



**Connected
Reading**

The digital heart of the
Thames Valley

Connected Reading 2021-2024

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Introduction

This is the first digital strategy for Reading, developed in conjunction with stakeholders from across the borough and within the council. In the strategy we explore how digital processes and tools can bring a whole new way of working for residents, businesses and council staff alike.

To guide our work we've described a [vision](#) of the future in 3 years' time, and set out the [principles](#) that will guide the ways we will work in delivering that vision.

The main areas where work is required to achieve the vision are aligned to five key [themes](#) that give structure and purpose. We've also looked at how people's lives will be improved by the delivery of the strategy, and we've described those outcomes through a set of 'personas' who represent a wide range of people across the borough. The personas are grouped into [three areas](#): residents, businesses and staff, and you can look in more detail at how each individual persona will be affected.

In order to deliver the strategy we have developed a [Roadmap for Change](#), which describes the initial projects that will help to accelerate the changes across Reading. This includes the projects that our partners are delivering that support and enable the strategy, and the ways in which the digital maturity and connectedness of the entire borough will improve as the strategy unfolds.

Finally, the borough has declared a Climate Emergency in response to the ongoing challenge of climate change. Digital measures can play an important role in helping to tackle the issues effectively, and we've indicated the important areas through the document wherever you see this green earth logo: 



Addressing the Climate
Emergency through digital

Accelerating Connections in Reading

This strategy for the borough of Reading builds on our unique strengths, in particular our strong digital economy and connected geographical location, as well as the wealth of assets the council and partners have across the borough.

We wish to use digital to create new, connected relationships between residents, businesses, delivery partners, and the Council and its staff. We are using an approach – user-centred design – that puts people and their needs first, designing the digital response to fit those needs.

We have set out a Roadmap for Change to accelerate the delivery of inclusive, responsive and efficient services. We will work collaboratively, in line with the Team Reading values, to co-design solutions that meet the needs of people through digital processes and technology.

We are working towards realising this strategic vision by 2024, with a review point in September 2022 to refresh and refine the focus and Roadmap for Change.

This strategy has been shaped and developed in connection with partners and stakeholders, modelling the collaborative, transparent ways of working that lie at the heart of the strategy.

This strategy will help to deliver better outcomes for residents in our three corporate priority areas:

- **Healthy environment**
- **Thriving communities**
- **Inclusive economy**

and is designed to support a number of parallel change strategies including: Customer Experience; Workforce Reviews and the Adult Social Care Transformation.

“

Digital - applying the culture, practices, processes, business models and technology of the internet-era to respond to people's raised expectations.

Tom Loosemore @tomskitomski

Connected Reading: **Our Vision**

Our Vision

Strong, connected relationships with residents, businesses and partners underpin a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.

What does the Connected Reading vision mean in practice?

- **Everyone is more connected**, so we work face-to-face as well as digitally
- **We share our data** with partners, and they help us by sharing their data too
- People in all our **communities are able to connect** directly with each other to share their stories and help one another
- People at home and on the move are able to **connect with businesses** and access services
- We **recover from the pandemic** by helping each other in new ways
- Vulnerable **people are connected to care providers** who can respond quicker with more targeted care
- People and businesses **choose to locate here** because of the great connectivity
- The **council plays a leading role** in bringing everyone together
- People's overall **health and wellbeing improves** in measurable ways, through joining up services and data for the population
- **Events bring people together** to gain a common understanding
- We **collaborate to solve shared problems** and try out new ideas

Connected Reading: **Principles**

Digital Design Principles

In a digital world we see the greatest benefits from new approaches when we adhere to shared standards and common methods of working.

We have drawn upon established principles from across the public, private and third sectors to create a set of digital design principles for Reading.

These digital design principles have informed our approach and guided our thinking as we developed the Connected Reading Strategy.

- Start with our community and their needs, our residents, local businesses, partners and staff
- Continuously improve our services, innovating and learning from our work
- Make things that are inclusive and accessible to everyone
- Work hard to make our services efficient, simple and person-centred
- Use modern, sustainable technology to deliver services based on shared approaches 
- Use data to gain insight and inform decisions, securely and transparently

Connected Reading: **Themes**

Themes

Connected relationships are about much more than just technology.

These five strongly interrelated themes emerged as the most important topics for people on our digital journey.

We connected with a wide range of stakeholders and the themes surfaced as we explored the key opportunities and barriers to a successful digital transformation in Reading.

The themes provide a consistent structure and context throughout the strategy, showing how people and projects are working towards the vision.



Connected Reading:
**Connecting
People**

Connecting people - the five key themes in action

In this section we look in more detail at the five key themes in action. Our layered approach to reaching our strategic vision is guided by the five key themes.

We demonstrate how the [strategic outcomes](#) are aligned to the themes. We show the ways in which [people remain at the centre](#) of this strategy and show how the themes ensure we are [meeting the needs](#) of our three key stakeholder groups. We develop the idea of [individual 'personas'](#) who represent examples of people across Reading who will be impacted by the strategy as it is delivered.



We then present the [Roadmap for Change](#), which highlights the projects positioned within the themes that will act as vehicles to reach the strategic vision.

We show first how the projects that make up the roadmap are [developed and prioritised](#) by considering the needs of our three main stakeholder groups. We then show the ways in which we will become [more digitally mature](#) in Reading as the roadmap unfurls.

Crucially, the [governance of each project](#) will follow a different path depending upon its type and its sponsorship, but all will contribute towards achieving the vision. We then show the projects in the [draft roadmap for 2021](#), split by project type.

Themes – the strategic outcomes



Developing Foundations

- The Council has digital tools and services that can readily be used by its staff and customers and that meet their needs
- Services collaborate with users to improve continually
- Processes and systems are kept up to date and maintained sustainably 



Sharing Information

- Data flows easily between council teams, residents and partners
- People are confident in the quality, security and privacy of data
- Good data improves understanding and decision-making



Enabling Investment

- Businesses and people choose to live and work here
- The council collaborates to create the right conditions for digital investment
- Up to date, accessible and sustainable infrastructure is in place as a key enabler for all 



Connecting Communities

- People connect directly to neighbours and the voluntary sector
- Services are delivered by the right partner, enabled or signposted by the council
- Digital relationships are central to supporting our communities
- People can connect to digital services, and those services are accessible, fostering digital inclusion



Improving Skills

- People across the borough are more confident and better equipped to thrive in a digital economy and be included in its benefits
- There is an increased usage of digital and other self-help tools
- Staff have the time and confidence to help those with complex needs

How the strategy will feel for people

Here we highlight the key benefits for each of our three key stakeholder groups.

To ensure our work is people-centred we have created ‘personas’ which aggregate the life experiences of a number of people in each group.

‘Personas’ help us stay connected to how the strategy will improve people’s lives by demonstrating how their needs will be met, and what they will be able to do differently as a result of this work.

You can read individual personas in more depth in the Appendix, and see below how they are affected by our five digital strategy themes.



Residents

[View all Resident personas](#)

I’ll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what’s happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Be confident in using digital services
- Know how to get to the help I need
- Know how I can contribute to my community



Businesses & their staff

[View all Business personas](#)

I’ll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what’s happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Link with local skills initiatives
- Know how I can offer social value
- Test innovations in public services



Staff & partners

[View all Staff & Partner personas](#)

I’ll be able to:

- Have technology that works
- Be confident in using technology
- Have the information I need where I am
- Have a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to office to give or get information 

Connecting People: Residents

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Developing Foundations



Enabling Investment



Sharing Information



Improving Skills



Connecting Communities



Residents

“In the future I can...”

- Place an order for services easily and consistently
- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected at home
- Be connected on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need
- Contribute to my community easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area



[View all Resident personas](#)

Connecting People: Businesses & their staff

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Developing Foundations



Enabling Investment



Sharing Information



Improving Skills



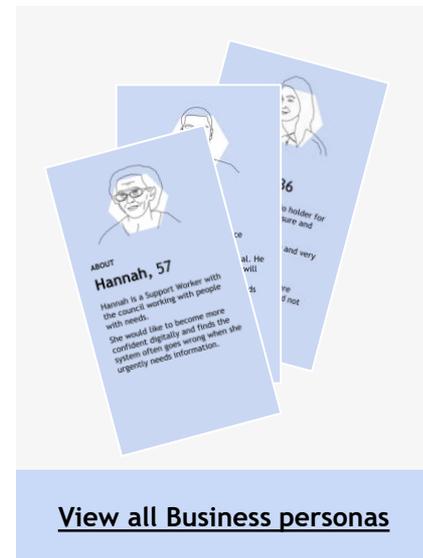
Connecting Communities



Businesses & their staff

“In the future I can...”

- Place an order for services easily and consistently
- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Test innovations in public services
- Be part of improving the area
- Be involved in innovation that furthers our green strategy 
- Access a single version of the truth
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Receive information and documentation easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Help my staff to invest in their digital skills
- Get the help I need
- Understand what information is needed to apply for services
- Contribute to add social value, support the green agenda and enable collaboration between businesses 



[View all Business personas](#)

Connecting People: Staff & partners

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE



Staff & partners

“In the future I can...”

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Work to clear, published processes
- Continuously improve my service
- Access a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to the office
- Share information with partners
- Share information with residents & businesses
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Use my networks to catalyse investment opportunities
- Help make Reading an attractive place to invest
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Plan my service visits in real time
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others



Connected Reading: **A Roadmap for Change**

The Roadmap is designed to deliver people's digital needs

THEMES

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE

ROADMAP



Residents

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Be confident in using digital services
- Know how to get to the help I need
- Know how I can contribute to my community



Businesses & their staff

I'll be able to:

- Order and pay for services easily
- Report issues and know what's happening
- Only give information once
- Be connected
- Link with local skills initiatives
- Know how I can offer social value
- Test innovations in public services



Staff & partners

I'll be able to:

- Have technology that works
- Be confident in using technology
- Have the information I need where I am
- Have a single version of the truth
- Avoid unnecessary trips to office to give or get information

Inflight projects run by the council and our partners

- Where there are digital projects already inflight, we are ensuring that they not only deliver their targeted benefits but also align as far as possible to the themes and principles of this strategy

Accelerated projects

- Deliver against the themes
- Test and establish consistent ways (patterns) of solving people's needs
- Give us an opportunity to build the capacity and capability for delivering the strategy
- Test and deliver foundational digital tools and systems

Pipeline

The pipeline of future digital projects is continuously reviewed and updated to identify opportunities to:

- Address gaps in meeting people's needs
- Address gaps in meeting the themes
- Test the needs for, and value of, possible new digital tools or systems

The Roadmap will also make us more digitally mature – for future needs

Defining Approaches Testing patterns and focussing on need

We are making technology decisions that meet user needs, guided by shared principles.

We are more comfortable with testing and piloting before we commit to solutions.

We are committed to documenting our processes and being transparent about how our services work.

Service Improvement Defining patterns and technology foundations

We are identifying consistent ways of doing things across services and implementing.

We are building confidence in our digital services and self-service offer.

Technology decision making is clearly communicated across the organisation and we have a published roadmap for the future of our business systems.

We are building a cohort of people in services, in the project, data, digital and web teams that have good agile and user-centred change skills to help drive our strategy.

Shared Service Improvement Sharing patterns and technology

We have a resource of reusable service patterns that help speed up our re-design of services for staff, residents and businesses.

We have made some big steps in investing in the technology underpinning our digital services.

We are more confident in using data in day to day decision making as well as prioritisation.

Staff are confident about what good looks like and understand why they need to work to the principles for design and decision making.

Systematic Service Transformation Based on shared patterns and technology

Design-led processes are being used to deliver simple, transparent, joined-up end to end services, based on shared technology components where possible

We are working and operating services in new ways, using improved processes, tools and technologies.

We are fundamentally changing how services are designed to meet user needs and to deliver improved outcomes.

Discrete change

Systemic change

Types of Projects on the Roadmap

THEMES



Developing
Foundations



Enabling
Investment



Sharing
Information



Improving
Skills



Connecting
Communities

Project type

Description

Example projects

Inflight Projects

Council projects that are in progress or have received resources and commitment to be delivered, which further the aims of the strategy.

- Smarter Working
- Finance System Replacement
- Housing System Upgrade

Accelerator Projects

A series of workstreams which put in place the foundational technology, tools and skills, while also boosting capacity to accelerate Reading Council's ability to deliver to the strategy.

The Accelerator projects will build cross-cutting capability (eg implementing a payment system that can be used across the whole business) but will do so by working with specific pathfinder areas which have urgent, high-benefit requirements.

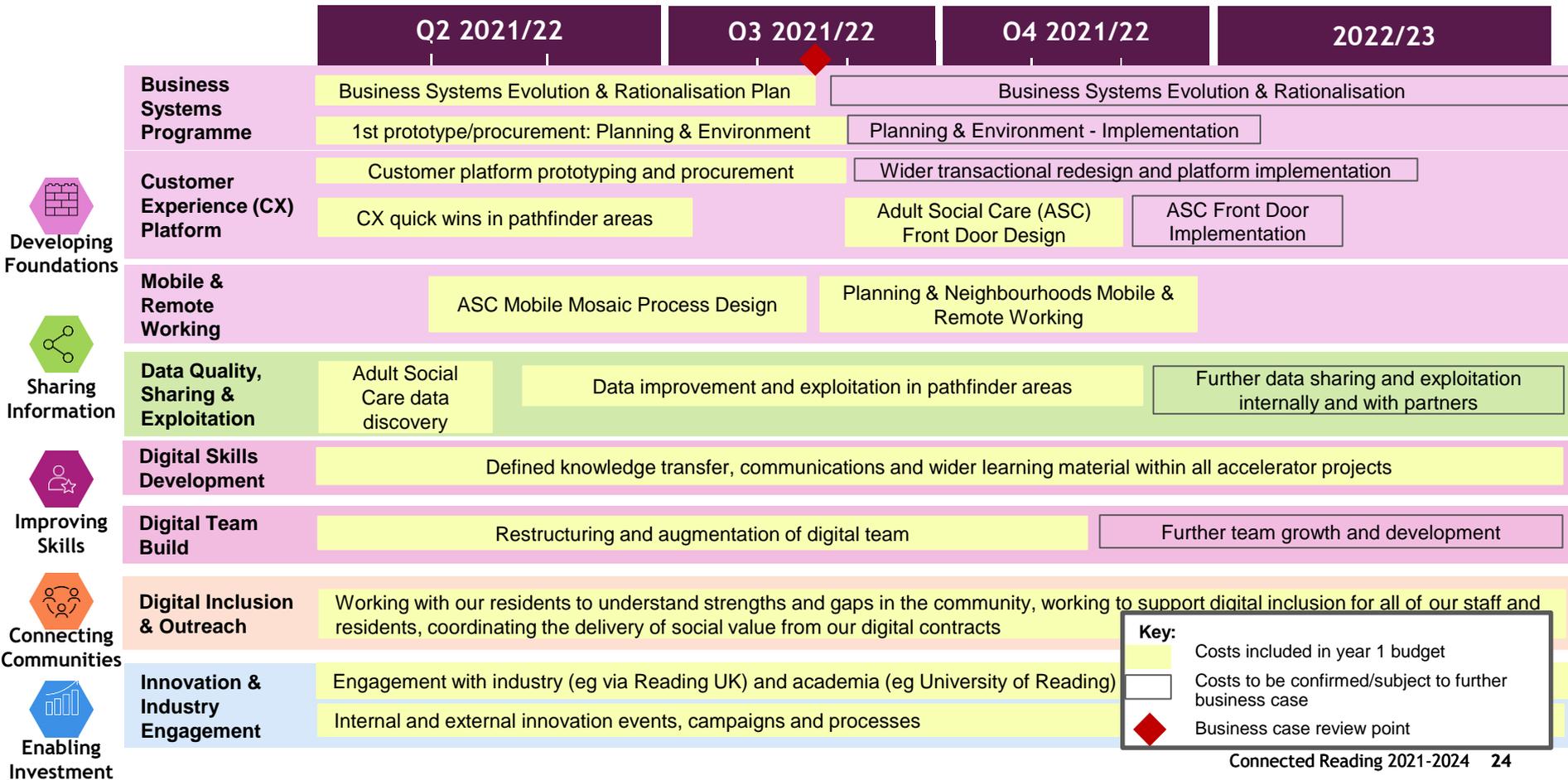
- Customer Experience Platform
- Business Systems Evolution & Rationalisation including replacement of end-of-life Civica APP product (used in Planning, Regulatory and Neighbourhood services)
- Adult Social Care data improvement and exploitation

Partnership Projects

Projects being delivered by different partnership organisations or groups across Reading which further the aims of the Strategy.

- Connected Berkshire
- Get Online Reading
- Connected Pathways

Roadmap Accelerator Projects and Activities



Connected Reading:
**The way
forward**

Conclusion

Thanks to everyone who helped to create, edit, comment and support this strategy.

We have researched and set out a new digital direction for the borough of Reading, its residents and its businesses. The positive impact of the strategy will reach widely across many stakeholders, some of whom we have described through the personas in the Appendix below, in order to bring the plans to life.

Our next steps after formal approval of the strategy will be to design and commence our human-centred engagement approach to the first ‘accelerated’ projects that make up the first 9-month segment of the Roadmap and set the foundations and good practice for the remainder of the programme. We invite you to get involved in our work in order to include as many diverse views as possible.



Connected Reading: **Appendix**

Connected Reading: Appendix

Connecting People

Personas / Residents



ABOUT

Derek, 68

“I want to stop feeling so lonely, but I’m a proud man”

Derek is a retired man who was widowed three years ago. He is isolated and lonely and is not good at keeping in touch with people.

He has some health issues that his sister is worried could be serious but he won’t go to the doctor.

He would like to make more use of digital tools but doesn’t know where to start.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Be connected at home and on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Provide information once and access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services and gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need, contribute easily and connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Learn how to use his tablet to connect to others.

Feel confident using digital tools to access information, activities and services.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR DEREK?

Derek comes down to his kitchen on Monday morning and makes a cup of tea. He opens his tablet and jumps on to the community chat group to see which of his friends are up for a gentle stroll around the park. There’s always a few of them and it’s so easy to arrange online. They usually go for a coffee afterwards. He enjoys the company and the walking is good for his health.

When Hattie, his sister bought him the tablet a couple of years ago, he thought she was foolish. He didn’t think learning digital skills was for him. Back then, Hattie looked up some classes on the council website that Age UK were running for older residents locally. When Derek went along, he found there were lots of people there like him. Learning how to use the internet opened so many doors for him. He is once again enjoying the reggae music of his youth, and has been able to look up and talk to old friends in Jamaica. It’s easy to find activities closer to home as they are all advertised online. He doesn’t feel so lonely any more and feels confident in his digital skills now.

Personas / Residents



ABOUT

Pam, Eric & Alice 43, 39 & 8

"It's exhausting looking after a disabled child and we need more support to apply for services online"

Pam and Eric are parents and full-time carers for their daughter Alice who has complex needs. They use digital devices for social purposes but would like to be more digitally savvy.

They struggle financially and are in receipt of benefits. Broadband is expensive and their computer is old. They do a lot on their smartphones.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information**

NEEDS

- Place an order and pay for services and book appointments easily and consistently
- Be connected at home and on the move
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once and access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services and gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need, contribute easily and connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Apply for and track services online.

To gain better digital skills.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR PAM, ERIC AND ALICE?

As full-time carers to Alice, Pam and Eric use their computer for networking with other parents who have children with similar conditions. It helps them feel less isolated. Through the council website, they were referred to a small local charity who provided them with a refurbished desktop computer for a very low cost which has opened up a lot of opportunities for them.

They hope that when they move into a council property they will also benefit from the low cost fibre broadband deal the council brokered for all its tenants.

There was some training available that the council and some local charities arranged online, which was great because it's so difficult to arrange to go somewhere for a particular time when you have caring responsibilities. They both completed a few sessions. It's helped them both feel more confident and made dealing with the benefits they receive for Alice easier. They can even book Alice's carers on an app on their smartphones.

They go onto the council's bidding site every week to bid for a council property that will suit Alice's needs better. They haven't found anything yet but feel optimistic about the future.



ABOUT

Jane, 40

"I lead a busy life and want to apply for services at my convenience and trust that my online request has gone through"

Jane is a single parent with a limited income who lives in council accommodation and finds broadband access expensive

She works part-time and is reasonably digitally literate. She contacts the council about services like school admissions and housing benefit.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills Connecting Communities

NEEDS

- Place an order, pay for services and book an appointment easily and consistently
- Be connected at home and have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Access information and advice easily
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

Request and pay for services online and receive confirmation of booking by text or email with a direct link to make changes if necessary.

Council could broker a deal to provide fibre broadband to council properties.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JANE?

With two young children and a part-time job, the evening is the only time that Jane has to go online and look for information and pay her bills. Her daughter is going to secondary school next year and Jane has researched schools and they have decided on their first choice.

She goes onto the council website to apply for a place and receives a confirmation straight away with a reference number with a link where she can track progress. All the information sits in her council account and after she has completed the school admission application she looks at her rent account to see how much of her arrears she has paid off.

Having access to information on the website helps her feel in control and she has managed to improve her financial position. She has also been able to get support from her peers by joining local online groups and feels less isolated by being part of a community.

The council put fibre broadband in all council properties last year, and it's much better value now. Jane has put the money she has saved towards a new family computer.



ABOUT

Mary, 59

"Everyone wants me to do things on the computer now, I feel left behind"

Mary is a widow and part of her local church community.

She is registered disabled due to a visual impairment. Her mobility and access to online tools is restricted but she is still independent.

She does some volunteering and is not confident in using digital tools.

She struggles financially.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Connecting Communities**

NEEDS

- Access information and advice that meets disability guidelines for audio interpretation
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives, including using disability aids
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To develop confidence with digital tools that are designed for easy access for those with disabilities, so that she can apply for opportunities in her community online and keep in touch with family and friends.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR MARY?

Mary uses the computer at the library a few times a week now. She went to the computer club at Age UK and learnt how to do things like using audio to help read text, going on the internet and paying her bills. She did think about getting a computer at home but is satisfied with going to the library for now.

She manages quite well at home although needs to stop often to rest often. At Age UK, they showed her how to go online using the smartphone her daughter got her and headphones to use the audio guidance. At the library she searches for volunteering opportunities. She has helped at a gardening club and is looking for some opportunities to help with after school clubs. She also learnt how to contact the council and they put her in touch with a charity who provide aids and adaptations in the home to help her do household tasks more easily.

She has also learnt how to communicate with her family back in the Philippines as she can't afford to travel there. She has now met new family members and feels more involved in her family's lives.



ABOUT

Keith, 17

“I am scared that I won’t be able to cope with moving into my own flat”

Keith is a looked after young person living in supported accommodation. He has learning difficulties and is currently unemployed.

He will be given a council tenancy when he is 18, but he is worried about how he will cope.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information**

NEEDS

- Place an order, make payments and book appointments for services easily and consistently
- Be connected at home
- Have the right equipment
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Access information and advice easily as its all written for reading age 11
- Build my ability and confidence in using digital services
- Gain access to local digital skills initiatives
- Get the help I need
- Connect with others

OPPORTUNITIES

Would like to learn digital skills so that he can feel informed and able to apply for jobs and services.

To be able to manage bills and apply for jobs online.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR KEITH?

Keith’s support worker showed him how to log into his council and benefits accounts so that he can manage his bills. His time living in supported accommodation taught him some important life skills, such as cleaning, cooking and looking after money. There is a private Facebook group for other young people in a similar position, and they help each other.

Keith got into some rent arrears when he first got his flat, but he came to an agreement with the council to pay off a little every week and he has nearly finished paying now.

He is able to go to one place on the council website to look at his rent and housing benefit accounts as its all set out simply and in plain English. He feels so much more confident with digital. His support worker told him about some digital skills training that was being sponsored by local tech businesses. He also received a refurbished laptop once he finished the course. He gets subsidised broadband as part of a deal the council did with a local fibre broadband provider so he doesn’t have to worry about expensive data charges.

He has started uploading videos of his music onto YouTube. He feels like he has the tools to manage his life now and feels hopeful about the future.



ABOUT

Julia & Richard 35 & 34

"We are worried about being able to borrow money to pay our service charges as we are both freelancers. We want to be able to understand our options at our convenience"

Julia is a Content Producer and Richard is a Web Designer. The service charges on their leasehold flat are high and cause them a lot of anxiety. They have an unstable income and are highly digitally literate.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills
Connecting Communities
Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To find the council services and information they need all in one place, and not have to re-enter the same information again and again.

They would like to find out about proposed service charges and payment options online to allow them to be better prepared.

Julia could find out if she is entitled to any benefits due to her unstable income.

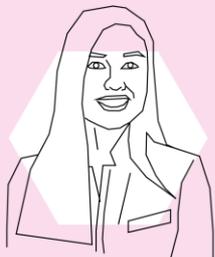
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JULIA AND RICHARD

Julia and Richard have always managed most of their business online but haven't always been able to apply for services and get information from the council in the same way.

They bought an ex-council leasehold flat back in 2017 and the service charges are one of their main worries. Other residents had told them that the council had underinvested in repairs on the block for a number of years and there are high charges to come.

Although it's never great to pay bills, the service charge part of the council website is clear, with a dashboard where they can find the information they need. It also gives them a range of payment options such as overpayment, which works well for them as they can put money away when Richard's work is going well and the bills aren't such a worry.

Julia has searched the council website for details about what benefits she could be entitled to. There are lots of links through to information available in the community, like free swimming lessons and community gardening clubs.



ABOUT

Imogen, 30

"I want to give something back to the local community, but the council don't seem to be interested in my ideas"

Imogen is the founder of a FinTech company. She is affluent and digitally literate.

She wants to support the local community through her company.

She is frustrated she can't do more with the council online, such as paying for her parking permit.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities
Enabling Investment

NEEDS

- Pay for services easily and consistently
- Provide information once
- Access information and advice easily
- Get the help I need
- Contribute easily to the community
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

To be able to pay for parking permits online.

For the council to signpost her to projects within the local community where she can make a difference.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR IMOGEN?

Imogen goes onto the council website where she is able to access lots of information about local schemes that could benefit from her company's funding or expertise.

A few months ago, she found details of the local project supporting young people develop their digital skills. Her company helped with digital mentoring after they passed all the checks. Today she's back to see who else they can help. It's great to have all the information in one place.

She lives in the centre of Reading and one of the things that used to frustrate her was renewing parking permits and applying for visitors permits. Now, the whole process is online and all she needs to do is log on to her council account and order and pay for what she needs. She has also been able to look at her council tax bill and check on her bin collection dates.

She doesn't use many council services but having all the information online, so she can do things at her convenience, has been invaluable.



ABOUT

Piper, 41

"I want to find places to go and things to do while I'm in the area"

Piper is a temporary resident. She is a Creative Director at Microsoft and usually works in the US but is over on business. She is staying for three weeks and wants to spend some time getting to know the area.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities

NEEDS

- Get the help I need
- Connect with others
- Find out what is happening in the area

OPPORTUNITIES

One place online to find out everything that's going on in the area for visitors.

Content or clear signposting from the council website.

Access to promotions and special offers for travellers.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR PIPER?

Piper travels across the world for business and looks forward to exploring the places the company send her on business in her free time. She is an ethical traveller and likes to contribute to the local economy.

Her trip to Reading is three weeks long, and she wants to experience it like a local. She asked at the office about things to do and got a few recommendations. Someone suggested that she went on the council website. She was really impressed with all the information she was signposted to.

She found out about some local museums and some running trails. She also booked tickets to go to see a couple of shows at the Hexagon theatre. They had a special offer so she even saved some money! Tripadvisor really only caters for tourist hotspots so it's great to find a website with a local focus where all the information she needs is in one place.



ABOUT

Hannah, 57

“I want council systems to share information to prevent people with needs falling through the cracks”

Hannah is a Support Worker with the council working with people with needs.

She would like to become more confident digitally and finds the system often goes wrong when she urgently needs information.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Connecting Communities Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Work to clear, published processes
- Continuously improve my service
- Know where to find information, with no duplication or inconsistency
- Share information with partners and residents
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office and on the move
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed

OPPORTUNITIES

Different council systems sharing information securely so that departments are aware of the full circumstances before life changing actions such as eviction are considered.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR HANNAH?

Hannah has just finished an online course covering the latest release of the people centred system they now use to manage complex care packages. She gets lots of support from her manager and the organisation to help with her digital learning and knows where to go if she needs more help.

She feels much more confident in her digital skills now and uses her tablet when she is out and about seeing clients, so she doesn't have to spend so much time writing up notes.

Before she saw digital as a cost cutting exercise, but now she has seen that if the majority of people use digital and self-help tools, it releases more time for her and her colleagues in the voluntary sector to support those with the most complex needs.

The website is so much easier to use now, so people are able to access information, advice and guidance when it suits them, and often are able to address their needs without support from the council. One of her former clients emailed her and told her that he feels more independent now.



ABOUT

Kuram, 24

“I need the council to invest in training for staff and local people so that they can do more online”

Kuram is a Customer Service Advisor.

He feels threatened by digital. He thinks his job will go and he will be replaced by robots. He wonders how people with needs will be supported. He worries about whether he will receive adequate training.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



Improving Skills Sharing Information

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Work to clear, published processes
- Access a single version of the truth
- Share information with partners, residents and businesses
- Be connected in the office
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

To be a confident user of systems to help people deal with the council.

To be able to use digital more confidently and for the council to invest in systems to allow residents to track their own requests.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR KURAM?

Kuram really enjoys his job in the council's contact centre. He feels valued because the council has invested in regular training to keep him and his colleagues up to date with the new customer record systems that are now in place across the organisation. The public facing website is so much better now, it's easy to find information, and if the caller is online, he can share their screen and point them to the right information. He and his colleagues have regular digital huddles to share any challenges they have with the systems, and management are very supportive of their learning.

They don't have as many phone calls as they used to, as many people self-serve, so part of his day is spent answering queries that come up on the webchat and answering queries submitted on forms, provided they are not too complex.

He and his team can see every contact someone has made with the council, however it was made. It means that they can give a user centred response, rather than the runaround they sometimes subjected people to in the past. He gets a lot of job satisfaction now, and he is able to spend the time needed to support people with needs over the phone who have a low level of digital literacy.



ABOUT

Victoria, 36

"I support digital progress but I am keen we don't exclude staff and residents"

Victoria is a portfolio holder for Environment and Leisure and Solicitor.

She is digitally literate and very positive about digital transformation.

Staff have told her they are worried about job cuts and not having the right skills.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Connecting Communities
Improving Skills**

NEEDS

- Continuously improve my service
- Use data confidently to support decision making
- Be connected in the office and on the move
- Use my networks to catalyse investment opportunities
- Help make Reading an attractive place to invest
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

People, both staff and residents will be supported to develop their digital skills to access digital services.

More resources for staff training and supporting non digitally literate resident.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR VICTORIA?

Victoria has seen a great deal of change in the directorate she has portfolio responsibility for. There have been some major changes to back end systems that mean staff can get the information they need to do their jobs and customers can apply and pay for services online when it's convenient for them.

The council have saved money, but not through lots of job cuts as predicted by some. A few staff left the organisation voluntarily, but the majority have been supported to develop digital skills to allow the council to transform the online customer experience.

In her area, pitch and court bookings can be done on the council app, and e-books and music can be downloaded from libraries. It means that staff can concentrate on serving people with more complex needs who have low levels of digital literacy.

Staff tell her that they feel supported in learning how to use digital services, and they know where to go if they need help. She is proud of the council's senior leadership team for shaping a culture of learning and excellence.



ABOUT

Julia, 37

"I need the council to invest in training for the community sector so we can give residents the support they need"

Julia is a Food Bank Manager

She has years of experience in the Charity sector. She is overstretched and over reliant on volunteers.

She is digitally literate but she worries about a society of digital haves and have nots.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Connecting Communities
Improving Skills**

NEEDS

- Have the right equipment to do my job well
- Have the information I need, wherever I am
- Continuously improve my service
- Be skilful and confident in using digital tools and technologies
- Gain access to digital skills initiatives
- Have the time to provide support to people where it's needed
- Help people to help themselves and others

OPPORTUNITIES

A way of empowering local people and her volunteers to gain confidence using digital tools to access vital services

Need to look at root problems such as lack of digital skills for volunteers as well as residents

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JULIA?

Julia opens up the food bank as usual in the morning and welcomes the digital champions, who are volunteers with good digital skills who help others who need support.

The council originally set up the scheme, but it has grown across the local community and voluntary sector. The council collaborated with a volunteering platform to build a local volunteer scheduler app so that Julia always knows she has volunteers both for digital and for the food bank.

A local charity had received donations of desktop computers from one of the big tech companies who were renewing their hardware for staff and the foodbank received six of these so that people could use them and receive support when they visit. It's made a big difference to people as most benefits and council services need to be applied for digitally now and it can be daunting for people if they don't have the skills.



ABOUT

Jon, 33

"I want to lead an ethical organisation that delivers change for local people and the environment"

Jon is the founder of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions start up. They have been successful in gaining two rounds of funding.

He is passionate about health inequality and sustainability.

Jon grew up in Reading, and wants to give back to the community.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Enabling Investment**

NEEDS

- Be part of improving the area
- Be involved in innovation that furthers our green strategy
- Contribute to add social value, support the green agenda and enable collaboration between businesses

OPPORTUNITIES

To have one place to go to be able to access online information about investment which benefits the local community.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR JON?

Jon has just come out of his monthly board meeting and feels really optimistic that his goal of giving back to the community is beginning to take shape.

His HR team have worked with the council to arrange for local young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to work with them as fully funded digital apprentices.

He is also working with some leaders in the council's climate change team to discuss the progress his company have made using digital tools to achieve their sustainability and renewable energy goals.

They are working together to see whether they can build a model for other local small businesses to become more sustainable. He is excited about working with the council because they are passionate about making things better for the community and are easy to get hold of through their social media channels.



ABOUT

Amanda, 50

“I want a way of managing everything I need to do with the council online”

Amanda is the owner of three florist shops across Reading.

She is digitally literate but staff have poor digital skills which causes issues as more business now is placed online.

The broadband connectivity poor at two of her shops.

DIGITAL STRATEGY THEMES



**Improving Skills
Enabling Investment**

NEEDS

- Place an order, pay and book appointments for services easily and consistently
- Be connected in the office
- Be connected on the move
- Access a single version of the truth
- Report issues and get regular updates
- Provide information once
- Receive information and documentation easily
- Help my staff to invest in their digital skills
- Get the help I need

OPPORTUNITIES

To have one account for the diverse range of services she needs to access and pay for from the council.

To benefit from improved broadband connectivity.

WHAT COULD THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR AMANDA?

Amanda has seen an increase in online orders, which now account for 60% of the business. She closed her least profitable shop and now rents a unit on an industrial estate where she has staff processing and fulfilling digital orders.

The shops catch spontaneous purchases and she has added a gift range in them to complement the flowers. Strong and fast broadband across the sites is key to their success and she is happy that broadband connectivity across Reading has improved recently.

She now has an online council account where she can manage a number of things across the sites such as business rates, parking permits and business grants. She no longer has to spend so much time on the phone trying to track down the information she needs as everything is now in one place.

She found a link on the council website to a small social enterprise who arrange training for businesses that need to improve their staff's digital skills. They offered good value and she has also had someone trained in social media management. They now have a popular instagram page which generates a lot of business.

Connected Reading 2021-2024