support development of a new Channel Shift Programme in the latter half of 2014/15. It will identify service specific opportunities for significant channel shift and also monitor how successful these activities are in both increasing on-line service requests and reducing those made using more expensive traditional channels. Use of a nationally recognised service list will also ease benchmarking with other councils or reporting to central government should these become necessary or mandated.

An interim series of service specific opportunities to exploit the web and to reduce the cost of providing more expensive traditional channels has been drafted and is included in Appendix A. These items are built on established colloquial knowledge, approved plans and recent successes at other councils. The key themes are:

- Previously analysis of telephony statistics for The Pods and the evident benefits that on-line bookings for sports facilities would deliver at peak times
- A number of service specific channel shift savings that were included in the 2014-2016 budget that was approved at Full Council in February 2014
- The recent implementation of a "combined benefits change of circumstances e-form" and a "combined council tax discount e-form" at North East Lincolnshire and the recent implementation of a "benefits application eform" at Croydon

The Channel Shift programme is owned by the Customer Services Development Board and its implementation is managed on a day to day basis by Customer Insight within Business Support.

Progress is monitored by a Project Board comprising representatives from Customer Insight, Digital Services, Communications and Customer Services. An update report is presented by Customer Insight at each Customer Services Development Board meeting.

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Our approach to delivering modern innovative digital services:

With digital increasing being seen everywhere there is a need to identify the right opportunities that will see a significant improvement in access to council services or a notable improvement in service delivery and a recurring saving in operational costs. This is approach to ensuring we work on the right project and create solutions that are fit for the future.

Extending our digital platform:

- We aim to plug any obvious gaps within our digital service portfolio by use of proven modern technologies that not only meet our specific need but will provide a springboard for innovative future developments.
- An example of this is the 2014/15 Business Intelligence (B.I.) project. The immediate need is to be able to identify which council services have been requested over any period and by what channel. But the technical solution can be extended to provide a future data warehouse to combine data from multiple back office sources to improve council-wide knowledge management and future decision making.

Identifying opportunities to refine our digital services technical platform & to deliver continuous incremental improvements

- We use customer feedback, our own lessons learnt evidence from previous projects and outcomes of commissioned user testing to identify opportunities to incrementally improve our range of online services
- We use evidence of success elsewhere within local government, central government or within the public service when considering potential benefits of at North Lincolnshire Council
- We use recognised project management techniques including PRINCE2 and AGILE as appropriate when delivery digital services projects

Using Innovation to improve customer access to council services and information, transform delivery of council services and reduce ongoing operational costs:

- We work with local councils that have a reputation for innovation excellence including Kirklees, Rotherham and Barnsley to share project ideas and best practice
- We engage with national innovation groups to maintain awareness of national issues, trends, emerging technologies and potential solutions
- We maintain a relationship with recognised vendors of public sector digital solutions to remain up to date with their service offerings, product roadmaps and new customers
- We monitor successes elsewhere within government, local authorities and the public sector to identify potential schemes that would for north Lincolnshire Council
- We work throughout the council to improve service area knowledge of modern innovative approaches that can transform how they deliver services and make ongoing savings in operational costs
- Where possible we aim to share projects, risks, resource and costs with other stakeholder organisations.

Exploiting our existing digital platform:

- We work with our existing suppliers to ensure that we fully understand their plans and roadmaps for their products ensuring that opportunities are identified and exploited to introduce additional functionality and features to further improve service access or deliver.

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Our Digital Development action plan for 2014-15:

An overview of the 2014/15 Digital Development Action Plan is included as Appendix A.

The appendix represents the currently known work streams and key projects. However due to the fast evolving nature of digital within local government the plan may be subject to change throughout the year.

Key components are as follows:

- Web enhancement programme
- Innovation action plan
- Data and Intelligence action plan (including open data & business intelligence)
- Interim channel shift action plan
- Digital inclusion action plan
- Commissioned website action plan

This action plan is linked with a number of other existing work programmes, plans, working groups and programmed boards to provide a cohesive joined up approach council-wide:

IT Strategy Board
<p>The IT Board have ownership of this plan. The Digital Services Manager will manage it's implementation and produce quarterly updates.</p> <p>The IT Board will also be made aware of risks or significant changes that could affect implementation of one, many or all projects within the agreed work plan to time or budget.</p>
Customer Services Development Board and Channel Shift Sub Group
<p>The Digital Services Manager represents IT Services at the Customer Services Development Board and works throughout the council as necessary to resolve identified IT and digital issues.</p> <p>The Digital Services Manager attends the Channel Shift Sub Group and will deliver all technical elements of the programme and some tools (eg. the Business Intelligence pilot) to identify opportunities in shifting high volumes tasks to the web from traditional, more expensive channels</p> <p>Wider aims of the Channel Shift group around promoting new digital services, digital inclusion, the mechanism for realising cashable savings, assisted digital, changes to stationary, building signage etc. are all within the remit of the Channel Shift programme.</p>
IT / Digital Plan 2013-16 & Directorate IT Plans 2014-15
<p>Digital Services work with the Business Enhancement Team to ensure that service areas are aware of digital projects that affect them and that they are captured in the IT / Digital Strategy and Directorate IT Plans.</p>